

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING
INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

November 26, 2007

We, the members of the Committee on Human Rights (CHR) of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine, continue to be deeply troubled by the plight of prisoners, including scientists, engineers, and health professionals, held at the Guantanamo Bay naval facility in Cuba and possibly in other, similar facilities.

The United States government's treatment of these prisoners remains at odds with the letter and spirit of its own Constitution, as well as with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Third Geneva Convention, and the Convention against Torture—all documents signed by our government. The rights being violated—prompt access to a court of law that may decide on the lawfulness of detentions; timely, fair and public hearings by an independent and impartial tribunal; family visits and access to lawyers and health professionals of their own choosing—are the very same rights that our Committee has promoted and defended in countries around the world for more than a quarter century.

We urge that the situation of prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay and, possibly, other similar facilities be promptly addressed and redressed. In addition, we request assurances that, when prisoners are transferred out of Guantanamo Bay, they will be sent only to countries in which their human rights will be respected. Meanwhile, we reiterate our standing request that the U.S. government authorities provide our Committee with information on detainees held at Guantanamo who have worked or trained as scientists, engineers, and health professionals, including: their names, professions, birth dates, citizenship, mailing addresses, legal status, and names of their lawyers.

While we recognize the seriousness and complexity of the dangers our country is facing, we had expected that, with the benefit of time and perspective, the treatment of these prisoners would be brought into conformity with international human rights standards. This has not happened.

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