

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

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It's time that the American public understands the decisions made in their name in the post-9/11 era.

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YARMOUTH Late last year, the Senate Intelligence Committee adopted a more than 6,000-page report on the CIA's use of torture.

The report is the result of the committee's three-year investigation into the CIA's post-9/11 interrogation program and is based on information contained in several million pages of documents detailing interrogations of detainees in CIA custody.

Sen. Olympia Snowe, who is deeply respected in Maine and across the country, retired from the Senate in December after 33 years of service in Congress. Before her retirement, she voted as a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee to approve the report.

She was the only Republican to do so.

Today, both of Maine's senators have a critical role to play in determining whether or not the American public will learn the truth about the history of CIA torture. Both Republican Susan Collins and independent Angus King are members of the Intelligence Committee and could vote to release the report publicly.

The release of this report has taken on special significance.

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About the same time as the Senate was approving its report, Zero Dark Thirty, an Academy Award-nominated film, opened in theaters nationwide.

It is the most publicized film recounting the story of the killing of Osama bin Laden.

The result is that millions of people left theaters or will watch the DVD believing they saw a historically accurate account of events.

The film, however, inaccurately suggests that the use of torture by U.S. authorities led directly to the killing of bin Laden, implying that it worked, and was therefore justifiable.

Not only is this a misleading message to send to the American public, it is dangerous because it hides two realities.

Torture is illegal, without exception. In 1994, the United States signed the U.N. 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.

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Torture is immoral. It 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.

Though Zero Dark Thirty is fiction, the report from the Senate Intelligence Committee contains the facts.

The report is said to show that interrogations using torture endanger U.S. national security by inspiring opposition to the United States.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture is working vigorously for the release of the report for this reason. The American people have the right to know the facts about the CIA torture program not only to understand that Zero Dark Thirty is fictional, but more importantly, to enable the American people to advocate for the creation of safeguards that will help prevent torture from ever happening again.

If the results of the Intelligence Committee investigation into U.S. torture are not made public, future policymakers will be handicapped in their efforts to make wise and moral decisions about interrogation policies.

Sunlight is the best disinfectant. Releasing the results of the report will help ensure that our government does not engage in torture again.

This issue is too critical to allow a film to have the final word. On behalf of the more than 300 congregations and religious organizations that comprise the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, I call on the Senate Intelligence Committee to release its report without delay. Our prayer is that Maine Sens. King and Collins will represent Maines respect for human rights by voting to support the release of the report.

The Rev. Richard Killmer of Yarmouth is a Presbyterian minister and the executive director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.

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