

Sheehan to join protest march outside Guantánamo

Cindy Sheehan, who protested the Iraq War by camping outside President Bush's ranch, will head to Cuba with a group of activists to protest at the gates of Guantánamo.

The Miami Herald
Jan. 05, 2007

HAVANA - American activist Cindy Sheehan will join an international delegation traveling to Cuba next week to protest treatment of terrorism suspects five years after the first prisoners arrived at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, organizers said Thursday.

Zohra Zewawi, the mother of a terror suspect still held at the base, will also be in the group protesting outside the U.S.-run prison in southeastern Cuba, peace activist Medea Benjamin said in a release.

"I am traveling all the way from Dubai because my heart is overflowing with grief over the abuse and ongoing detention of my son," Zewawi said in a statement distributed by Benjamin's Global Exchange group of California, a lead organizer of the trip with the U.S. group CODEPINK: Women for Peace.

Zewawi said her son, British citizen Omar Deghayes, had been tortured and blinded in one eye since he was imprisoned in September 2002 and still had not been charged or tried.

Sheehan, 49, of Vacaville, Calif., became an anti-war activist known as the "peace mom" after losing her 24-year-old son Casey in Iraq in April 2004. She has drawn international attention after camping outside President Bush's Texas ranch to protest the war in Iraq, and has been arrested many times for trespassing.

Also planning to travel to Cuba is Asif Iqbal, a former Guantánamo detainee who was freed after no charges were filed. A retired U.S. Army colonel and a constitutional rights attorney will also be in the group.

The 12-member delegation is to arrive Tuesday in Havana, and later travel to the Cuban side of the U.S. base.

Next Thursday, the fifth anniversary of the Jan. 11, 2002 arrival of the first prisoners to Guantánamo, the group plans to march to the main gate separating the base from Cuban territory to protest the treatment of prisoners inside.

In December 2005, American Christians with the Witness Against Torture activist group held a protest march outside the base.

The U.S. military still holds about 395 men on suspicion of links to al Qaeda or the Taliban, including about 85 who have been cleared to be released or transferred to other countries. The military says it wants to charge 60 to 80 detainees and bring them to trial.

Additional protests calling for closure of the Guantánamo prison are planned in U.S. cities, including Washington, New York, and outside the U.S. Southern Command in Miami.