

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/toward-ensuring-an-end-to_b_3093581

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Co-founder of "Shoulder to Shoulder: Standing with American Muslims; Upholding American Values

A non-governmental, bipartisan task force recently completed a two-year investigation into the U.S. government's treatment of 9/11 detainees, concluding indisputably that the United States government engaged in illegal torture.

The [Task Force on Detainee Treatment](#) of The Constitution Project released its [500-page report](#) today, [summarized by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture](#). The detailed nature of the findings and the high-level, bi-partisan make-up of the task force guarantees that this report is an important source of credible information about the reality of U.S.-sponsored torture and hopefully, a catalyst for ensuring that U.S.-sponsored torture never happens again.

The co-chairs of the task force were Asa Hutchinson, who served as Under Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security during the George W. Bush administration and is a former Republican member of Congress from Arkansas, and James Jones, former Democratic member of Congress from Oklahoma and former ambassador to Mexico. Drawing on public records and the task force members' own interviews with a number of eye witnesses and involved persons, the task force's report describes in detail numerous examples of torture, including several cases where individuals were literally tortured to death.

The [report documents](#) how the United States used interrogation techniques on detainees that it had previously condemned as illegal when used by others, including waterboarding, stress positions, extended sleep deprivation, sexual humiliation and prolonged solitary confinement.

The report also shows how certain government lawyers manipulated the law in order to claim that torture is legal, when in reality, it is against U.S. law. [As stated in the report](#), the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice "repeatedly gave erroneous legal sanction" to torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. It also describes the admirable attempts made by individuals in both our armed forces and civilian agencies to stand up for U.S. law and American morality, and it shows how our political leaders and their handpicked lawyers found ways around them.

Torture was authorized by political leaders at the highest levels. [As described in the Statement of the Task Force](#), "The events examined in this report are unprecedented in U.S. history. In the course of the nation's many previous conflicts, there is little doubt that some U.S. personnel committed brutal acts against captives. But there is no evidence there had ever before been the kind of considered and detailed discussions that occurred after September 11, directly involving a president and his top advisers, on the wisdom, propriety and legality of inflicting pain and torment on some detainees in our custody."

While very comprehensive, the task force report is not the final word on torture. The Senate Intelligence Committee has conducted its own investigation into torture during which it reviewed over six million pages of documents. The report on the Intelligence Committee's investigation is over 6,000 pages long.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture continues to [encourage the release of the Senate Intelligence Committee report](#) for this reason. The American people have the right to know the facts about the CIA torture program in order to not only better understand the true story instead of being misled through fictional accounts conveyed in films such as the Academy Award nominated "Zero Dark Thirty" and claims by those who ordered and approved the torture that it is justifiable, but more importantly, to advocate that safeguards be put in place to prevent torture from ever happening again.

As The Constitution Project's [report states](#), "the United States has violated its international legal obligations in its practice of the enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention of terror suspects in secret prisons abroad." The United States ratified the Convention Against Torture in 1994, which has the force of domestic law, prohibiting the use of torture without exception.

The fundamental reason that all faith groups oppose torture is because it is immoral. It runs contrary to the teachings of all religions and dishonors all faiths. It is an egregious violation of the dignity and worth of every human being - both the torturer and the tortured. Torture should never be perpetrated on others because we would not want others to torture us.

The religious community is grateful to The Constitution Project for its comprehensive report. It has broadened and deepened our understanding of horrendous realities that occurred in the post-9/11 era. To complete the picture, though, we also need the report from the Senate Intelligence Committee report. I call on Senator Dianne Feinstein and the Intelligence Committee to release its report as soon as possible. The United States government should never again engage in torture as policy.

Co-founder of "Shoulder to Shoulder: Standing with American Muslims; Upholding American Values

Do you have information you want to share with HuffPost? [Heres how.](#)