

Guantanamo letter from faith leaders to Congress

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

Copies to all members of Congress

Dear Members of Congress:

As leaders of major religious groups in the United States, we are very aware of the importance of symbols in one's spiritual life. So, too, are symbols important in the spiritual life of a country.

Guantanamo is the symbol of our country's violation of our deepest values. Regardless of how it is operated now compared to how it was operated in earlier years, it stands in the minds of hundreds of millions of people in our nation and around the globe as a place where America broke faith with itself and used torture as an interrogation technique. Torture is immoral, illegal, and never justifiable -- without exception.

Our government must close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay now to help us heal spiritually and to put an end to this dark and errant chapter in our history. For those detainees that must continue to be incarcerated, we believe that appropriate alternative sites can be identified.

We ask that you do everything in your power to help close Guantanamo -- now.

In faith

Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer, President
The Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

Dr. Ingrid Mattson
President
Islamic Society of North America

Archbishop Vicken
Diocesan Legate
Armenian Church of America

Rabbi Yael Ridberg
President, Reconstructionist
Rabbinical Association

Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church, USA

Rev. Geoffrey A. Black
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos
Chancellor
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Joe Volk
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National
Legislation

J Ron Byler
Acting Executive Director
Mennonite Church USA Executive
Leadership

Stanley J. Noffsinger
General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone
Co-chairs, Rabbis for Human Rights-
North America

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed
National Director
Islamic Society of North America

Archbishop Nicolae Condrea
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the
Americas

Dr. David P. Gushee
President
Evangelicals for Human Rights

Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
National Council of Churches

Suhag Shukla
Managing Director
Hindu American Foundation

Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo
Executive Minister, Justice and Witness
Ministries, United Church of Christ

Very Rev. Thomas Cassidy, SCJ
President,
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Jane Burke, SSND
Executive Director
Leadership Conference of Women
Religious

The Most Reverend Michael Seneco
Presiding Bishop
North American Old Catholic Church

Rev. Peter Morales
President
Unitarian Universalist Association of
Congregations

Steven Gerber
Executive Director
Rabbis for Human Rights-North
America

Dr. George Hunsinger
Professor of Theology
Princeton Theological Seminary

Marie Dennis
Co-President
Pax Christi International

Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser
Executive Director
California Council of Churches

The Rev. Russell L. Meyer
Executive Director
Florida Council of Churches

The Rev. Gary L. Harke
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

The Reverend Dennis D. Sparks
Executive Director
West Virginia Council of Churches

Rabbi Ellen Lippmann
Co-chair
Rabbis for Human Rights-North
America

David Lamarre-Vincent
Executive Director
New Hampshire Council of Churches

David Leslie
Executive Director
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

The Rev. Jill Job Saxby
Executive Director
Maine Council of Churches

Scott D. Anderson
Executive Director
Wisconsin Council of Churches

Rev. Richard Cizik
President
The New Evangelicals, Inc.

Rick Love, Ph.D.
Consultant for Christian-Muslim
Relations

Dr. Ronald J. Sider
President
Evangelicals for Social Action

Dr. Glen Stassen
Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian
Ethics Fuller Theological Seminary

Timothy Floyd
Director, Law & Public Service Program
and Professor, Mercer University

Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns, Professor of
Christian Formation, Pentecostal
Theological Seminary

Rev. Peter Laarman
Executive Director
Progressive Christians Uniting

Rev. Peg Chamberlin
Executive Director, Minnesota Council
of Churches; President-Elect, National
Council of Churches