

NCC joins in brief on prison detainees: Legal rights for Guantánamo prisoners

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The National Council of Churches has joined a “friend of the court” brief at the U.S. Supreme Court supporting the legal rights of suspected terrorist detainees in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The NCC, in a brief filed along with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Union for Reform Judaism and others, said the 660 foreign nationals at the camp must be granted access to lawyers and redress in the courts.

The Bush administration’s policy to deny lawyers to the detainees because of national security concerns was upheld last year by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit; however, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed in November to review the case.

The legal brief said denying legal recourse to the detainees violates the U.S. Constitution, the international Geneva conventions and other international laws. It also said U.S. allies such as Britain and Israel extend legal protection to prisoners of war and other detainees. If the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee their legal rights, it would presumably allow “the summary execution or torture of prisoners detained” in Guantánamo, the brief said.

Said Antonios Kireopoulos, an NCC associate general secretary: “What we are saying is that there is no land without law. The law of the United States requires due process, and so does international law.” *-Religion News Service*