

By Andy Worthington

It's three years since President Obama promised to close Guantánamo

Remind President Obama of his promise. [Sign the petition](#) on the White House's "We the People" website urging him to honor his promise. 25,000 signatures are needed by February 6 to secure a response, so please sign up, and please spread the word.

What happened to President Obama's bold promise?

Three years ago, on January 22, 2009, President Obama issued an executive order promising to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay within a year, but he did not move swiftly to implement his promise, and Congress then stepped in with onerous restrictions on the release of prisoners or their transfer to the U.S. mainland for any reason, even to be tried or imprisoned.

Instead of being closed, Guantánamo still holds 171 men, even though 89 of these men were [cleared for release](#) more than two years ago by the interagency Guantánamo Review Task Force, which was established by the President after taking office.

Some of these cleared men, like [the Uighurs](#) (Muslims from China's Xinjiang province), remain in Guantánamo because they cannot be safely repatriated, even though the Bush administration conceded they had been seized by mistake, and even though a District Court judge granted their habeas corpus petitions in October 2008.

Others - 28 in total - are Yemenis, whose release was approved by the Task Force but

prevented by the President after a Nigerian man, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who had been recruited in Yemen, tried and failed to blow up a plane bound for Detroit on Christmas Day 2009. Although these men had nothing to do with Mr. Abdulmutallab, their release is prevented solely on the basis of their nationality. We believe that this is wrong, and that continuing to hold these men makes a mockery of claims that the United States believes in fairness and justice.

30 other Yemenis are held in what the Task Force described as "conditional detention," a category of prisoner invented by the Task Force, and designed to prevent their release until, by some unknown mechanism, it is decided that the security situation in Yemen has improved sufficiently for them to be released.

We call on the President to release these 89 prisoners, and to bring to an end the unacceptable situation in which those cleared for release are indistinguishable from those recommended for trials or for ongoing detention, because of the unfair obstructions imposed to prevent them being freed.

Again, [please sign the petition](#), and then tell others about it. Let's make 2012 the year that we close Guantánamo.

Also, please note that the petition can be signed by anyone, not just U.S. citizens. When registering from outside the U.S., just leave the "zip code" section blank. Good luck, and thanks for the support!