

# Guantanamo Bay: 22 years of indefinite detention and eroded human rights

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2024 marks the 22nd anniversary of the opening of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, a facility shrouded in controversy and synonymous with indefinite detention and alleged human rights abuses.

Established in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Guantanamo has held hundreds of individuals suspected of terrorism, many without charge or

trial, and under conditions widely condemned by international [human rights](#) organizations.

Over 779 individuals have passed through Guantanamo's gates, with 30 still detained today, some for over two decades without ever facing trial. This indefinite detention raises serious concerns about due process and the fundamental right to a fair trial.

Reports of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment have plagued Guantanamo since its inception. Investigations by independent bodies have substantiated these claims, raising questions about the camp's compliance with international human rights law.

In February 2023, Professor Sondra Crosby of Boston University School of Public Health [testified in court to denounce the "rectal feeding" used by the CIA](#) in Guantanamo Bay, which the group Physicians for Human Rights has condemned as a form of torture and as "[sexual assault](#) masquerading as medical treatment."

In a new viewpoint [published in JAMA](#), Crosby and colleague Leonard Glantz call for the identification of and potential action against the medical officers who authorized or participated in this forced feeding, arguing that they violated ethical and legal standards by enabling this abusive, discredited practice.

The creation of a legal framework outside the U.S. justice system and the use of military commissions have been criticized for undermining established legal principles and setting a dangerous precedent for the erosion of human rights protections.

Crosby, Glantz, and colleague George Annas have written about the controversy for more than a decade, including an article in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) that questioned the involvement of medical

personnel in the forced feeding of detainees.

Guantanamo Bay stands as a stark reminder of the dangers of sacrificing human rights in the name of security. As we mark this anniversary, we must not forget the individuals who have been held in this legal limbo for years, nor can we turn a blind eye to the erosion of legal principles that Guantanamo represents. It is time to close this chapter in U.S. history and recommit ourselves to upholding the values of justice and human dignity.

**More information:** Sondra S. Crosby et al, "Rectal Feeding"—Unethical Medical Officer Participation at CIA Secret Interrogation Facilities, *JAMA* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2023.25866](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.25866)

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