

A service-connected disabled veteran is being inhumanely detained and being denied access to appropriate treatment for wounds incurred during the early days in our war in Afghanistan.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have produced an increased understanding of trauma and its effects on our returning veterans, their social networks, and the interactions between them. To many veterans who returned in the early years from the War on Terror, this knowledge simply existed but the appropriate treatments were not available. In May 2014, then, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki resigned after taking responsibility for what he described to be “a systemic, totally unacceptable, lack of integrity.”

An opinion that is becoming more prominent within the veteran community is that our veteran status – a salient aspect of our identity – is nothing more than a bargaining chip for some people in power; and it is our opinion that the mantra ‘Support the Troops’ applies conditionally.

When the 1% of the population who has volunteered to put themselves in harm’s way for this country return, they are often met with unemployment, a host of reintegration difficulties, lack of support, and lack of purpose. Lack of proper care, if any care is given at all, allows for the symptoms of trauma to manifest into behaviors deemed criminal in our society such as alcohol and drug use and abuse. Often, these behaviors and coping mechanisms are present before a service-member’s enlistment ends and continues well after.

Like many other veterans who had returned before our systems began to pay attention, Mr. Perez was suffering from untreated traumas incurred during the early days in Afghanistan (2002-2003) with the U.S. Army Special Forces. Had Mr. Perez been afforded appropriate support after his discharge from the service, today he would be a successful and contributing member of society instead of a Patriot facing exile. Now, that more appropriate services are available to Mr. Perez, our government is denying access through inhumane detention awaiting deportation. Mr. Perez is being denied his right to heal from wounds that make him a Service-Connected Disabled Veteran.

It is well known among those of us who work in assisting veterans with attaining their benefits that involvement with the justice system is positive evidence for some claims to the Department of Veteran Affairs. When the same behavior that could benefit one veteran’s recovery becomes grounds for exiling another, there is no equity.

We are asking that President Trump show his support for our returning veterans by signing an executive order halting the deportation of veterans and to repatriate those already deported.

Green Card Veterans