

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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Public Facing Advocacy Writing

u.s. capitol.JPG

(AP Photo)

Rev. Richard Killmer

Voting for the grandchildren By Rev. Richard Killmer

Like most grandparents, we love our grandchildren and think about them often. My wife and I are lucky to have eight of them, and the ninth is on the way.

Earlier this year, a non-governmental, bipartisan task force completed a two-year investigation into the U.S. government's treatment of 9/11 detainees, concluding indisputably that the United States government engaged in illegal torture.

The [Task Force on Detainee Treatment of The Constitution Project](#) released its 500-page report this spring. The detailed nature of the findings and the high level, bipartisan makeup of the task force ensures that this report is an important source of credible information about the reality of U.S.-sponsored torture and hopefully, a catalyst for meaningful action.

Drawing on public records and the task force members' own interviews with a number of eye-witnesses and involved persons, the report describes in detail numerous examples of torture, including cases where individuals were tortured to death.

The report documents how the United States used interrogation techniques on detainees that it had previously condemned as illegal when used by others, including waterboarding, stress positions, extended sleep deprivation, sexual humiliation and prolonged solitary confinement.

So how can our country make sure that our grandchildren and all of the grandchildren in the United States do not grow up in a nation that tortures human beings? How can all of us guarantee that U.S.-sponsored torture will never happen again?

The Senate Intelligence Committee will likely vote this month on whether to release its 6,000-page report on CIA torture. The Senate Intelligence Committee has conducted its own investigation into torture during which it reviewed more than six million pages of documents, including classified files. The committee approved its report in a bipartisan vote on December 13, 2012.

For the past year, the Senate Intelligence Committee's report has remained classified. It needs to be released to the public so that the American people can learn the whole truth about torture. Torture is shocking, counterproductive, and, ultimately harmful to our nation's long-term security.

The task force report proves that our government authorized and encouraged the use of torture. Now, the Senate Intelligence Committee should release its report as well, so that the American public will be fully equipped to ensure that torture is never used again.

Torture is illegal without exception. In 1994, the United States signed the UN Convention Against Torture, which binds our country to the following stipulation: "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture brings diverse faith groups together in a universal reminder that torture is immoral. Torture runs contrary to the teachings of all religions and dishonors all faiths. It is an egregious violation of the dignity and worth of every human being both the torturer and the tortured. The Golden Rule makes it clear: Torture should not be perpetrated on others because we would not want others to torture us.

In our U.S. democracy, the government ought to be accountable to the American people. I agree with the task force report: "Task Force members believe that having as thorough as possible an understanding of what occurred during this period of serious threat and a willingness to acknowledge any shortcomings strengthens the nation and equips us to better cope with the next crisis and ones after that. Moving on without such a reckoning weakens our ability to claim our places as an exemplary practitioner of the rule of law." This is why it is critical that the Senate Intelligence Committee vote this month to release its report on CIA torture.

Our nation is at a turning point. The Senate Intelligence Committee has the power to determine if my grandchildren and all of the

grandchildren of this nation will live in a country that does not torture. Tell your senators to urge their colleagues on the committee to vote in favor of the grandchildren.

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Guest columns may be submitted to community engagement specialist Zane McMillin at zmcmilli@mlive.com.

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