

The Biggest Human Rights Abuses in Cuba Happen at Guantanamo Bay

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Leading up to U.S. President Obama's visit to Cuba the private media in the United States made a lot of noise about Cuba's human rights record.

Conservative and liberal pundits alike called for Obama to take the Cuban revolutionary government to task.

Human rights did, of course, come up but both Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro did not deliberate much on the issue, choosing instead to focus on the new relationship between their countries.

The most memorable moment on the question of human rights came not from Obama but rather when a CNN reporter Jim Acosta asked President Raul Castro about "political prisoners" in Cuba.

"Give me the list of political prisoners right now and I'll release them. Give me the names if we have those political prisoners they will be released before tonight ends," said Raul Castro in response.

When it comes to the question of human rights, however, it is important to begin by understanding that the United States and Cuba have vastly different conceptions of what constitutes human rights.

This difference was made clear by Raul Castro himself.

"We believe that civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights are indivisible, interdependent and universal. We cannot conceive a government does not defend and guarantee the right to health, education, social security, food and development, equal pay and the rights of children," said President Raul Castro.

But even from the U.S. perspective, the human rights abuses occurring on Cuban soil are not being committed by the Cuban government but rather the U.S. government at their illegal detention center in Guantanamo Bay.

Previously, the Cuban leader said he was not going to accept double standards on the issue of human rights, however the CNN reporter failed to ask about human rights violations that have been documented by activists at the U.S.-run military prison in Cuba.

Last month, Obama presented a long-awaited plan to close the controversial prison the

issue along with the lifting of more than 50 years of an economic blockade on the island nation is one of the main conditions that Raul Castro has set to fully restore relations with Washington.

The U.S. detention camp of Guantanamo entered its fifteenth year of operation this year, according to activists since it opened on January 11, 2002, 9 prisoners have died in the facility.

Prisoners at the infamous U.S.-run prison have asked authorities to halt the inhumane practice of force-feeding hunger strikers.

During his 2008 reelection campaign, Obama promised to close the prison citing the damage it causes to the U.S. reputation abroad. However, the president backed away from implementing his promise later on due to stiff opposition by the greater Republican majority in Congress.

Washington says the prisoners at the facility are terror suspects, but has not pressed charges against most of them in any court. Many detainees have gone on hunger strikes to protest their conditions at the prison, set up after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

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