

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<https://www.mysanantonio.com/default/article/Release-Senate-panel-s-torture-report-4830832.php>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

As the world ponders the response to prevent the further use of chemical weapons by the armed forces and government of Syria, the people of the United States should not let this current crisis and debate distract us from our own accountability for unconscionable, immoral and counterproductive acts that have been committed by agents of the American government in the recent past. I am speaking, of course, of acts of torture committed against detainees suspected of terrorism.

Torture refers to illegal and immoral practices long condemned and banned by responsible members of the world community of nations. In 1994, the United States signed the [U.N. Convention](#) Against Torture, which binds our country to the following commitment: 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. The Social Principles of the [United Methodist Church](#) state, in part, The mistreatment or torture of persons by governments for any purpose violates Christian teaching and must be condemned and/or opposed by Christians and churches wherever it occurs. Most religious traditions stand in solidarity on this.

Under orders from officials at the highest levels of government, acts of torture have been committed during the past decade in the name of the American people in dark and hidden locations in places including Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay and in secret CIA prisons. Meanwhile, the American government has a legal and moral responsibility to investigate all acts of torture and to make public its findings. So far, however, the very comprehensive investigation undertaken by the [Senate Intelligence Committee](#), approved in December of last year, has remained hidden.

In the spring, the [New York Times](#) published an in-depth piece affirming the findings released at that time by the nongovernmental, bipartisan 11-member Task Force on Detainee Treatment of the Constitution Project. The group concluded there is no justification for these practices that damaged the standing of our nation, reduced our capacity to convey moral censure when necessary and potentially increased the danger to U.S. military personnel taken captive.

But the Constitution Project committee was only able to access information available to the public, as well as engage in interviews of its own. In contrast, the Senate Intelligence Committee's 6,000-page report on torture, based on classified CIA records, has not been released to the public. It is critical that the Senate share the truth with the American people.

Careful research proves that the United States engaged in the practice of torture. Some government officials have argued that harsh treatment let's just call it what it was, torture was necessary to extract important, even life-saving information that otherwise would not have been obtainable. Fictionalized accounts of history, such as the recent film Zero Dark Thirty, have made claims for the efficacy of torture, but members of the Senate Intelligence Committee have asserted that no firm or persuasive evidence has ever been produced that the use of torture produced significant information of value. In fact, the Constitution Project's task force found that there is substantial evidence that much of the information adduced from torture was not useful or reliable. If there is any evidence whatsoever of useful information from these abhorrent and immoral means, that evidence could only be shown through the release of as much of the Senate Intelligence Committee's recently adopted report as possible.

The American government must remain accountable to the American people, and the American people must have the tools to ensure the government that represents us adheres to our nation's founding principles. In the recent past, our government captured and held detainees not known to have any connection to terrorism and mistreated detainees in capriciously cruel ways. Our political leaders deliberately decided to set aside both legality and morality. If we are ever again, going to send members of our armed forces to risk their lives in perilous places, they must at least be given moral leadership from our military and intelligence leadership. Let us do all in our power to assure that the United States does not perpetuate policies that cause more harm than good in the world. We must know the truth and act upon it for change.