

# Congressional Progressive Caucus

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

October 30, 2014

The Honorable Barack H. Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear Mr. President,

We write to request that you release to Members of Congress the video recordings of Guantánamo Bay detention facility detainees who are being force-fed while on hunger-strike.

U.S. officials first acknowledged the existence of such video recordings in April, 2014, during the habeas proceedings of Abu Wa'el Dhiab, a Syrian detainee cleared for release. Thirty two video recordings of Mr. Dhiab's forcible cell extractions and force-feedings have been produced to his legal team as part of his habeas proceedings. Four additional video recordings have been produced for Imad Abdullah Hassan, a Yemeni detainee also cleared for release. The recordings are currently classified at the "Secret" level, although no national security or other justification has been provided for this classification.

Although Mr. Dhiab's legal representatives are barred from revealing the contents of the recordings, they have broadly described them as "extremely disturbing" and allege that they are evidence of unlawful force-feedings taking place at Guantánamo Bay. In his court filings, Mr. Dhiab asserts that the force-feeding techniques are applied arbitrarily and constitute abuse that potentially rises to the level of torture. According to recent reports, at least one medical provider at Guantánamo is refusing to participate in force-feeding because of his opposition to the techniques.<sup>1</sup>

A number of prominent non-governmental organizations have asserted that JTF-GTMO's force-feeding techniques violate medical ethics and acceptable medical care standards, and constitute human rights abuses. The organizations also raise concerns about the secrecy surrounding the techniques.<sup>2</sup>

The facts pertaining to these practices at Guantanamo should be available to Members of Congress. The judge for this case, Judge Gladys Kessler, has issued an order to release the

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<sup>1</sup> Danica Coto, Navy Nurse Refuses to Force-Feed Gitmo Detainees, Associated Press, 15 July 2014, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/16/guantanamo-nurse-refuses-force-feed-prisoners>

<sup>2</sup> Letter to the Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, 10 April 2014, available at <http://www.constitutionproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/140410-Coalition-Letter-GTMO-Hunger-Strikes-2.pdf>

videos. Ongoing secrecy is untenable. U.S. personnel at Guantánamo should not carry out policies that are contrary to American laws or values. We urge you to allow Members of Congress to view the video recordings of Mr. Dhiab's and Mr. Hassan's force-feedings and to take any action necessary to correct these practices.

We will continue to support your efforts to close the Guantánamo Bay detention facility. Until that occurs, we would like to work with the administration to stop any abusive or illegal practices that take place within its walls. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

  
Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress