

In response to the announcement today that the Obama administration would be transferring detainees from Guantánamo to the Thomson Correctional Center in Illinois, Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) Executive Director Vincent Warren issued the following statement:

If President Obama is simply moving detainees from one Guantánamo to another, he has done nothing to honor his pledge to close the prison camp. The vast majority of detainees remaining at Guantánamo will never be charged with anything. Yet the president has made clear that he believes he can continue to hold these men, most of whom have already been in Guantánamo for eight years and should never have been detained in the first place, for as long as he wants without any trial whatsoever.

Moving the Guantánamo system onshore is not change. Whether in Thomson, IL, at Guantánamo, or elsewhere, the very idea that we would toss aside our founding constitutional principles and allow any executive the power of kings to imprison someone forever without a trial is anathema to democracy.

The Obama administration has already cleared for release at least 116 of the 210 men who remain at Guantánamo. Many of them have nowhere to go because they are from countries that routinely engage in torture and other human rights abuses. Will they now be subject to inhuman conditions of solitary confinement in a maximum security facility despite the fact that they will never be charged with anything and have been approved for release? For them Thomson, Illinois may be worse than Guantánamo.

While the fear-mongering over bringing any of the men to the U.S. is opportunistic and entirely political, we cannot support this latest move merely to shut down the symbol of Guantánamo without dismantling the injustice of Guantánamo. A change of scenery does nothing to restore the rule of law.