

## Why are we here today at the Supreme Court? January 11

We come to the Supreme Court today because it is the sixth anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo prison as a place where men, given the devious label "enemy combatant" have been held in indefinite detention, inhuman conditions, isolation and torture. We are here to bring their plight, and the plight of all prisoners from this current war, to the "highest court in the land." We are here to make their suffering visible, to make their voices heard, to make their humanity felt.

Lawyers from the Center for Constitutional Rights and other organizations are working hard to bring the cases of the prisoners into the courts. But the lawyers can only do so much, because these prisoners—who have been illegally detained, and tortured, abused and kept from their families for years—are not even able to communicate openly with their lawyers. And so, after years of despair, many prisoners have lost what confidence they might have had in the legal process. More, highly competent lawyers who have patiently devoted their time and skills at great personal cost, are understandably frustrated because they are unable to conduct what a reasonable person would consider a reasonable defense.

The men at Guantanamo may seem very far from us; they not only have different names and cultures, but they have been relentlessly demonized and dehumanized by government officials who *knew all along* that almost all of them are innocent of any crime. We come here to bring their stories and assert their humanity, because for six years, men such as Sami al Haji from Sudan and Sabir Lahmar from Algeria have been denied the basic right to come here to present their own defense. We are here to tell these stories.

So we come to the Supreme Court on this January 11th to let the nine justices—who hold so much power over these men— know that we care about the prisoners, that we are watching, that we expect and demand justice.

Some of the recent Supreme Court rulings on the Guantanamo prisoners appear to be reasonable, but so far they have proven ineffective in securing even the most basic rights which accused persons should have—rights guaranteed by the fundamental laws and practices of U.S. society and by civilized nations all over the world. Again and again, an intimidated Congress—even the Democratic Congress elected with a mandate to reverse the Administration's abuses—has lacked the will to restore basic rights which *everyone* deserves.

We are here today to appeal to the Supreme Court Justices to stand up now to *assert decisively* an end to torture; to *assert decisively* the abolition of secret prisons supposedly outside the realm of law; and above all, to *assert decisively* the right of *habeas corpus*, the most crucial protection of any democratic society.

Although the justices don't always have the empire's poor and marginalized as their first concern, we appeal to them as people of conscience and humanity to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.