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Editorials / Op-Ed

The 3 Suicides at Guantánamo

To The Editor:

As a federal court-appointed monitor of health care in prisons for more than 20 years, I have reviewed the medical records of prisoners who killed themselves in prisons and jails throughout the United States.

Prisoners kill themselves when they are hopeless, when they have no contact with their families, and when faced with a terrifying future.

Prisoners at Guantánamo are subject to torture and to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment intended to drive men to madness, which leads to suicide.

For the sake of humanity, for the sake of the prisoners at Guantánamo and to divert our country from its course of infamy, the prison at Guantánamo must be closed immediately.

ROBERT L. COHEN, M.D.

New York, June 11, 2006

The writer, the medical director of Rikers Island Health Services from 1982 to 1985, is a federal court-appointed monitor of medical care for prisoners in Michigan, New York, and Connecticut.