



## ***Committee on International Justice and Peace***

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December 9, 2014

The Honorable Clifford M. Sloan  
Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Special Envoy Sloan,

On behalf of the Committee for International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I would like to commend you and your office for your work in finding a just and responsible means for expediting the recent transfers of cleared detainees out of Guantanamo. I realize that the process of arranging for such transfers is a delicate one, involving negotiations with the receiving countries as you seek to assure that security and human rights concerns are respected.

For many years, we have urged the closing of Guantanamo because it has become a symbol of violations of basic human rights as detainees have been abused and held in indefinite detention without trial. As you are aware, the Catholic Church has long registered its absolute opposition to torture, calling it an “intrinsic evil.” We were gratified when an executive order banning torture was issued in 2009 and will continue to work to encourage bipartisan support in the new Congress for legislation to turn the executive order banning torture into law. Pope Francis, in remarks on October 23, 2014 to the delegates of the International Association of Penal Law, spoke against the practice of detaining “un-sentenced prisoners” and of keeping prisoners in isolation for extended periods of time, calling them abuses that are “attacks against the dignity and integrity of the human person.”

We support efforts to expedite the transfer of detainees out of Guantanamo since reducing the number of detainees held in Guantanamo and eventually closing that facility would represent a major step in allowing the United States to regain its moral standing as a defender of human rights. At the same time, such transfers strengthen national security as they bolster cooperation with other countries on programs to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Please be assured that we will continue to support efforts to release detainees that have been cleared and greatly appreciate the cooperation of those countries who have agreed to accept transferred detainees.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of Las Cruces  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace