

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/blog/healing-and-human-rights/truth-matters-survivors>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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Many movies bear the phrase "Based on a True Story," but few movies have roots in truths as important to the soul of America and fraught with cover-ups and lies as *The Report* starring Adam Driver as Dan Jones and Annette Bening as Senator Dianne Feinstein. The film recounts the six-year struggle led by Senator Feinstein and driven daily by Jones and fellow intelligence committee staffers Evan Gottesman, Chad Tanner, and Alissa Starzako to bring to light the CIA's use of illegal torture techniques in the fever for information following the 9/11 attacks. The viewer will see the impossible lengths to which this group went, overcoming attempt after attempt to discredit the investigation and block release of any of the committee's findings, to ensure the world knew the truth a truth I believe very much needs to be told.

In the end, Senator Feinstein succeeded in making public a 525-page executive summary of the committee's 6,700 page study into the CIA's so-called enhanced interrogation program. The full study has become known as the Torture Report, and for good reason. The Report's executive summary makes painfully clear that the CIA's methods—waterboarding, stress positions, simulated burials and other vicious tactics—were torture under the sugar-coated name of enhanced interrogation. It also exposed the CIA's repeated misrepresentations, both inside and outside of government, of torture's success. And it is a powerful reminder of a point that the movie ably demonstrates: nothing, not even the events of 9/11, can legalize torture. Enhanced interrogation was, always has been, and always will be illegal. The CIA knew this, and so did the lawyers (among others). But both took great pains from destroying video evidence to giving new meaning to the term legal gymnastics to hide this truth.

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The truth matters. CVT's clients know this better than anyone. The truth restores justice and the truth heals. Take torture survivor [Hamid](#) for example. Hamid fled Iraq after his family was harassed. In Jordan, he cloaked his pain and avoided making friends. He thought nobody would believe him. Afflicted with self-doubt, he was afraid to speak up and [say it](#), say the word torture, until he met two of my CVT colleagues who convinced him to seek help for his trauma. At CVT Jordan, Hamid was able to unburden himself of his fear and break his silence. Telling his story to therapists gave him the courage to come forward and share it with others. It is important that the world know the [truth about torture](#). Hamid and many others who have sought CVT's assistance believe this. They feel encouraged when Hollywood shines its powerful light on stories kept in the dark for too long.

As tremendous an accomplishment as releasing the executive summary was, the full 6,700-page Torture Report remains classified, essentially inaccessible even to members of the executive branch, and at risk of disappearing forever. As Americans, we demand to know the whole, terrible truth about what crimes were committed in our name, and how. The story told in *The Report* film helps move this truth into the light. It is not easy to watch, because it is honest about the brutality the CIA inflicted, but what it shows is important to watch and to acknowledge. We risk a return to such practices if we don't break the silence that the torture programs operators (many of whom still hold influential positions in the government and elsewhere) impose with obfuscation empowered by secrecy. With knowledge of this truth, we must call for far stronger transparency, reform and accountability. At the very least, the U.S. must release the Torture Report. We must confront the realities of torture and the truth of the U.S. wrongdoing. And the truth, as Hamid says, will set you free.

We **heal victims** of torture through unique services and professional care worldwide.

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We **advocate** for the protection & care of torture survivors and an end to torture.

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