

PRESS RELEASE: Over 80 Arrested in Guantánamo Protests at Supreme Court

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DIRECT ACTION TODAY DEMANDED SHUT-DOWN OF GUANTANAMO AND AN END TO TORTURE AND INDEFINITE DETENTION

WASHINGTON, DC - Early this afternoon, over 80 activists organized by Witness Against Torture delivered a message to the U.S. Supreme Court demanding the shut-down of the U.S. prison at Guantánamo and justice for those detained there. 35 activists were arrested inside the Court building and another 35 on the steps. The arrests followed a solemn march from the National Mall of 400 persons that included a procession of activists dressed like the Guantánamo prisoners in orange jumpsuits and black hoods - part of an International Day of Action that was endorsed by over 100 groups and that included 83 events around the world.

Inside, a member of Witness Against Torture delivered a letter to the nine Supreme Court justices regarding *Al Odah v. United States* and *Boumediene v. Bush*, the two cases brought by Guantánamo detainees that they are now considering, along with a writ of habeas corpus for each of the 275 current detainees. Other activists attempted to unfurl a banner inside the Court building but were prevented from doing so by police, who began arresting them and shut the front doors to the building. Another group then started reading the names of the Guantánamo prisoners, but were prevented, whereupon they sat down and started chanting, "Shut It Down!" prior to being arrested.

At approximately the same time, activists dressed in orange jumpsuits and black hoods representing the men imprisoned at Guantánamo, knelt on the steps of the Court building and eight others unfurled a banner on the steps. They were arrested as well. Each arrestee had previously surrendered his or her ID, and was taken into custody under the name of one of the Guantánamo prisoners.

"This group brought the names of the victims of Guantánamo right to the Supreme Court," said Elizabeth McAlister, a member of the Jonah House community in Baltimore and the mother of one of the persons arrested inside the Court. "The Court has listened and listened to the views of the imprisoned, but has not heard them."

Outside the Court, advocates read testimonies and names of prisoners, performed street theater, and handed out information. One performance was a simulation of waterboarding, one of the most controversial torture tactics used at Guantánamo and in other U.S. detention centers.

January 11, 2008 marks six years of detention without hope of release for nearly 300 men at Guantánamo. "Lawyers are working hard to bring the cases of the prisoners into the courts," said Susan Crane of the Jonah House Community, who participated in today's action. "But lawyers can only do so much. These prisoners, who have been illegally detained, tortured, abused, and kept from their families for years, are not even able to communicate openly with their lawyers. That's why we were here today to appeal to the Supreme Court justices to stand up now and end this abuse."

Witness Against Torture is calling on the U.S. government to: * Repeal the Military Commissions Act and restore Habeas Corpus; * Charge and try or release all detainees; * Clearly and unequivocally forbid torture and all other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, by the military, the CIA, prison guards, civilian contractors, or anyone else; * Pay reparations to current and former detainees and their families for violations of their human rights; and * Shut down Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and all secret CIA detention facilities.

About Witness Against Torture Today's action is the latest by Witness Against Torture, which came into being in December 2005 when a group of 24 friends walked to Guantánamo to visit the

prisoners - an action following the nonviolent tradition of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker. Upon returning to the U.S., they continued the work with public education and community outreach, networking and resource sharing, and acts of nonviolent civil resistance to draw attention to the plight of prisoners in Guantánamo and victims of the war on terrorism everywhere.

The International Day of Action launches a concerted campaign to Shut Down Guantánamo. For more information, please visit www.witnesstorture.org.