

STORIES BY CATHERINE SCHURZ
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LONDON, UK

Former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher died on April 8 at age 87. Thatcher was the first female prime minister of the U.K., a Conservative Party member and an avid supporter of the free market and individual liberty. Nicknamed the "Iron Lady," she reigned over Britain for 11 years, although often met with great opposition. "I am not a consensus politician," Thatcher once said. "I am a conviction politician."

MYANMAR (FORMERLY BURMA)

For the first time in 50 years, the Myanmar government has allowed news publications under private ownership to print daily papers. The country's strict censorship of media permitted only a government-run paper and outlawed information dissemination without review of the content prior to release. Four private publications have already begun producing print issues, but journalists are unclear about the extent to which they can report.

CYPRESS, TEXAS, USA

On Tuesday, 14 students were wounded on the campus of Lone Star Community College in Cypress, Texas. The 21-year-old male assailant has been arrested — but not yet charged — for stabbing fellow students in the face, neck and heads with sharp objects. One 19-year-old girl was found with a box cutter blade protruding from her cheek and four students were air-lifted to nearby treatment. Lone Star College also endured a school shooting two months ago, wounding three.

NAIROBI, KENYA

On April 9, tens of thousands gathered for the inauguration of Uhuru Kenyatta, who was sworn in as Kenya's new president for the next five years. Currently, the 51-year-old father of three has charges against him for crimes against humanity and will appear before the International Criminal Court for trial this year.

US may be violating human rights, according to activists

GUANTANAMO BAY REMAINS OPEN, TORTURE OF INMATES CONTINUES

BY BRYAN DOOLEY
SENIOR WRITER

Despite being cleared for release from Guantanamo Bay in 2007 and again in 2009, British citizen Shaker Aamer remains incarcerated. Britain has repeatedly called for his extradition to the U.K., but Aamer continues to sit in a cell.

"Like any other detainee, Shaker Aamer must either be charged and fairly tried or released," said Zeke Johnson, director of Amnesty International USA's Security with Human Rights Campaign, in an email interview.

"In Aamer's case, he should be released to the U.K. since he has been cleared to leave prison, and the U.K. government has stated it would welcome him back to freedom with his wife and children."

According to The Huffington Post, Aamer has been held for 11 years without charges or a trial. He was arrested in Afghanistan by Afghan forces on Nov. 24, 2001. Aamer is unique among the 166 current detainees because he has been cleared several times and is married to and father of British nationals. Under British law, this entitles Aamer to lawful residency in the U.K.

Aamer claims that U.S. officials have tortured him on numerous occasions, and he is known for actively protesting against the mistreatment of detainees.

Aamer's case has refocused attention to the detainees of Guantanamo Bay and raised concerns about what some have named human rights violations, occurring daily.

Detainees have claimed various types of torture are used on them at Guantanamo. The Justice Campaign's website lists 11 methods of torture including sleep and sensory deprivation, solitary confinement, humiliation and sexual assault.

"U.S. involvement in Guantanamo dates back to 1902," wrote Time magazine. "The Platt Amendment gave the U.S. the right to lease a 45 square mile area at Guantanamo Bay. The lease specifies that the area is for use as coaling or naval stations only and for no other purpose."

But in 1991, the base played a crucial role as a sanctuary for Haitian refugees and became more widely recognized a military prison in 2002 during the Bush administration.

While campaigning for office in 2007, Obama pledged to close Guantanamo, but members of Congress prevented him from fulfilling his promise.

"Obama would have (closed Guantanamo)," said Robert Duncan, assistant visiting professor of political science. "But, Republicans in Congress would not agree to it. They do not want terrorists (tried and jailed) in our country."

Duncan explained why a place like Guantanamo might be a wise decision.

"It is good to have a place to put people who wish to harm the U.S. who are not U.S. citizens," said Duncan. "They are not prisoners of war, they are terrorists."

Johnson disagrees.

"They do have rights — all people do — and the U.S. government cannot strip those rights away in the name of national security," Johnson said. "The U.S. government regularly criticizes the human rights records of other governments, including for indefinite detention, unfair trials and impunity for torture. The U.S. government must

practice the human rights it preaches."

If activists in international agencies are correct, the U.S. is not meeting its human rights obligations.

"If American values include 'the right of trial by jury,' 'habeas corpus' and 'innocent until proven guilty,' then I don't see Guantanamo Bay meeting the test," said Max Carter, director of the Friend's Center and campus ministry coordinator, "not to mention valuing a person's inherent right to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'"

"Indefinite detention without charge at Guantanamo and Bagram and unfair military commission trials are a damaging blight on the human rights record of the U.S.," stated the U.N. Human Rights Council, condemning the handling of Guantanamo prisoners. "We urge the U.S. government to bring an end to these illegal practices by either prosecuting these detainees in civilian courts or releasing them."

The process of the U.S. government prosecuting terrorists has worked in previous cases, such as the "Blind Sheik" (Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman) in which Abdel-Rahman was convicted of seditious conspiracy and sentenced to life in prison in connection with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. He is serving his sentence at Butner Federal Medical Center in North Carolina.

The debate over Guantanamo will likely continue for many years before definitive solutions are implemented.

Zeke Johnson has a message for those who are passionate about the topic.

"People can get involved and take action to uphold human rights. They can join Amnesty International's Security with Human Rights Campaign by emailing security@aiusa.org or going to www.facebook.com/swhrcampaign."