

By [Witness Against Torture](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On Monday, June 14 twenty-seven will face trial stemming from arrests at the U.S. Capitol on January 21, 2010 — the date by which President Obama had promised the closure of the Guantanamo detention camp. The human rights activists will hold a press conference outside the courthouse defending their protest, condemning the Obama administration's continuation of Bush policies, and explaining their use in court of the "necessity defense."

The press conference will be held Monday, June 14 at 8:30 am near the intersection of Fifth Street NW and Indiana Avenue NW, directly across from the Moultrie Superior Courthouse (500 Indiana Ave., N.W. Washington).

On January 21, twenty-seven people dressed as Guantanamo prisoners were arrested on the steps of the Capitol holding banners reading "Broken Promises, Broken Laws, Broken Lives." Inside the Capitol Rotunda, at the location where deceased presidents lie in state, fourteen activists were arrested performing a memorial service for three men who died at Guantanamo in 2006. Initially reported as suicides, the deaths may have been — as recent evidence suggests — the result of the men being tortured to death (see Scott Horton, "Murders at Guantanamo, March 2010, Harpers).

"The continued operation of the prison camp at Guantanamo is unacceptable," Matthew W. Daloisio of Witness Against Torture. "If Guantanamo was a foreign policy liability and stain on the rule of law on day one of the Obama presidency, it surely is eighteen months later."

"The deaths at Guantanamo show how barbaric US policies have been," says Helen Schietinger, another member of WAT. "We are still waiting for accountability for those who designed and carried out torture policies under President Bush. Obama can't restore the rule of law if he doesn't enforce the law."

The human rights activists plan to mount a "necessity defense" before Judge Russell Canan. "We will be arguing that we broke the law only after exhausting all legal means of opposing a much larger crime—the indefinite detention, mistreatment, and torture of men at Guantanamo and other US prisons," says Jerica Arents of Chicago, Illinois,

another the defendants. The trial comes in the middle of Torture Awareness Month, when many groups--including Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International-- are planning activities.

The January protests were the culmination of a twelve-day fast for justice and an end to torture organized by Witness Against Torture in Washington, DC. More than 100 people participated in the fast and daily actions throughout the nation's Capital.

*Witness Against Torture formed in December 2005 when twenty-five activists walked to Guantanamo to visit the prisoners and condemn torture policies. Since then, it has engaged in public education, community outreach, and non-violent civil disobedience.*