



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NORTHWEST OHIO PEACE COALITION, AMERICAN MUSLIMS FOR PALESTINE-TOLEDO CHAPTER, VETERANS FOR PEACE SAY 'FROM GUANTANAMO TO PALESTINE: SHUT DOWN UNJUST IMPRISONMENT'**

On Thursday, January 11, the Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition, American Muslims for Palestine, and Veterans for Peace will mark the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the opening of the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba with a vigil and march, beginning at 12 noon at the Michigan Street entrance to the Lucas County Courthouse in downtown Toledo. The courthouse is located between Adams and Jackson Streets.

Guantanamo Bay, known as "Gitmo," is a maximum security military prison built to hold hundreds of men captured throughout the Middle East as suspected terrorists and enemies of the U.S. following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the U.S. Gitmo quickly became infamous as an offshore torture center, where pseudo-scientific interrogation methods with painful, frightening and/or psychologically damaging features were used to extract information from prisoners about global opponents of U.S. imperialism. The techniques left grave physical and psychological damage on prisoners and produced remarkably little useful information.

From its founding in 2002, a total of 779 men were imprisoned at Gitmo. Seven hundred forty (740) were released or shipped elsewhere, 9 prisoners died there, and thirty (30) are still imprisoned there, most without ever having been given a trial and the chance to clear themselves. Evidence that has emerged since Gitmo was opened reveals that the Bush Administration knew that most of the prisoners were innocent or had little useful intelligence but who could not be

released because of potential political embarrassment by the bungling U.S. intelligence establishment.

And it's those truths – that most Gitmo prisoners were innocent and the torture techniques were used to punish and dehumanize mostly Arab prisoners after 9/11 – that bothers Waila Kanan of American Muslims for Palestine. “The same hateful retribution is playing out in the Israeli jails filled with Palestinian prisoners since the October 7, 2023 attacks by Hamas. Eighty-five percent of the 5000 taken into custody in the past 90 days are jailed for being Palestinian, or for being bystanders to Israeli atrocities or at worst, for defending their families and themselves from Israeli settler mobs and undisciplined Israeli military. I also want to stress that arbitrary arrests of innocent Palestinians by the Israeli military in the Occupied Territories did not begin on October 7, 2023. For instance, since 2000, the Israeli military has detained some 13,000 Palestinian children, almost all boys between the ages of 12 and 17. Everywhere a Palestinian child turns, there is the Israeli military to exert some kind of control over their life.”

“There's an old saying that ‘military justice is to justice as military music is to music,’” said Mike Ferner, national director of Veterans For Peace. “Torturing people to the point that they'll tell you anything to make the torture stop, and jailing people without charges, only get you worthless confessions. If Joe Biden had an ounce of courage, he'd close Guantanamo tomorrow.”

“We demand the permanent closing of Gitmo and freedom or rehabilitation of the prisoners,” said Susan Kuehn, a convenor of the Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition. “And we demand freedom for the nearly 8,000 Palestinians jailed by Israel. Even if some are guilty of crimes, if they were in civilian prisons their sentences would have been up long ago. The truth of Israeli jailing of Palestinians is that raw, uncontrolled punishment is the point, not the accidental result. It is more genocide. And it has to stop.”