

That's It. Eight Years Later, Obama White House Admits Gitmo Won't Close

 [commondreams.org/news/2017/01/18/thats-it-eight-years-later-obama-white-house-admits-gitmo-wont-close](https://www.commondreams.org/news/2017/01/18/thats-it-eight-years-later-obama-white-house-admits-gitmo-wont-close)

1/18/2017

The Obama administration made clear Tuesday that it would not be fulfilling its promise to close the notorious [Guantánamo Bay prison](#).

Speaking to reporters, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest [said](#), "I don't anticipate that we will succeed in that goal of closing the prison, but it's not for a lack of trying."

He put the blame on "the politics that members of Congress in both parties, frankly, played with this issue," and said that its remaining open is "not a good use of taxpayer dollars, and it certainly isn't the most effective way to protect our country."

The comments come on the heels of the [release](#) of 10 detainees to Oman, leaving 45 men to continue their indefinite detention at the facility now beginning its 16th year of operation.

They also come nearly eight years after Barack Obama began his presidency with [an executive order](#) to shut down the facility, and just days before President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Trump, for his part, [tweeted](#) earlier this month, "There should be no further releases from Gitmo," and on the campaign trail last year [promised](#) to "load it up with some bad dudes."

That prompted members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC) last week to [urge](#) Obama to deprive Trump of "the tools to reinstate torture," and Margaret Huang, executive director of Amnesty International USA to [warn](#): "We are incredibly concerned about human rights in the upcoming Trump administration, and that includes the president-elect's promise to expand Guantánamo's population. We cannot risk letting this institution of injustice become permanent."

The blame for the prison remaining open, said Shane Kadidal, managing attorney of the Center for Constitutional Rights' (CCR) [Guantanamo project](#), lies not with members of Congress, as Earnest argued. Rather, Obama's "failure to lead decisively and act with conviction on what had been an issue with bipartisan consensus was what led Republicans to attack him as weak on it, and in turn led to Democrats in Congress fleeing with them," he said in a statement to *Common Dreams*.

On top of that, he continued, "Earnest says that the requirement of 30-day advance notice to Congress meant that it was clear that Guantánamo could not close as of several weeks ago. But just last Friday [CCR] asked the administration in a court filing to agree to the entry of a court order that would have exempted two cleared detainees from the 30-day requirement, and let these cleared men be sent home this week. And rather than agree, Obama's Justice Department fought that order tooth and nail, apparently less interested in closing Guantánamo than in protecting presidential powers it will pass on to President Trump."

[Witness Against Torture](#), an organization that has engaged in numerous demonstrations to highlight the abuses at the facility, decried the continuation of the "giant crime scene."

"The continued existence of the detention facility at Guantanamo is a devastating policy failure for President Obama and stain on his legacy," stated Jeremy Varon with Witness Against Torture. "The prison never should have existed in the first place, and it should not exist now. It is a place of torture, a giant crime scene with which the United States has never fully reckoned. In Gitmo, America has institutionalized the idea of indefinite detention without charge or

trial. Holding exclusively Muslim men, the prison is also the fiercest edge of an Islamophobia that has only gathered steam."

"And Guantanamo lies at the ready for Trump or even some future president to re-populate with U.S. captives," he continued. "Sadly, it remains a part of America's security apparatus, laws, and very soul."

**This post has been updated to include comments from CCR's Kadidal.*