

Guantánamo Update: Hunger Strikes & the Shaker Aamer Parliamentary Debate.

Shaker Aamer has been imprisoned without charge at Guantánamo for more than eleven years. He remains incarcerated despite being cleared for transfer in 2007. A government e-petition for Shaker Aamer reached 100,000 signatures before its 20 April deadline thanks to an overwhelming response from the British public, including thousands of Amnesty supporters. This triggered a parliamentary debate on his case, which was arranged for 24 April by Jane Ellison, Shaker Aamer's Battersea MP. Foreign Minister Alistair Burt was questioned by backbench MPs. While he was unable to answer many enquiries – particularly those about private conversations with US officials – Burt insisted the government were united in their attempts to return Shaker Aamer to the UK. Brighton Pavilion MP Caroline Lucas suggested the mystery surrounding his continued detention was "Kafkaesque."

Call on William Hague and Alistair Burt to redouble their efforts to return Shaker Aamer to the UK:

William Hague: Email private.office@fco.gsi.gov.uk or tweet @WilliamJHague

Alistair Burt: Email burta@parliament.uk or tweet @AlistairBurtFCO

Shaker Aamer is one of at least 43 Guantánamo prisoners on hunger strike in protest at their treatment. Please write to Charles Hagel, the US Secretary of Defense, with the following messages:

- Expressing dismay at the USA's continuing failure to resolve the detentions at Guantánamo, in line with international human rights law;
- Calling on the US administration to fully recognize the impact that years of indefinite detention has upon detainees and their families, and that the USA's failure to meet President Obama's promise to close the Guantánamo detention facility is a matter of profound human rights concern, as made clear by the UN High Commission for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, in her statement of 5 April 2013;
- Calling for a serious and thorough review of the current situation at the facility, including a review of cell search policies and practices, and urging that all efforts be made to defuse any tensions between detainees and detaining authorities;
- calling for hunger strikers to be guaranteed continued and regular access to independent medical assessment and care, based on medical ethics and best practice, and that lawyers for the detainees are kept fully informed about developments relating to the health and well-being of their clients (you may underline the issue of independence by stressing that medical staff caring for detainees on hunger strike must not be instructed to act other than in accordance with their professional judgment and internationally agreed medical ethics including the principle of informed consent to any treatment, which in turn includes the intake of food and nutrients);
- urging that the US administration publicly injects a renewed urgency into meeting the promise to resolve these detentions (you may note that there are dozens of detainees who have been "approved for transfer" by the US authorities for years), and that the administration uses its energy to persuade Congress of this urgency rather than merely to blame it for blocking resolution of the detentions;
- seeking assurances that the goal of closure will be achieved with all detainees treated in full compliance with the USA's international human rights obligations;
- calling for Guantánamo detainees to be released unless they are to be charged with recognisably criminal offences and given fair trials in independent civilian courts in accordance with international fair trial standards, and calling for the USA not to resort to the death penalty in any case.

ADDRESS

The Honorable Charles Hagel
Secretary of Defense
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