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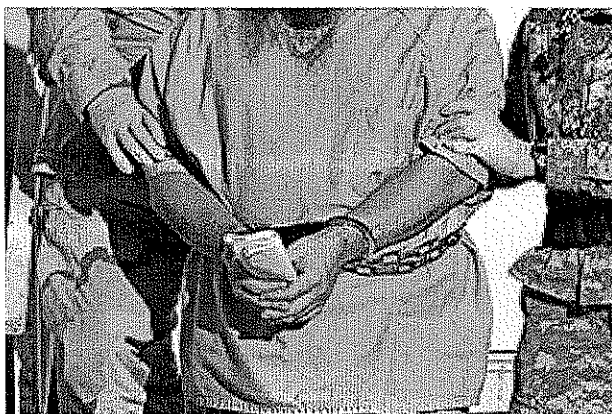
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2007  
9:19 MECCA TIME, 6:19 GMT

## Protests on Guantanamo anniversary

A legal-aid group that represents hundreds of detainees held at Guantanamo Bay has condemned it as an "abomination" and called on Washington to close the facility five years after it received its first prisoners.

A demonstration will take place outside the US naval base in Cuba on Thursday to mark the fifth anniversary.

Protests are also planned in New York, London, Sydney, Australia, and many other cities across the world.



Nearly 400 men are still being held at the US naval base in southeast Cuba [AFP]

Michael Ratner, the president of the Centre for Constitutional Rights, said: "The abomination that is Guantanamo Bay must be shut down.

"There is simply no place in a democracy for offshore penal colonies in which people have no rights."

The first 20 detainees, shackled and blindfolded, arrived from Afghanistan on January 11, 2002, and several hundred have passed through the detention centre in southeastern Cuba since.

About 395 men are currently held there, detained because of their alleged links to al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

### 'Enemy combatants'

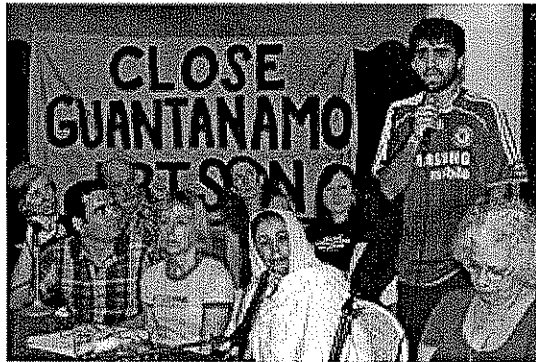
The US military says many of the "enemy combatants" held in Guantanamo Bay have provided interrogators with information about terrorist networks.

The government has blocked their access to US courts, claiming it has the authority to detain them indefinitely to keep they country safe.

Ratner said 90 per cent of the detainees have never committed a hostile act against the US and described Guantanamo as "a legal failure".

Former detainees and the families of men still being held in the military prison will march to the security perimeter surrounding the US enclave in Cuba.

Zohra Zewawi, whose son Omar Deghayes has been held at the prison camp since his arrest in Pakistan in 2002, Asif Iqbal, a former detainee, and several American peace activists will demand the closure of the facility.



**Detainees' relatives and former prisoners will take part in a protest in Cuba [AFP]**

"I came here to ask to shut down Guantanamo and release everybody who is there, and ask George Bush ... who is a father how he would feel to have one of his daughters detained in such a place," Zewawi said on Tuesday.

### **Interrogations**

Iqbal was 20-years old when he travelled to Pakistan to get married and said he went to Afghanistan out of curiosity and a desire to help the Afghan people when the US invasion began.

He was arrested in Mazar-i-Sharif in November 2001, flown to Guantanamo and subjected to endless interrogations, sensory deprivation, exposure to extreme temperatures and spent days on end in shackles, he said.

After three months in solitary confinement, Iqbal signed a confession that he had been at an al-Qaeda rally in Afghanistan in 2000. British police later corroborated Iqbal's account that he had been in Britain at the time.

"The burden of Guantanamo is still there. Until the prison is closed down I cannot get on with my life," he said.

Only 10 detainees have been charged by the military tribunal set up to try the inmates.

[Al Jazeera's Rob Reynolds was granted access to Guantanamo Bay - read his report here.](#)

### **Your Views**

**"The abomination that is Guantanamo Bay must be shut down"**

[Michael Ratner, the president of the Centre for Constitutional Rights](#)

**Send us your views**

Source: Agencies