

Wolfgang Schüssel
Federal Chancellor of Austria
Austrian Presidency of the European Union

10 January 2006
Ref: B_516

Dear Chancellor Schüssel,

Subject: Closure of Guantánamo

On 11 January 2002 the first detainees were transferred to the US naval base of Guantánamo Bay. Now, four years later, hundreds of people of various nationalities continue to be held there without charge or trial in what Amnesty International has previously called a legal black hole.

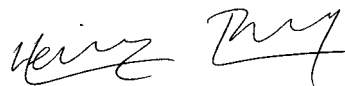
New testimony received recently by Amnesty International including from one of Guantánamo's first detainees, Bahraini national Jumah al-Dossari (see document attached), contains a first-hand account of physical and psychological torture and ill-treatment by US personnel. As highlighted in other reports, Guantánamo Bay is only part of a wider pattern of abuses committed in the so-called "war on terror", with torture and other ill-treatment apparently a commonplace occurrence. There have been several disclosures of CIA secret detention facilities elsewhere, and of secret transfers and "disappearances". Recent reports have suggested that such activities may implicate European countries including EU Member States.

Amnesty International believes that it is now time for the EU to take a stand on Guantánamo as it did in 2004 following the disclosure of torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. We therefore call on the Austrian Presidency of the EU to follow the steps of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and to request the US Government to close the illegal detention centre.

Yours sincerely,



Dick Oosting
Director
Amnesty International EU Office



Heinz Patzelt
Director
Amnesty International Austrian section

CC to: Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner for External relation and European neighbourhood policy; Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP

Enclosed: "USA - Days of adverse hardship in US detention camps - Testimony of Guantánamo detainee Jumah al-Dossari", AI Index: AMR 51/107/2005