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Visiting Guantanamo, PA human rights leaders call for closing U.S. facility



Isabel Santos and Mehmet Sevki Kulkuloglu, Chair and Vice-Chair of the OSCE PA's human rights committee, conducted a visit to the Guantanamo Bay detention facility this week and today called on OSCE countries to proactively assist the United States in efforts to close it as soon as possible, including through the resettlement of detainees.

"The continued detention of well over 100 people at Guantanamo year after year remains a dark spot on the United States' reputation in the spheres of human rights and rule of law. While progress has been made in relocating detainees from Guantanamo, much remains to be done. We applaud the commitment of the U.S. government to close the facility, but the United States cannot achieve this alone. It requires the support of all OSCE countries," said Santos and Kulkuloglu in a joint statement.

The MPs also expressed concern that in applying traditional laws of war the U.S. government has asserted that detainees can be held until the end of hostilities, which does not have a clear-cut end point. The application of these laws is therefore incompatible with the modern fight against terrorism.

Santos and Kulkuloglu traveled to Guantanamo to tour the facilities and to meet with officials on 27 January. Ahead of their travel to the detention facility, they viewed part of



a military commission of Abd al Hadi al-Iraqi by closed circuit television from the U.S. Army's Fort Meade outside of Washington. The delegation also met with senior officials from the Department of State and the Department of Defense in Washington ahead of their visit and with personnel of the Joint Task Force in Guantanamo to discuss the status and treatment of remaining detainees. The delegation was not authorized to speak to inmates of the facility.

In a meeting with Senator Benjamin Cardin, member of the United States Helsinki Commission and of the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE PA, Santos and Kulkuloglu stressed their willingness to work with members of Congress from the United States and parliamentarians from across the OSCE to support efforts to close the detention camp.

Other meetings were held with representatives of U.S.-based NGOs Human Rights Watch and the Heritage Foundation. The delegation's visit was facilitated by the U.S. government and was staffed by OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares and Director of Elections Andreas Baker from the International Secretariat.

The members of the delegation expect to prepare a report outlining the conclusions of their visit in the coming weeks, to be presented at the Winter Meeting in Vienna, 19 February.

Tidei and Bekkevold to lead OSCE election observers in Tajikistan



Marietta Tidei

Marietta Tidei, Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment, and Geir Bekkevold, Head of the Norwegian Delegation to the OSCE PA, will provide leadership to the OSCE election observation mission to Tajikistan for the 1 March parliamentary elections. OSCE

Chairperson-in-Office Ivica Dacic has appointed Tidei, a member of the Italian Parliament, as Special Co-ordinator, and OSCE PA President Ilkka Kanerva has appointed Bekkevold to serve as Head of the OSCE PA Delegation.

Elected to her national parliament in 2013, Tidei has participated in nine election observation missions, including

the presidential election in Tajikistan in November 2013. This will be Bekkevold's seventh election observation mission. Most recently, he participated in the election observation mission to the United States in November 2014.

OSCE PA Director of Elections Andreas Baker, Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk, and Programme Officers Maria Chepurina and Loic Poulain are staffing the mission, which is working in close co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR and the European Parliament.

The registration deadline for OSCE PA observers is 6 February.



Geir Bekkevold