

# Amnesty mark ten years of Guantánamo

✘ The University of Edinburgh Amnesty International group held a dramatic awareness raising action to mark the ten year anniversary of Guantánamo Bay.

In order to draw attention to the prison camp's legal and human rights issues, in particular regarding its' uncharged prisoners, the Edinburgh Students' Amnesty Group acted out illegal arrests inside Potterow last week.

This event was part of Amnesty International's on-going campaign to encourage the camp's closure. Much of the campaign is specifically centred on securing the freedom of Guantánamo Bay inmate Shaker Aamer.

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Aamer is a permanent British resident, is married to a British national and has four children with her.

Despite being in prison for ten years, Aamer has not yet received a trial or been officially charged of a crime, according to Amnesty.

During his time in imprisonment the UK government has repeatedly called for his release and return to his family.

However, negotiations between the British and US governments ended in 2007 and have not yet been renewed.

The Amnesty Group's action aimed to communicate his, and his fellow inmates plight to the public.

The event started with members sitting anonymously in the Potterow central area.

Without any announcement, they were then violently apprehended by other members, acting as guards.

The arrestees were shouted at and forced to change into Guantánamo Bay's trademark orange jumpsuits.

They were then marched around and placed in stress positions.

Once the scenario had been acted out petitioners appeared, collecting signatures for the petition to secure the release of Amer.

The action has been particularly successful because of its shocking nature.

Said one observer, student Julie Ferguson:- "It was scary, for the first few minutes we had no idea what was happening."

She also commented:- "I knew about Guantánamo Bay before, but I hadn't really thought about it."

The Chair of the Edinburgh University Amnesty International Society, Laura Shepard stated the importance of the protest, and the need to close Guantánamo Bay.

"It is appalling that it is ten years on and we are still calling on the US government to close Guantánamo."

She went on:- "Kidnapping and imprisoning people indefinitely without charge or trial, denying them their freedom and human rights, gratuitously denigrating and abusing them physically and mentally – all of this needs to end and it needs to end now."

Speaking about the experience of acting out the part of a Guantanamo Bay guard, the Edinburgh University Amnesty International Society Fundraising Organiser, Nadia Mehdi, said:-"It felt fairly scary to be shouting at people like that as it is definitely against my nature to be that aggressive."

She continued:- "It brought me one step closer to experiencing what life must be like every day for those still stuck in Guantánamo Bay having to undergo that sort of dehumanising humiliation."

The event was very successful in raising public awareness and support for the anti- Guantánamo Bay movement.

With the campaign still on going, and still gathering publicity, the Amnesty International Group remains hopeful for the future.