



ACLU Calls on President to Keep Promise and Close Gitmo

A once reliable friend of the Obama administration is becoming its frequent foe. On Wednesday, the day after President Obama was reelected, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) leaned on the president to keep one of the first promises he made after being elected in 2008.

In its letter, the ACLU encouraged President Obama to shutter the infamous detention facility at Guantanamo Bay. The request was couched in congratulatory tones praising the president for his Election Night victory.



“We congratulate President Obama on his re-election. This is his opportunity to reaffirm our constitutional principles and the fundamental American values of due process, respect for the rule of law and individual freedom. It is a time to once again be a nation where we can be both safe and free,” wrote Anthony Romero, executive director of the ACLU.

President Obama issued an executive order in 2009 calling for the closing of the detention facility within one year. [In January, the prison “celebrated” 10 years](#) of operation.

[In his letter, issued as a press release](#), Romero reminded President Obama of his obligation to “respect the rule of law and individual freedom.” He wrote, “We urge President Obama to end warrantless surveillance, extra-judicial killings by drones, indefinite detention and other un-American practices that have become official government policy.”

President Obama has [\(in\)famously compiled a kill list](#) comprised of those individuals he suspects of threatening the security of the homeland. At least three of those killed by drone on the president’s order have been American citizens. One of those three was Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, a teenager who was killed by a Hellfire missile launched from a Predator drone. This summary execution was carried out without charge, without trial, and without due process.

[Abdulrahman al-Awlaki was killed](#) in October 2011, and to date the Obama administration has never informed the country of any wrongdoing by this teenager other than being related to a man (his father) who posted anti-American videos on the Internet that allegedly influenced others to commit crimes. A government-sanctioned assassination of such an individual is repugnant to all those who cherish life, liberty, and the due process of law that protects them.

Regarding Guantanamo Bay, many of those detained at the facility have been held for a decade without being informed of any charge and without having an opportunity to respond to the accusations made against them before an unbiased judge.

[Jurist.org reports](#) that President Obama isn’t the only one responsible for not shuttering Guantanamo:

According to Forum contributor David Frakt, the Obama administration is [not solely to blame](#) for Guantanamo Bay remaining open. The US Congress has, since 2009, “passed a series of increasingly stringent spending restrictions which have made it virtually impossible to transfer most detainees out of Guantanamo.” Other scholars, including Forum contributor Jonathan Hafetz,



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on November 9, 2012

have [raised concerns](#) about how the failure to close Guantanamo Bay “has helped justify the policies of arbitrary detention and torture that spurred its creation in the first place.”

The awareness of the torture being carried out by American officials at the Guantanamo Bay facility was highlighted in a report released concurrent with Obama’s election in November 2008.

The story was [reported at the time by *The New American*](#):

Last month, a consortium of human-rights groups from the University of California at Berkeley released a report entitled [Guantanamo and Its Aftermath: U.S. Detention and Interrogation Practices and Their Impact on Detainees](#) [pdf]. Its 136 pages prove in dispassionate prose allegations that Americans passionately debate: The U.S. government imprisoned mostly innocent men, without trial or criminal charges, at its prison in Guantanamo Bay, abused a great many of them, and tortured some.

Returning to its more familiar role as champion of the liberal agenda, the ACLU promotes comprehensive immigration reform and easier access to abortion.

“Closer to home, the president needs to end his administration’s discriminatory deportation policies, which foster racial profiling and do nothing to improve public safety, and remove the many dangerous abortion restrictions from the federal budget so that the right to a safe and legal abortion remains accessible to all women,” the letter reads.

As a final thought, Romero prompts the president to use his next term to “put us back on the right track.”

Photo of Camp Delta prison at Guantanamo Bay Naval base: AP Images



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