

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK SECTION
AMERICAS WORLD REGION**

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Colin Powell
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington DC 20520, USA



May 14, 2003

Dear Mr Powell:

I welcome the news that 13 of the detainees held at the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay were transferred for release on May 7 2003 but I am concerned that the Department of Defense has declined to give the names or countries of origin of those released. In view of the international concern about these detainees and in particular that a number of juveniles are among those held, I urge that more information about those released be given. I hope to learn that the children are among them.

Reports that children, some as young as 13, were discovered to be at Guantánamo Bay earlier this year are extremely disquieting. As in the case of the 16-year old Canadian national, Omar Khadr, who was already known to be in custody at Guantánamo, these children appear to have been transferred from the Bagram Air Base. While it is good news that the younger children are at least not being held in isolation cells, it is a matter of serious concern that anyone under 18, the definition of a child under international standards, should be held in indefinite detention at a remote location like Guantánamo Bay.

International law requires that children should be incarcerated only as a last resort and then for the minimum time possible. The fact that detainees have been held without access to lawyers, their families or the courts, cannot be in the best interests of the children. In the case of Omar Khadr, it took 6 months for the Canadian government to gain access to him and my understanding is that he remains with access to legal counsel or his family.

If any juvenile detainees are not among those who have been released from detention, I urge that they are given immediate access to lawyers and their families and that their treatment should be in accordance with the special needs of children. They should be promptly charged and tried within a reasonable time and if it is proved that any of them have served as soldiers their treatment be in accord with the rehabilitation of child soldiers which the USA has an international obligation to observe.

Yours sincerely

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