

U.S. President Barack Obama Refuses to Use Executive Order to Close Guantanamo



Washington, June 14 (RHC)-- U.S. President Barack Obama has been talking about closing the U.S. military-run Guantanamo Bay detention camp in Cuba since first running for president in 2008. But despite eight years of promises, he's now saying he won't use his power as commander-in-chief to unilaterally close the detention center, located on illegally-held Cuban territory.

Political observers in Washington say that without an executive order, the only way for Guantanamo to now be closed is for the U.S. Congress to overturn a long-standing ban on bringing the remaining prisoners to maximum-security prisons in the United States. With Republicans in control of both houses, and Democrats unwilling to court controversy ahead of an election, analysts say that will not happen.

Official figures reveal that a total of 779 prisoners have been held at Guantanamo since the prison opened after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Of those, 689 have been released or transferred and nine have died, while 80 men are still held there without internationally recognized charges or trials.

Many detainees have conducted hunger strikes to draw attention to their deteriorating conditions inside the prison. The authorities have responded with force-feeding, which human rights groups consider

tantamount to torture.

Meanwhile, lawmakers refuse to allow the transfer of detainees to U.S. prisons or to other countries over concerns that released prisoners will engage in militant activities.

During the Obama administration most detainees have been transferred to other countries, but there is a small number of detainees who the White House says it would like to hold in detention in U.S. prisons, without civilian trials or rights to due process, ostensibly for national security reasons.

Cuba has repeatedly insisted that the U.S. return the occupied territory as part of the normalization of relations between the two countries.

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