

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<https://bangordailynews.com/2013/05/05/opinion/tell-collins-and-king-release-the-report-to-america-on-torture/>

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During an extraordinary week that began with the Patriots Day bombing at the Boston Marathon, people faced extraordinary choices. We all admire those bystanders who ran toward the mayhem to help strangers and those first responders and law enforcement officers who performed their duties so well under immense pressure. Such people demonstrate that human beings are always capable of doing the right thing, making good moral choices, even in the face of fear, confusion and unknown threat. For that reason, we call them heroes.

Ever since the 9/11 attacks, America, too, has faced extraordinary choices. How we respond to terrorist attacks will determine our own moral character and how others respond to us. The United States is founded upon a world-changing set of ideas about democracy, the worth and dignity of every person, and inalienable rights. Even in the face of fear and confusion, even when under attack, we can choose as a nation to follow our own best principles, to do the right thing. A nation founded on ideas what might even be called heroic ideas can do no less if it is to survive in the long run.

The United States has long stood, legally and morally, against the use of torture. Now, the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee has completed a three-year investigation into U.S. policies and practices regarding torture in the years following the 9/11 attacks. Former Maine Sen. Olympia Snowe, in one of her last acts in office, voted in December for the adoption of the report. It was an extraordinary choice. She was the only Republican on the committee to do so.

Now, our current senators, Susan Collins, a Republican, and Angus King, an independent, both of whom serve on the committee, have a decision to make about whether or not to support the reports release to the public.

Our senators will face the choice of whether to trust the American people with the truth about our own recent history. Knowing the truth puts us on the road to making better choices in the future. The report is more than 6,000 pages long and is based on a review of more than a million documents. It is expected to show that the U.S. use of torture on suspects in the war on terror was ineffective and in fact endangered American interests by inspiring opposition.

The report has taken on special significance recently. Millions of Americans who watched the Oscar-nominated film Zero Dark Thirty were left with the impression that torture was an effective weapon in the hunt for Osama bin Laden. It was not.

This issue is too important to allow a fictional film to write the historical record. Policymakers and American citizens continue to face choices regarding the interrogation of terror suspects. We need accurate information about the past to chart the right course for the future.

Torture is illegal, without exception. In 1994, the United States signed the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which states: 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.

Torture is immoral. Every major world religion recognizes this. Torture degrades human life, both of the victim and the torturer. It degrades the moral character of the society that tolerates its use. For these reasons, I join the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, representing more than 300 congregations and religious organizations nationwide, in [calling for the public release of the Senate Intelligence Committee report](#).

If we hide from the facts, we risk making bad public policy and bad moral choices based on a warped mythology about torture that has taken hold in many quarters in the wake of the fear caused by terrorism.

But fear and confusion are no basis for making the right choice. The people who ran toward the danger in Boston to help others knew this. There is a higher moral ground on which individuals and nations can stand and face the world even at the worst moments. I urge Collins and King to make the courageous choice, the moral choice for truth: Vote to release the Senate report.

The Rev. Jill Saxby of Cape Elizabeth is a board member of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.