

Human Rights Watch

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

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/08/dispatches-torture-no-longer-four-letter-word>

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Is some sense of sanity finally slipping into the torture debate in the US? Yesterday, after years of criticism for failing to call it by its name, the *New York Times* [finally decided](#) it would use the word torture to describe when US interrogators use pain to get detainees to talk. This follows President Obama's admission last week that the US [tortured people](#) as part of the CIA's post 9/11 detention and interrogation program.

When the torture debate last flared after the release of *Zero Dark Thirty*, a movie about the hunt for Osama bin Laden, a slew of CIA supporters flooded media space with [arguments](#) about how so-called enhanced interrogation techniques a euphemism for torture - were both humane and effective. These claims were [patently false](#). Torture, as [experts](#) will tell you, is not only illegal and immoral, it discourages detainees from cooperating and is likely to produce false information. Nevertheless, former CIA officials were able to advance the [false narrative](#) because much of the information that could have been used to counter it had either been [destroyed by the CIA](#) or remained classified.

But today, as the Senate Intelligence Committee is on the verge of releasing a summary of a report said to be [hugely damning](#) of the [CIA's torture program](#) and that [contradicts the CIA's version of events](#), something seems to have shifted. Though CIA director John Brennan was reported to have been planning a [major PR offensive](#) against the report's findings, it has been somewhat thwarted by revelations confirmed by the CIA inspector general that his agency spied on Senate staff working to put the report together. A sheepish Brennan then [apologized](#) to Senate Intelligence Chairman Senator Dianne Feinstein last week for having previously asserted that the CIA [wouldn't do that](#).

Though Republican Senator John McCain has always been an outspoken critic of the CIA's use of torture, it's not every day that senior lawmakers come out and lambast fellow party members for their views, even for things they feel strongly about. But that's exactly what happened this week when Senators Lindsay Graham and McCain held a [press conference](#) to explain why they opposed their Republican colleagues who had assembled a minority view of the Senate CIA torture report - said to hew closely to the CIA's line.

Though Feinstein is now in a [tooth and nail](#) battle with the CIA and the White House over their proposed redactions to her committee's report, let's hope these developments are signs Feinstein will ultimately win that fight, the truth will finally come out, and that as the torture debate rears its ugly head once again, the forces of reason will finally prevail.

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