

By Debra Sweet

In this country of unending wars, vast surveillance of whole populations, targeted killing, "enhanced interrogation," and secret ops. the existence of the US torture camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, has become a powerful symbol.

For the Cheneys and McCains, the prison projects American might; the ability to hold anyone there with impunity, and the threat of going to the basest methods "in a minute" a la Cheney.

For the Obamas, it's a reminder that the U.S. has ended up with nothing more in the cauldron of war on terror horror — Iraq & Afghanistan, now spreading to Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Libya — than searing hatred of them as occupiers, and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism reenforced by imperialism.



Obama declared again last night that he still wants to shut down Guantanamo. He likely will continue to move some Yemenis to third countries so that fewer of the "cleared" prisoners are there. But in the unlikely event that happens, what about the "forever" prisoners? There are some 58 men the U.S. says they won't release, but has no evidence to charge with a crime. Will they be held in U.S. military or civilian prisons without charges, a direct violation of

habeas corpus? That will be an interesting political problem for the U.S. — this freest of all societies — in the 800th anniversary year of the Magna Carta.

January 8-15, World Can't Wait sponsored panels and films on the Guantanamo prisoners in New York City, Boston, Cambridge, Springfield and Northampton, MA and Chicago: the **Close Guantanamo Now Tour**

with Andy Worthington, Ramzi Kassem, Omar Farah, Candace Gorman, Debra Sweet. We helped organize protests in Washington, Boston, Miami, Chicago, Berkeley and Honolulu.

Andy, co-ordinator of the [Stand with Shaker Aamer](#) campaign and [CloseGuantanamo.org](#), answered many questions at the events, and on interviews, based on his work since 2006 researching the lives of the prisoners. He's looking now at the government's claims that up to 25% of the prisoners have gone "back" to the battlefield, even though we know that almost none of them were ever on a battlefield taking up arms against the U.S. We look forward to Andy's research on that, and on what has happened to men released from Guantanamo, spread as they are around the globe.

[Read Andy's report on his trip to the U.S.](#)

We were very fortunate to have Ramzi, Omar, and Candace — all of whom have clients currently in Guantanamo — thoughtfully wrangle with us over the existence of the “forever” prison, and what it will take to shut it down.

