

Human Rights Watch

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

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2001/11/19/torture-not-option>

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Human Rights Watch today issued a detailed rejection of the suggestion made by some commentators that torture or the involuntary administration of "truth serums" should be permitted against September 11 detainees who are suspected terrorists or who may have information about them.

As this statement explains, the prohibition against torture is firmly embedded in customary international law, international treaties ratified by the United States, and U.S. law. The prohibition against torture is absolute and applies even during times of armed conflict or when national security is threatened. The United States may not use torture as a means to obtain information from detainees, nor may it send detainees to another country to be questioned by security forces who use torture. The mistreatment of detainees forbidden by international human rights law includes the use of truth serums - which, in any event, like torture, frequently yield unreliable information.

Other issues discussed in the statement include: why efforts to limit torture to the "ticking bomb scenario" invariably fail, and why the granting of "use immunity" to overcome violations of the right against self-incrimination does not avoid the unconditional prohibition of torture and other mistreatment.

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