

Continental meeting calls for closure of illegal U.S. torture camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

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'Occupied Cuban territory': the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay.

May 11 - At the invitation of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples

(ICAP) and the World Peace Council (WPC), the VII International Seminar for Peace and Abolition of Foreign Military Bases was held. Delegates from anti-imperialist, peace and solidarity movements gathered since Wednesday to debate current issues of peace work within the framework of the WPC's "Regional Continental Meeting of the Americas and the Caribbean." The event was attended by delegates from 23 countries and 70 Cubans.

After a welcome by the governor of Guantánamo Province, Emilio Matos Mosqueda, the president of ICAP, Fernando González Llort, opened the seminar with the words: "The planet needs peace now more than ever, and to achieve it we need unity." He thanked those present for their solidarity with Cuba. Silvio Platero, leader of the Cuban peace movement, added that the meeting was taking place "under difficult conditions" because the United States was stepping up its aggression against Cuba and other Latin American countries. This also includes tightening economic sanctions under the blockade that has lasted for more than 60 years.

Return demanded

The seminar is taking place "in a complex context characterized by the increasing aggressiveness and interference of U.S. imperialism and NATO, media propaganda wars, military conflicts and tensions in the world," said González. The Cuban people therefore demand compliance with the United Nations Charter by "returning occupied territories to their rightful owners." The area of the U.S. Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, which has been occupied by the U.S. since 1903, is "the oldest imperialist outpost in the world," which Washington uses to supply the U.S. fleet with logistical supplies and has repeatedly been "the starting point for invasions of Latin American countries and the whole world."

Under the banner "Guantánamo - World Capital for the Restoration of Peace," WPC President Maria do Socorro Gomes condemned the "unlawful appropriation of Cuban territory" and the atrocities committed in the Guantanamo torture camp. "This deeply

affects all of us who defend human rights and peace," she said. In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, too, NATO played the decisive role "as the spark of the war." The president called for "breaking the siege of the media that distorts the truth." The WPC is "against the permanent establishment of military bases in sovereign countries." They serve "the exercise of domination."

With around 800 U.S. military bases in 100 countries around the world, U.S. policy was at the center of the debates. As a representative from the U.S., Gloria Verdieu spoke for the Socialist Unity Party and the group Women In Struggle and recalled the developments since the last international seminar in 2019. Cuba has achieved a lot despite the coronavirus pandemic. The implementation of its immunization program has not only benefited the Cuban people, but also those most in need of vaccines and medical supplies around the world through the dispatch of doctors and medicines.

"But what did the U.S. rulers do during this time?" asked Verdieu. They failed in their attempts to contain the coronavirus "because they are relying on the market instead of pursuing a democratic and common approach with the international community," said the socialist. "Too little and too late" have they helped to fight the virus, especially on the African continent.

Danger of a world war

Now the U.S. government is exacerbating the crisis by misappropriating another \$33 billion needed to fight the spread of the virus "to finance a proxy war in Ukraine, including arming Nazi regiments there." This only exacerbates "NATO's hunger for oil profits and regime change in Russia and China," according to Verdieu. Since the unilateral dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, NATO has expanded from 17 to 30 member states. The 1999 bombing war against Yugoslavia claimed thousands of lives.

“The recent U.S.-NATO proxy war, in which the media acts as a propaganda force,” Verdieu said, not only carries a serious risk of triggering World War III, but “exacerbates the national and international crises of global warming, critical health care shortages and hunger - crises that affect children the most.”

At the conclusion of the seminar on Thursday, delegates visited Caimanera, a small fishing village that borders the illegal U.S. naval base, to get an idea of the area cordoned-off by the U.S. military. There, in the presence of the villagers, the final communiqué was read. The goal is to “strengthen the unity of the global campaign against U.S. and NATO foreign military bases” through “massive national actions coordinated with other anti-war and environmental organizations” to “denounce the possession and growth of military bases in our region and around the world.”

Background: Guantanamo Bay

In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, the U.S. conquered areas of the old colonial power Spain and occupied Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. Although Cuba was formally granted independence in the “Peace of Paris,” Washington took the island under its “military administration” and, through the Platt Amendment of 1901, contractually secured a right of intervention “in the event of internal unrest” and the territorial claim of a port for the U.S. Navy. In 1903, the U.S. and Cuba signed a 99-year contract for the 117.6 square kilometer area in Guantanamo Bay as a “coal loading station” for their steam-powered war fleet at a lease price of \$2,000 a year. Washington’s condition was “complete jurisdiction and control” over the area.

Source: [junge Welt](https://www.junge-welt.de/en/2022/05/12/continental-meeting-calls-for-closure-of-illegal-u-s-torture-camp-in-guantanamo-bay-cuba/)

