

Witness Against Torture

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

<https://witnessagainsttorture.com/2016/07/15/platform-planks-torture-abolition-and-accountability/>

Policy Issue Resources

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Torture Abolition and Accountability[\[1\]](#)

Close the Guantanamo Prison

Ensure Accountability for Torture[\[3\]](#)

Strengthen Anti-Torture Provisions[\[4\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) Torture is always and in every sense wrong. It is a violation of human rights; a breach of domestic laws and international conventions; a sin to all faiths; a moral outrage; a profound abuse of the body, the psyche and the soul; and an enduring trauma that can destroy individuals, families, and whole communities.

The Peoples Convention calls for the total abolition of torture throughout the world. We demand, in particular, that the United States fully repudiate torture, which became a systematic state practice following September 11, 2001. We sharply denounce the pro-torture candidacy of Republican nominee Donald Trump. Trumps call to bring back plainly illegal torture techniques like waterboarding should alone disqualify him from consideration for the presidency. However, both Republican and Democratic administrations and politicians have been complicit in torture policies over the last 15 years. All lawmakers and candidates have an obligation to relegate torture to the US past.

[\[2\]](#) President Bush asserted, and President Obama formally claimed by Executive Order, the right to detain captives indefinitely without charge or trial. This is illegal and wrong.

[\[3\]](#) Torture policies were devised or condoned by our highest elected officials and their staffs, including the President and Vice President, and leading cabinet heads, notably the Secretary of Defense. Torture was carried out by US intelligence officials, civilian contractors, and uniformed US military. It was sometimes assisted by professionals in the fields of medicine and psychology. (The American Psychiatric Association has since taken a position prohibiting its members from participating in these) And yet almost no one whether they concocted, facilitated, or executed torture policies has ever been held to legal account for their treatment of detainees. Shortly after becoming Attorney General in 2009, Eric Holder announced that the DoJ would not pursue criminal investigations of US intelligence and military personnel operating under the aegis of since-discredited DoJ memos that essentially authorized torture. This was an unconscionable whitewash of criminal activity, terrible mistake, as it both effectively immunized torture and accepted the power of the Executive to unilaterally rewrite without accountability for torture, the rule of law and the US justice system stand shattered. The law, moreover, is removed as a deterrent to current and future torturers.

The Peoples Convention seeks meaningful legal and other forms of accountability for US torture. We are motivated not by a desire for punishment but rather the desire for justice for survivors of torture victims and assurance that the United States will never again torture anyone in its custody/protection.

[\[4\]](#) As indicated, US and international law already prohibits torture and the cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of detainees. Nonetheless, existing laws can be strengthened.