

Activist groups call on T-Mobile to stop providing cell service to the Guantánamo Bay prison site

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Demonstrators hold a sign during a protest calling for the closure of Guantanamo in front of the White House in Washington, DC on January 11, 2022.

Washington, October 27 (RHC)-- A coalition of 22 organizations is calling on T-Mobile to end its work with the Department of Defense providing cell service to the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base and detention camp.

T-Mobile has worked with the Department of Defense more than 4,000 times. At least 11 of these contracts, according to research conducted by the coalition and shared with Insider, are for providing cell service to the Guantánamo Bay prison site. The contracts, identified by the coalition and reviewed by Insider, began in 2016 and are collectively worth less than \$700,000.

"T-Mobile is the only service provider operational in Guantanamo Bay Cuba," a Navy document from March said.

The activist groups Action Center on Race and the Economy, MPower Change, and Little Sis, the leading voices in the coalition, focus on highlighting corporate contractors for the Guantánamo Bay prison 20 years after it opened in 2002. It comes on the heels of their Big Tech Sells War campaign, which highlights tech companies supplying infrastructure in support of the War on Terror.

"T-Mobile cannot claim to be working toward anti-racism while simultaneously providing services and telecommunications infrastructure to Guantánamo, a site that is synonymous with racial profiling, torture, and unlawful detention," a letter from the coalition to T-Mobile says.

The coalition contacted Jeffrey Neal, T-Mobile's national director of federal sales, on September 23, October 5, and October 13. Ramah Kudaimi, an organizer with ACRE, said it has not received a response.

T-Mobile's Guantánamo Bay contracts are worth a meager amount compared to its other contracts worth more than \$1 million each. But the company has taken pride in its work for the prison.

The company published a press release about its work in Guantánamo in 2016. T-Mobile's CEO at the time, John Legere, said the company was "honored to be able to serve those who serve this country with the first high-speed connection."

Kudaimi told Insider that T-Mobile's work on Guantánamo doesn't align with racial-justice values that T-Mobile's current CEO, Mike Sievert, has tried to project in the past, such as announcing the company would no longer run ads on Tucker Carlson's Fox News show following Carlson's racist comments on Black Lives Matter protesters.

"You're providing services and infrastructure to a site that is synonymous with racial profiling, with torture, with unlawful detention, and in particular, around Islamophobia," Kudaimi said.

The US has held almost 800 people in the Guantánamo Bay prison, often without being charged with a crime, since it opened in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. In many cases, prisoners at the site have awaited trial for years and experienced torture, beatings, and force-feedings.

Currently, 36 people remain imprisoned at Guantánamo Bay, despite claims by President Joe Biden and former President Barack Obama that the prison would close. Seventy-five House Democrats recently urged Biden to follow through on his stated intent to close the prison.

People who eventually left the detention site have reported lingering consequences of their time at the prison, including trouble finding a job, making friends, and restarting their lives

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