

By Andy Worthington

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Today, prisoners at Guantánamo will embark on a peaceful protest, involving sit-ins and hunger strikes, to protest about their continued detention, and the continued existence of the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, three years after President Obama came to office promising to close it within a year, and to show their appreciation of the protests being mounted on their behalf by US citizens, who are gathering in Washington D.C. on Wednesday to [stage a rally and march](#) to urge the President to fulfill his broken promise.

Ramzi Kassem, a law professor at the City University of New York, and one of the attorneys for [Shaker Aamer](#), the last British resident in Guantánamo, said that his client, who is held in isolation in Camp 5, told him on his last visit that the prisoners would embark on a peaceful protest and hunger strike for three days, from Jan. 10 to 12, to protest about the President's failure to close Guantánamo as promised.

He explained that the men intended to inform the Officer in Charge ahead of the protest, to let the authorities know why there would be protests, and added that the prisoners were

encouraged by the “expression of solidarity” from US citizens planning protests on Jan. 11, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the prison.

Kassem also said that another of his clients, in Camp 6, where most of the prisoners are held, and where, unlike Camp 5, they are allowed to socialize, stated that prisoners throughout the blocks were “extremely encouraged” by reports of the protests in Washington D.C.

The prisoner, who does not wish to be identified, also said that banners and signs had been prepared, and that there would be peaceful sit-ins in the communal areas. He added that the prisoners were concerned to let the outside world know that they still reject the injustice of their imprisonment, and feel that it is particularly important to let everyone know this, when the US government, under President Obama, is trying to persuade the world that “everything is OK” at Guantánamo, and that the prison is a humane, state of the art facility.

He also explained that the prisoners invited the press to come to Guantánamo and to request interviews with the prisoners, to hear about “the toll of a decade” of detention without charge or trial, and said that they “would like nothing more” than to have an independent civilian and medical delegation, accompanied by the press, be allowed to come and talk to the 171 men still held.

In Camp 5, Shaker Aamer and the other men still held there will not be able to stage a sit-in, as they are unable to leave their cells, but they will participate in the protests by refusing meals.

No one knows how the authorities will respond to the protests, especially as the new commander of Guantánamo, Navy Rear Adm. David Woods, has gained a reputation for punishing even the most minor infractions of the rules with solitary confinement.

According to Kassem, prisoners have complained that the new regime harks back to the worst days of Guantánamo, between 2002 and 2004, when punishments for non-cooperation were widespread.

Of the 171 men still held at Guantánamo, [89 were “approved for transfer”](#) out of Guantánamo

by a Task Force of career officials and lawyers from the various government departments and the intelligence agencies, and yet they remain held because of Congressional opposition and President Obama's unwillingness to tackle his critics. 36 others were recommended for trials, and 46 others were designated for indefinite detention without charge or trial, on the basis that they are too dangerous to release, but that there is insufficient evidence against them to put them on trial.

That is a disgraceful position for the government to take, as indefinite detention on the basis of information that cannot be used as evidence indicates that the information is either tainted by torture, or is unreliable hearsay. It remains unacceptable that President Obama approved the indefinite detention of these men in [an executive order last March](#), even though he also promised that their cases would be subject to periodic review.

Just as disgraceful, however, is the fact that *all* of the 171 prisoners still at Guantánamo face indefinite detention, as none of them can leave the prison given the current restrictions. That ought to trouble anyone who cares about justice and fairness, and the protests by the prisoners, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Guantánamo, ought to convey, more eloquently than any other method, why the pressure to close the prison must be maintained.

**Note:** For further information, to sign up to ☐ a new movement to close G, and to sign a new White House petition on the "We the People" website calling for the closure of Guantánamo, visit the new website, "[Close Guantánamo](#)."