

The following text may be printed, copy/pasted, or downloaded and emailed.

New York Protesters Seek Guantanamo Base Shutdown

Reuters

May 1, 2006

UNITED NATIONS, May 1 (Reuters) - Protesters seeking a shutdown of the Guantanamo Bay U.S. prison camp marched to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations on Monday and held an interfaith service in its entryway after building owners asked New York police not to arrest them.

Nearly half the 135 demonstrators, many of them members of the clergy, had hoped to be arrested as an act of civil disobedience to protest what they say is torture at the U.S. camp.

When police announced they would not be jailed, protest leaders boasted of a symbolic victory, saying the police told them that U.S. diplomats had heard their message.

"Perhaps their hearts were turned in a way," said the Rev. Osagyefo Sekou, national coordinator of the group Clergy and Laity Concerned about Iraq.

Several of the protesters dressed in orange jumpsuits and wore black hoods over their heads as they knelt in front of the privately owned building in prayer after their march from U.N. headquarters a half-mile (0.8 km) away.

Organizers said they were following up on the recommendations of five U.N. human rights experts who in February urged the United States to shut down Guantanamo Bay after concluding the forced feeding of prisoners and some interrogation techniques amounted to torture.

The U.N. team rejected an invitation to tour the Guantanamo facility, where more than 500 people have been held since 2002 following the Sept. 11 attacks, after the U.S. military said they would not be allowed to interview prisoners.