



## National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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July 12, 2013

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

As leaders of our respective faiths and religious organizations, we write to you to express our concern about the hunger strike at Guantanamo, the continued existence of the detention center there, and the seemingly permanent detention without trial of most of the people imprisoned there.

Earlier this year, you spoke movingly of the importance of “redoubling our efforts to close the prison at Guantanamo.” You said that you had tried to close Guantanamo and that it “should have never been opened,” but that Congress had imposed restrictions to effectively prevent you from either transferring detainees to other countries or imprisoning them in the United States. You also committed to taking two important steps toward closing Guantanamo – lifting the blanket ban on transfers to Yemen and appointing special envoys at the State Department and the Department of Defense to be in charge of ensuring that detainees are transferred out of Guantanamo.

We are grateful to you for your commitment to close Guantanamo, and for taking steps to resume transfers of detainees from that prison. It is our understanding that current law gives Secretary Hagel the authority to resume transfers. We encourage you to direct him to transfer as many prisoners as possible out of Guantanamo as soon as feasible.

We also ask that you clearly state that you will veto any future congressional attempts to place restrictions on transfers that would prevent you from closing Guantanamo. Living up to the basic values of due process, the rule of law and the respect for human rights will best serve our nation’s interests.

The hunger strike at Guantanamo is an ongoing humanitarian crisis – caused in large part by the despair prisoners at the detention center feel over their continued detention without hope of trial. It is past time for our country to deal with that crisis.

Thank you for again committing to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. We stand ready to support you in doing so.

Bishop Mark S. Hanson  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

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