

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<https://www.startribune.com/congressional-report-on-torture-ought-to-be-released/227144371/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Indisputably, the U.S. government engaged in torture. So says a much-publicized report that came out earlier this year, after two years of research and analysis. That report was produced by the Task Force on Detainee Treatment, a bipartisan panel of independent experts, sponsored by the Constitution Project. It provides a comprehensive portrayal of U.S.-sponsored torture of post-9/11 detainees, but it doesn't tell the full story.

At the same time members of the task force were conducting interviews with high-level Bush administration officials and reviewing public documents, the Senate Intelligence Committee was conducting its own investigation. Its extensive, 6,000-page report is critical in understanding the full story of torturous interrogation methods because it was based in part on information contained in classified documents that task force members were not privy to, but it remains classified.

The public deserves to know the truth. The committee is expected to vote on whether to release the report this fall. Without the full truth, accessible to all, how can we expect to never go back to such a terrible time, such a shameful era?

Torture is illegal without exception. In 1944, the United States signed the U.N. Convention Against Torture, which binds our country to the following stipulation: 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.

Torture runs contrary to all religions and dishonors all faiths. It is an egregious violation of the dignity and worth of every human being both that of the torturer and the tortured. As a clergyman, I follow a faith that teaches me the importance of treating all people decently. Our government should follow that precept as well.

I join people of faith from hundreds of diverse religious and faith-based groups who have come together through the National Religious Campaign Against Torture to call on the Senate Intelligence Committee to publicly release its torture report.

The Rev. Dr. James A. Siefkes is a retired executive of the former American Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He started the Congressional Social Concerns Program in the ALC and directed the Mission Discovery Program in the ELCA. He lives in Minneapolis.

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