

# Physicians for Human Rights

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

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### Public Facing Advocacy Writing

For Immediate Release

[Physicians for Human Rights](#) (PHR) welcomed rulings by the European Court of Human Rights affirming Lithuanias and Romanias complicity in the CIAs illegal torture program. The May 31 judgments ruled that the countries violated multiple human rights obligations by knowingly hosting secret black site prisons for the CIA where two detainees were brutally tortured.

This is a significant victory for accountability, but it only underscores the United States own failed record, given that it enacted the CIA torture program in the first place, said [Homer Venters](#), PHRs director of programs.

Rather than pursue meaningful accountability, the United States has promoted those responsible, including CIA Director Gina Haspel, who oversaw torture and helped destroy evidence. This ruling in Europe reinforces the absolute nature of the ban on torture and the continued importance of transparency and accountability for this criminal program. Countries everywhere must reject involvement in secret detention and torture, ensuring that they do not facilitate human rights violations on their own soil or elsewhere, Venters added.

The men at the center of the rulings, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a Saudi citizen of Yemeni descent, and Abu Zubaydah, a stateless person of Palestinian descent, were two of the CIAs first detainees and have been held in Guantanamo Bay prison since 2006. The men were subjected to a range of torture practices in CIA custody, including waterboarding, confinement in small boxes, painful stress positions, prolonged sleep deprivation, and blunt force trauma. In addition, al-Nashiri was subjected to rectal feeding, a procedure with no medical justification that constitutes sexual assault. Romania was ordered to pay \$118,000 in damages to al-Nashiri and Lithuania was ordered to pay \$152,000 to Abu Zubaydah.

[Sondra Crosby, MD](#), a PHR medical consultant who is one of the few health professionals to have evaluated al-Nashiri, said torture no matter where it takes place must be eliminated, and those who are complicit need to be exposed.

Regardless of where torture takes place, Mr. al-Nashiri deserves damages for the injury and long-term damage inflicted upon him after years of abuse, Crosby said. Those who were involved and those who enabled it should be brought to justice.

PHRs senior anti-torture fellow, [Sarah Dougherty](#), warned that continued secrecy and cover-up of the CIA torture program highlighted the illegitimacy of indefinite detention at Guantanamo as well as the military commission proceedings.

The United States abuse of detainees and efforts to conceal this unlawful program continue to inflict profound harm, not only on victims but also on the pursuit of justice and the rule of law. Former CIA detainees remain at Guantanamo, some uncharged and others being prosecuted by the same government that once tortured them. The military commissions effectively serve to cover up torture and silence victims, in procedures designed to avoid any measure of accountability, due process, or justice, Dougherty said.

The Courts judgments are the second set of rulings centered on al-Nashiri and Abu Zubaydah. In 2015, Poland was accused of having turned a blind eye to a black site on its soil where CIA torture of both men took place. In past years, Macedonia and Italy were found to be complicit in CIA maltreatment for their involvement in the abduction of two other detainees. These countries are among a long list of nations across Europe which are suspected of having been involved in one way or another in CIA actions, violating their obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.

As Europe takes the lead in condemning countries across its continent that participated in torture, PHR calls on the United States to follow suit and finally release all information about the torture programs which it implemented after 9/11, and to ensure meaningful investigations and prosecutions of those who designed, implemented, and ordered torture and ill-treatment.

*Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is a New York-based advocacy organization that uses science and medicine to prevent mass atrocities and severe human rights violations. [Learn more here.](#)*

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