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Ireland Wants US to Shut Guantanamo Bay Camp

Agence France Presse
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DUBLIN, Feb 23, 2006 (AFP) - Irish Foreign Minister Dermot Ahern on Thursday called on the United States to close down its detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, echoing a recent UN Human Rights Commission report condemning the camp.

"The issue of this facility in the long term, medium and short term indeed is that it should be closed," Ahern told RTE state radio.

Ahern had told parliament he endorsed the view of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan that the 500 or so inmates at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba should either be charged or released, and that Washington should close the facility.

"This would be highly desirable on human rights grounds," he told lawmakers.

"Closure of Guantanamo Bay would, in addition, serve to reassure all of America's friends, including Ireland, who recognise the importance of the role of the United States as a global leader in combating terrorism and promoting democracy."

Ahern said Ireland knew from its own history as a result of internment without charge in Northern Ireland that it did not work.

On Tuesday, he told the 46-member Council of Europe that an investigation has revealed no evidence that US Central Intelligence Agency had transported terrorist suspects through the country's airports.

In a written response to the body, whose brief includes protecting human rights, Ahern reiterated Dublin's "very deep concern" over claims that secret CIA prisons existed to interrogate suspects.

He also stated its "complete opposition to the practice of so-called extraordinary rendition", the transfer of suspects to countries outside the legal process.

Ahern said Ireland was one of only three countries that had received "absolute categorical assurances" from the US authorities that no terrorist suspects had been moved through Irish airports.