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US judges criticize Guantanamo prison genital searches

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The US government has gone too far by searching the genital areas of Guantanamo detainees, who want to meet with their lawyers, a three-judge panel said on Monday.

"That's rather provocative and offensive, isn't it? How do you justify such a provocative search?" Judge Thomas Griffith asked a government lawyer at a hearing at the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Griffith added that the government has a "special obligation" to ensure that detainees' access to counsel is preserved.

In July, US District Court Judge Royce Lamberth ordered the government to end the searches as they pertain to detainees' easy access to counsel.

Lamberth concluded that the motivation for the searches was not to enhance security, as the government claims, but to deter the detainees' access to attorneys. Lawyers for some detainees say their clients are foregoing the meetings rather than subjecting themselves to searches they consider religiously and culturally abhorrent.

Some of the prisoners have decided not to meet their lawyers because genital searches were required beforehand.

Despite various calls for a halt to the humiliating and degrading treatment of inmates at Guantanamo, such acts continue.

Another US appeals court is reviewing whether it is necessary to force-feed hunger-striking prisoners, an act which some people describe as torture.

Inmates at Guantanamo have launched a new round of hunger strikes, according to Shaker Aamer, a British inmate at the United States' notorious facility in Cuba.

Aamer revealed that 29 detainees, including himself, are now on hunger strike. Nineteen hunger strikers are being force-fed, he added.

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