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The Honorable Mark T. Esper
Secretary of Defense
US Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Esper:

As a member of Amnesty International USA, I am writing to you to seek information about the Department of Defense's (DoD's) efforts to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic among detainees in the prison facility at the United States Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (Guantanamo), as well as efforts to protect servicemembers responsible for detention operations and all other military personnel at the base. Given current U.S. law's restrictions on the transfer of detainees off the base and the lack of comprehensive medical infrastructure on the premises, I am concerned that COVID-19 on the base combined with an at-risk detainee population could cause a significant outbreak endangering the health and safety of all.

On March 24, 2020 the Department of the Navy announced the first confirmed positive case of COVID-19 at Guantanamo Bay. The Navy also announced efforts to mitigate coronavirus outbreaks and has been announcing further mitigation efforts on social media. However, it remains unclear whether the Department's control efforts will be enough to protect the health of the 40 detainees at the Guantanamo prison facility.

Some of these 40 aging detainees, five of whom have been recommended for transfer and many of whom have been in indefinite detention for over 17 years, could require specialized treatment for issues such as heart attack, stroke, kidney failure or cancer. This population of chronically ill detainees bear the physical and mental wounds of torture; their health conditions are worsened by their prolonged indefinite detention. They are therefore at great risk of serious medical complications from COVID-19. In addition, current US law strictly prohibits their transfer off the base to other US territory, even temporary transfers for urgent medical reasons.

Amnesty International believes that all Guantanamo Bay detainees should either be fairly tried in civilian courts or released. However, in the meantime I ask you to provide me with information regarding the following:

- What procedures are in place to respond to a confirmed or presumed positive case of COVID-19?
- Are independent medical experts currently available to all Guantanamo Bay detainees?
- With informed consent, can their counsel and medical experts obtain their full medical records?
- What is the status of DoD's appointment of a Chief Medical Officer at Guantanamo Bay as required by the FY 2020 NDAA?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

(5/2020)