

Unfolding Humanitarian Crisis at Guantánamo

International Human Rights Body Holds Hearing

By [Center for Constitutional Rights](#)

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As Detained Men Enter Fifth Week of Hunger Strike in Peaceful Protest of 11 Years Detention, U.S. Officials Face Questions About Guantánamo for First Time Since Obama Re-Election

March 12, 2013, Washington D.C.— Today, the Center for Constitutional Rights provided expert testimony at a thematic hearing about the unfolding humanitarian crisis at Guantánamo before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), a body of the Organization of American States (OAS). The hearing took place in response to CCR's request to the Commission, filed on January 16, 2013 with co-petitioners at the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), and Reprieve. It marked the first time since President Obama's re-election that U.S. officials were confronted with questions about Guantánamo and its future in a formal public setting.

"Today's hearing at the IACHR came at a critical moment in Guantánamo's troubled history," said Omar Farah, Staff Attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights. "Our clients report that most of the men at the prison are now in the fifth week of a mass hunger strike to peacefully protest worsening prison conditions, religious provocation, and the crushing reality that after 11 years in indefinite detention, there is no end in sight to their suffering. In light of the humanitarian crisis unfolding at Guantanamo, it is indefensible that the U.S. government failed to answer the Commission's simple questions about how it plans to close the prison camp."

At the IACHR hearing, CCR and other experts testified on issues including the grave psychological impact of indefinite detention, the deaths of men at Guantánamo, the lack of access to fair trials, and illegitimate U.S. policies that restrict the closure of the prison, including the blanket ban on repatriating Yemeni men. They also requested that the Commission:

- reiterate that the United States must close down the detention center at Guantánamo without further delay,
- issue a report on the ongoing human rights violations at Guantánamo that acknowledges the physical and psychological impact of indefinite detention without charge or trial, and
- renew its request to the United States government to allow the Commission to visit the detention center, with full access to the detained men.

To read the full submission the Center for Constitutional Rights and co-petitioners filed for this hearing, see the documents listed at the bottom of [CCR's IACHR thematic hearing page](#). Also see [11 Years and Counting: Profiles of Men Detained at Guantánamo](#) to read CCR's new report on detained men, part of its submission to the IACHR. Lastly, note that CCR has also

filed two separate petitions at the IACHR. One concerns two men who died while in U.S. custody at Guantánamo, about which you can learn more on [CCR's Al-Zahrani v. Rumsfeld case page](#). The other concerns CCR client Djamel Ameziane, an Algerian man who has been cleared for release and who urgently needs to be resettled to a new and safe home where he can rebuild his life. Learn more on [CCR's Djamel Ameziane's case page](#).

The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) has led the legal battle over Guantánamo for the last 11 years – representing clients in two Supreme Court cases and organizing and coordinating hundreds of pro bono lawyers across the country to represent the men at Guantánamo, ensuring that nearly all have the option of legal representation. Among other Guantánamo cases, the Center represents the families of men who died at Guantánamo, and men who have been released and are seeking justice in international courts.

The Center for Constitutional Rights is dedicated to advancing and protecting the rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Founded in 1966 by attorneys who represented civil rights movements in the South, CCR is a non-profit legal and educational organization committed to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change.

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