

Demonstrators Rally in Washington Demanding Obama Close Guantanamo Prison



Washington, January 12 (Sputnik-RHC) – Dozens of demonstrators gathered outside of the White House in Washington, DC on Sunday to remind U.S. President Barack Obama, the U.S. Department of Justice and Congress to fulfill the president's promise to close the Guantanamo Bay prison facility in Cuba.

"We're here to remind the President Barack Obama and the people of the United States and all over the world that this is a crime... we need to continue to demand the closure of Guantanamo," Organizer and member of Witness Against Torture Christopher Knestrick told Sputnik news.

Sunday marked the 13th anniversary of the now 127 prisoners remaining at the U.S. prison facility.

Demonstrators, dressed in bright orange prison uniforms covered their faces with black hoods to show what the Guantanamo prisoners are required to wear every day. Then they made their way to the U.S. Department of Justice to "lay down one carnation for each detainee each of the men in Guantanamo," Knestrick said.

The demonstration began with speakers from faith organizations, poets, human rights organizations and activists, addressing the crowd telling them stories of the Guantanamo prisoners who they work with and why the prison should be closed.

Bill Streit, a 60-year-old US citizen and a demonstrator from Witness Against Torture, dressed in the orange prison uniform, who visited the U.S. detention facility in 2005 said that he wanted to let the Guantanamo prisoners know that as an American he supports their release.

Since November, the United States has released 28 Guantanamo detainees to countries including Afghanistan, Uruguay, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia and Kazakhstan, leaving 127 prisoners left at the detention facility, according to the Pentagon. Some have even remained at the prison for years despite having been cleared for release.

In 2009, President Obama signed an executive order to close Guantanamo Bay and described the detention facility as a "sad chapter in American history." However, the prison remains open today.

The detention facility, located in illegally occupied territory of Cuba, has been the subject of harsh criticism by human rights groups, governments and media since its establishment in 2002. Health workers, inspectors and former detainees have described the conditions at the camp as cruel and inhumane, and have reported numerous acts of torture.

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