

An embarrassment for the United States

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Prisoners at Guantanamo Naval Base (File image/RHC)

By María Josefina Arce

More than 20 years ago, in its supposed fight against terrorism, after the September 2001 attacks against the Twin Towers in New York and other targets in U.S. territory, the government of then President George W. Bush opened a clandestine prison, torture center and all kinds of humiliations at the illegal naval base of Guantanamo, in eastern Cuba.

The illegal occupation of a portion of Cuba's territory for 120 years, against the will of its government and people, was compounded by the opening of the prison, which became known worldwide for its inhumane practices against the people held there.

In 2011, the world was shaken by more than 700 secret reports leaked by the digital site Wikileaks, which revealed that 60% of the inmates were taken to that prison without having any link to the jihad, holy war.

The files, dating from 2002 to 2009 and published simultaneously by U.S. and European media, record the interrogations to which the detainees were subjected and the offenses committed in the illegal center.

Allegations about the mistreatment of inmates followed one after the other over the years. And although in 2013 President Barack Obama signed an order to dismantle the facility, some 30 prisoners still remain there.

In the last hours, the request for the closure of this center gained strength again, after the UN affirmed that its closure is a priority.

After a visit to the place, the first to be carried out, in spite of the claims of UN experts, Fionnuala Ni Aolain, special rapporteur on the protection of human rights while countering terrorism, found that all the prisoners are living with constant damage as a consequence of systematic practices of torture and arbitrary detention.

A statement from the specialist points out deficiencies in health care, inadequate access to family and arbitrary detention characterized by constant violations of fair trials.

Nearly 800 detainees, allegedly accused of terrorism, have been held in these facilities. Very few have faced concrete charges or been tried and found guilty.

International organizations, former officials and the U.S. press have described the prison at the Guantanamo naval base, created by Bush outside of national and international laws, as an embarrassment for the United States.

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