



International Refugee
Assistance Project



The Bridge

October 16, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

The undersigned 125 organizations implore the Biden administration to **stop detaining asylum seekers at Guantánamo Bay** and to allow people interdicted at sea to seek protection in the United States. At a time when the administration is [contemplating expanding the use of Guantánamo](#) to detain Haitians who flee by sea, we urge you instead to process all asylum seekers in a manner consistent with human rights obligations and to **close the Guantánamo Migrant Operations Center**.

People who had no choice but to flee by sea to escape persecution in their home countries shared their horrifying experiences at Guantánamo in [Offshoring Human Rights: Detention of Refugees at Guantánamo Bay](#), a new report by the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP). One family, including two children, was interdicted by the U.S. Coast Guard and transferred to a dilapidated detention facility in Guantánamo Bay where they were held until IRAP threatened to file a lawsuit. The U.S. government denied them access to their attorneys and engaged in collective punishment in response to complaints about their treatment. For over a year, the U.S. government deprived the children of appropriate access to education, medical care, and mental health support, leading a physician at the Naval base to recommend their immediate release.

Of equal concern is the U.S. government's practice of returning individuals interdicted at sea back to harm in their country of origin. Despite opposition from the [United Nations](#) and [Members of Congress](#), the [U.S. Coast Guard continues to interdict](#) and [repatriate Haitians](#) to warzone-like conditions in Haiti. The U.S. government interdicted more than [11,000 people of different nationalities](#) from October 2022 to September 2023 and sent [almost 500 unaccompanied children back to Haiti](#). These policies and practices prevent asylum seekers from being able to access humanitarian protections in the United States.

The United States has a disgraceful history of using Guantánamo Bay to operate secretive prisons away from public and legal scrutiny. We demand that your administration close the Guantánamo Migrant Operations Center and process asylum seekers encountered at sea



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in a manner consistent with U.S. human rights obligations. The U.S. government cannot continue to hide its diversion and mistreatment of asylum seekers by exiling them to Guantánamo, out of reach of their families, advocates, public consciousness – and the law.

Respectfully submitted,

1. ACCESS of WNY
2. ANAR
3. Acacia Center for Justice
4. Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice
5. Afghans For A Better Tomorrow
6. Al Otro Lado
7. Alliance of Baptists
8. Alternative Chance
9. American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
10. Americans for Immigrant Justice
11. Amica Center for Immigrant Rights
12. Amnesty International USA
13. Anethum Global
14. Angry Tias and Abuelas
15. Ansara Family Fund
16. Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
17. Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
18. Black LGBTQIA+ Migrant Project (BLMP)
19. Borderlands Rescue Initiative
20. Bridges Faith Initiative
21. Carolina Migrant Network
22. Casa de Paz
23. Catholic Migration Services
24. Center for Constitutional Rights
25. Center for Engagement and Advocacy in the Americas (CEDA)
26. Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
27. Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) of California
28. Church World Service
29. Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
30. Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition
31. Communities United for Status & Protection (CUSP)
32. Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
33. DeBellis Aviv Pardini LLP



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34. Defending Rights & Dissent
35. Detention Watch Network
36. Disability Rights Advocates (DRA)
37. Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Movement
38. East Bay Sanctuary Covenant
39. Envision Freedom Fund
40. Estrella del Paso (Formerly Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services Inc)
41. Families For Freedom
42. First Friends of New Jersey & New York
43. Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project
44. Florida Immigrant Coalition
45. Former Army JTF-GTMO Chaplain
46. Franciscan Action Network
47. Freedom for Immigrants
48. Friends Committee on National Legislation
49. Gender Action
50. Global Justice Clinic, NYU School of Law
51. Haiti-Jamaica Society
52. Haitian Bridge Alliance
53. Hindus for Human Rights
54. Hispanics in Philanthropy
55. Hope Border Institute
56. Immigrant Defenders Law Center
57. Immigrant Family Defense Fund
58. Immigrant Freedom Fund
59. Immigrant Legal Resource Center
60. Immigration Equality
61. Immigration Hub
62. Immigration Institute of the Bay Area
63. Innovation Law Lab
64. Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti
65. Interfaith Action for Human Rights
66. International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
67. Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western MA
68. Justice in Motion
69. La Raza Centro Legal, San Francisco
70. La Raza Community Resource Center
71. Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center
72. LatinoJustice PRLDEF



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73. Mariposa Legal
74. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
75. Midwest Immigration Bond Fund
76. Minnesota Freedom Fund
77. Mobile Pathways
78. Muslim Advocates
79. Muslims for Just Futures
80. NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
81. National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
82. National Center for Youth Law
83. National Immigrant Justice Center
84. National Immigration Law Center
85. National Immigration Litigation Alliance
86. National Immigration Project
87. National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
88. National Lawyers Guild - Bay Area Chapter
89. National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR)
90. National Partnership for New Americans
91. Nebraska Appleseed
92. Never Again Action
93. New York Law School Asylum Clinic
94. Nicaraguan American Legal Defense and Education Fund (NALDEF)
95. Oasis Legal Services
96. Pax Christi USA
97. Presente.org
98. Project Hajra
99. Public Counsel
100. Quixote Center
101. RAICES
102. RCHP-AHC Still Waters Anti-Trafficking
103. Refugees International
104. Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
105. San Francisco Office of the Public Defender
106. Sanctuary for Families
107. Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
108. Society of the flora, fauna & friend
109. T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
110. Tea Project
111. The Advocates for Human Rights



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112. The Sikh Coalition
113. Transformations CDC
114. Tsuru for Solidarity
115. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
116. UK Guantanamo Network
117. Ujima, The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
118. UndocuBlack Network
119. Union for Reform Judaism
120. Voces Unidas RGV
121. Washington Defender Association
122. We Are All America (WAAA)
123. Witness Against Torture
124. Witness at the Border
125. Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights

CC:

Charanya Krishnaswami, Counselor, Office of the Secretary, DHS

Royce Bernstein Murray, Assistant Secretary for Border and Immigration Policy, DHS