

Witness Against Torture

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

<https://witnessagainsttorture.com/2020/12/21/torture-victims-their-advocates-oppose-morell-haines-for-national-security-positions-in-the-biden-administration/>

Campaign and Advocacy

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Torture Victims & Their Advocates Oppose Morell & Haines for National Security Positions in the Biden Administration.

WASHINGTON, D.C. Today, torture survivors and their advocates released an [Open Letter](#) urging President-Elect Biden not to nominate torture defender Mike Morell for CIA Director and asking the Senate not to approve Bidens nominee Avril Haines, a torture enabler, as Director of National Intelligence. The letter was also delivered this morning to members of the Senate Intelligence Committee, as well as President-Elect Biden and Vice-President Elect Kamala Harris.

Signatories include: Mansoor Adayfi, a writer from Yemen imprisoned for 14 years without charge at Guantanamo Bay, where he was force fed for two years; Moazzam Begg, a British-Pakistani ex-Guantanamo detainee and Outreach Director for CAGE, a service organization for torture survivors and communities impacted by the War on Terror; Sister Dianna Ortiz, a US missionary tortured by members of the CIA-funded Guatemalan army; Colonel Larry Wilkerson, Whistleblower and Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell; John Kiriakou, former CIA officer imprisoned after exposing CIA waterboarding; and musician Roger Waters (formerly with Pink Floyd), whose song Each Small Candle is a tribute to torture victims.

The organizers of the letter, Marcy Winograd of Progressive Democrats of America, Medea Benjamin of CODEPINK, and Jeremy Varon of Witness Against Torture, have been lobbying against the inclusion of torture apologists in the Biden administration since the August Democratic National Convention. Their efforts include a [letter to Biden](#) from 450 DNC delegates, a CODEPINK petition [signed](#) by over 4,000, and calls to the offices of the Senators on the Intelligence Committee. When we started this campaign, says 2020 DNC Delegate Marcy Winograd, Morell was considered the frontrunner, but opposition to his disgraceful defense of torture has cast a pall on his nomination. We want to make sure his nomination is off the table, and that Biden and the Senate also understand we reject Avril Haines for her complicity in suppressing evidence of CIA torture,.

Morell, a CIA analyst under Bush and Deputy and Acting CIA Director under Obama, has defended the agency's enhanced interrogation program, objecting to use of the word torture to characterize waterboarding, sleep deprivation, starvation diets, sexual humiliation, hypothermia and painful bodily contortions. Morell also falsely claimed that torture worked in foiling terrorists plots. In addition, Morell defended the CIA's destruction of nearly 90 videotapes documenting brutal interrogations at CIA black site prisons.

As CIA Deputy Director from 2013-2014, Avril Haines overruled the CIA Inspector General in choosing not to punish agency personnel accused of hacking into the Senate Intelligence Committee's computers during their investigation into the CIA's use of torture. She was also part of the team that suppressed evidence of CIA torture by redacting the Senate Intelligence Committee's landmark torture report, reducing a 6,000 page document to 500 pages.

Both Morell and Haines supported Trump's nomination of Gina Haspel to CIA Director a nomination that then-Senator Kamala Harris, other prominent Democrats, and Senator John McCain opposed. Haspel supervised a black site prison in Thailand and authorized a memo authorizing the destruction of CIA videotapes documenting torture.

Jeremy Varon, Witness Against Torture:

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris promised to restore transparency, integrity, and respect for the rule of law to government. So how can their National Security team be led by people who endorsed, or tried to cover up, the clear crime of torture? It makes no sense.

Djamel Ameziane, Former Guantanamo Prisoner (2002-2013):

Elevating torture apologists to a leadership position within the Biden administration will damage the US's standing and give the world's dictators succor and comfort.

Jeffrey Kaye, Author, *Cover-Up at Guantanamo*:

Morell and Haines have put loyalty to CIA torturers above adherence to US treaties and domestic law, as well as basic morality. To allow them to serve in government would send a message to all that accountability for torture is pass, and that war crimes will always be dismissed with a wink from those in high office.

John Kiriakou, Former CIA officer who blew the whistle on agency torture:

Morell has disingenuously said that he was unaware of the CIAs torture program at the same time that he was the Agencys fourth-ranking officer. As deputy CIA Director and Acting CIA Director, he oversaw illegal activities around the world. I cant believe that any sane person could or would consider Mike Morell as a serious candidate for CIA Director.

Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK:

We cant allow the new Biden administration to include people who have been involved in any way in heinous acts of torture. Thats why we are part of a groundswell of opposition to both Mike Morell and Avril Haines for key intelligence positions. No torture apologists should be allowed to serve in this administration. Period.

Torture Survivor Mansoor Adayfi on Morells assertion that torture is effective: In Guantanamo, when they put you under very bad circumstances like 72 hours under very cold air conditioning, and you are tied to the ground and someone comes and pours cold water on you you are going to tell them whatever they want you to say. I will sign anything, I will admit anything!, says Dayfi.

Torture Survivor Moazzem Begg on his treatment at Bagram Air Base before arriving at Guantanamo: They tied me up with my hands behind my back to my legs, kicked me in the head, kicked me in the back, threatened to take me to Egypt to be tortured, to be raped, to be electrocuted. They had a woman screaming in the next room whom I believed at that time was my wife. They bought pictures of my children and told me I would never see them again.

Colonel Larry Wilkerson, torture whistleblower: Kidnapping, torture and assassination have no place in a democracy and turn the CIA into a secret police. Abuses of the kind documented in the Senates report could happen again.

James Dorsey, attorney for released Guantanamo detainee [Ahcene Zemiri](#). As a Marine Corps veteran, I have always understood that when our servicemen have been captured and tortured in the past, a real source of strength for them has been knowing that their country would never engage in such conduct.

Also available for interviews:

James Dorsey, Attorney, represented released Guantanamo Detainee [Ahcene Zemiri](#)
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Letter Below

Open Letter to President-Elect Biden & U.S. Senate:

From: Torture Victims and their Advocates Opposed to Mike Morell for CIA and Avril Haines for National Intelligence

Say NO to Morell; Say NO to Haines.

As survivors of torture and their advocates, we urge President-elect Biden not to nominate Mike Morell for CIA Director and ask the Senate not to approve Bidens nominee Avril Haine as Director of National Intelligence.

Both Morell and Haines have troubling records on torture a form of violence with lingering effects: anxiety, stress, physical and psychological trauma. We know because we have lived this nightmare, either personally or as advocates of survivors forever haunted by past torture.

We believe that the record of Morell and Haines disqualifies them from directing intelligence agencies. Their appointment would undermine the rule of law and U.S. credibility around the world. It would be a callous rebuke to people like ourselves and all those who care about human rights and the protection of basic dignity.

Morell, a CIA analyst under Bush and both Deputy and Acting CIA Director under Obama, has [defended](#) the Agencys [enhanced interrogation](#) practices. These included waterboarding, physical beatings, sleep deprivation, stress positions, and sexual humiliation. These practices have commonly, and rightly, been denounced as torture. In July 2014, President Obama plainly admitted, We tortured some folks.

That same year, the Senate Intelligence Committee issued the 500-page summary of its Torture Report. Drawing on millions of pages of internal CIA documents, the report denounced CIA torture as both inhumane *and* ineffective. It [concluded](#) that the Agencys use of torture was far more frequent and gruesome than previously acknowledged. Senate investigators also documented that the CIA had lied to Congress, the President, and the American people by falsely insisting that its enhanced interrogations had forced detainees to reveal critical information, and thereby thwarted terrorists plots.

Yet in his 2015 memoir, Morell asserted without evidence that torture was effective. As the *Military Times* [reported](#), Senate intelligence committee staffers were so troubled by Morells claims that they issued a lengthy rebuttal in a special report. Referencing the CIAs own documents, the report blasted Morells numerous errors and misrepresentation of established facts.

In addition, Morell defended the CIAs destruction in 2005 of nearly 90 videotapes of the brutal interrogation of Abu Zubaydah and other

detainees in CIA black sites. Sought by congress, the courts, and attorneys, the tapes doubtless depicted troubling US conduct. Their destruction came in the wake of the Abu Ghraib abuse revelations, just as the country was vigorously debating the lawfulness and morality of the treatment of detainees.

To defend the elimination of the tapes, as Morell has done, is unconscionable. It defies the transparency our democracy needs to function, while serving to shield from accountability those potentially guilty of grave crimes.

The claim that torture works is the great lie used by tormentors throughout history to justify their abuses. When repeated by high-ranking officials to defend post-9/11 torture, it serves to excuse the inexcusable.

Morell has no place in a Biden-Harris administration. His nomination would send a chilling message to torture survivors and other victims of grave injustice that the United States government, including the Biden administration, does not uphold its own stated principles. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) from the Senate Intelligence Committee [has said](#) about Morell: No torture apologist can be confirmed as CIA director. Its a nonstarter. We agree and urge the President-elect not to nominate Morell.

We also oppose Avril Haines, another torture apologist, as Director of National Intelligence. Since she has already been nominated, we ask Senators to oppose her confirmation.

As CIA Deputy Director from 2013-2014, Haines overruled the CIA Inspector General by choosing not to punish agency personnel accused of hacking into the Senate Intelligence Committees computers during their investigation into the CIA's use of torture. In addition, Haines was part of the team that redacted the Senate Intelligence Committees landmark 6,000-page report on torture, reducing the public portion to a [500-page summary](#). The full report has been sought by attorneys, human rights advocates, legislators, and scholars seeking a full account of the United States' troubling conduct.

Haines also supported Trump's nomination of Gina Haspel for CIA director. Supervising a CIA black site in Thailand in 2002, Haspel was directly implicated in CIA torture. She later [drafted the memo](#) authorizing the destruction of the CIA videotapes.

Like Morell, Haines has worked both to defend torture and suppress evidence of it. She too, is incompatible with the stated aim of the Biden-Harris administration to restore integrity and respect for the rule of law to government.

The new administration must show the American people and the world that it acknowledges past disturbing U.S. conduct and will ensure that such abuses never recur. To do that, it needs intelligence leaders who have neither condoned torture nor whitewashed the CIA's ugly record of using torture. We need intelligence leaders who understand that torture is [illegal under international law](#); that is inhumane; that it is ineffective; that it puts at risk U.S. military personnel, should they be captured by adversaries; and that it violates the restoration of trust in American decency central to Biden's vision for his presidency.

That is why we urge President-Elect Biden not to nominate Mike Morell for Director of the CIA and the Senate to reject the nomination of Avril Haines for Director of National Intelligence. The people of the United States and the world deserve better.

Signed (partial list):

[Moazzem Begg](#), Torture Survivor, former Guantanamo prisoner, CAGE, UK; signed confession under torture; while in US custody subjected to sleep deprivation, stress positions, hog tied with hood over head

[Djamen Ameziane](#), Algerian, former Guantanamo detainee, torture survivor imprisoned without charge from 2002-2013, in solitary confinement for a decade, suffered vision loss

[Maher Arar](#), Canadian torture and rendition survivor; whipped with an electrical cord and forced to confess while in US custody in Syria

[Mohamedou Ould Salahi](#), tortured prisoner at Guantanamo; held without charge for 14 years; beaten, force fed, deprived of sleep; released in 2016, author, [Guantanamo Diary](#)

[Mansoor Adayfi](#), Released Guantanamo prisoner sold to US forces in Afghanistan for bounty money; imprisoned at Guantanamo without charge for 14 years, seven in isolation; torture survivor; resettled in Serbia; award-winning writer

[Lakhdar Boumediene](#), Algerian-born citizen of [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay from 2002-2009, force fed for two years; lead plaintiff in *Boumediene v. Bush*, a 2008 US Supreme Court decision that Guantanamo detainees have the right to habeas corpus in US federal courts

[Carlos Mauricio](#), College professor kidnapped and tortured by US-backed right-wing death squads in El Salvador; Executive Director: Stop Impunity Project

[Hector Aristizabal](#), Psychologist and theater artist; torture survivor from Colombia, CoCreator of Reconnectando; Theater of the Oppressed

[Sister Dianna Ortiz](#), US missionary teaching Mayan children, tortured in 1989 by members of the US supported Guatemalan Army

[Jean Marie Kalonji](#), Congolese youth leader tortured by the police and military, Coordinator of the Fourth Way

[Mario Avila](#), a Guatemalan torture survivor kidnapped in 1969 and again in 1976 and tortured in clandestine jails under the directives of the U.S. government; Colectivo Guatemalteco Los Angeles Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)

Gloria Avila, Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)

Frankie Flores, Torture Survivor from El Salvador; Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)

[Jennifer Harbury](#), Atty, wife of deceased Guatemalan torture victim Efran Bmaca Velsquez; author, *Truth, Torture and the American Way*, which documents the CIA's historical use of torture

Major Todd Pierce (U.S. Army, Retired), Judge Advocate General attorney on the defense teams for Guantanamo military commissions defendants

Buz Eisenberg, Attorney for Guantanamo detainee

Jim Dorsey, Attorney for released Guantanamo detainee

Colonel Larry Wilkerson, Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell

Bill Binney, Retired National Security Agency official and whistleblower

Elizabeth Murray, Retired Deputy National Intelligence Office/Near East

Colonel Ann Wright, US Army Colonel (retired) and former US Diplomat

Ray McGovern, Retired CIA officer, Member of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity

Philip M. Giraldi, former CIA Operations Officer, Executive Director, Council for the National Interest

John Kiriakou, Former CIA officer imprisoned after whistleblowing re CIA torture

[Coleen Rowley](#), former FBI special agent and whistleblower

[Greg Thielmann](#), retired intelligence official, U.S. State Department

Valerie Lucznikowska, September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows

Roy Bourgeois, School of the Americas Watch

Dr. Maha Hilal, Justice for Muslims Collective

Kathy Kelly, Voices for Creative Nonviolence

Marcy Winograd, Progressive Democrats of America; 2020 DNC Delegate, Author of [Open Letter to Joe Biden: Hire New Foreign Policy Advisors](#), signed by 450 Delegates opposed to torture whitewashing

Adrienne Kinne, President, Veterans For Peace

Garett Reppenhagen, Executive Director, Veterans For Peace

Jeremy Varon, Witness Against Torture and Professor of History at The New School

Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK Women for Peace

Andy Worthington, Director, [CloseGuantanamo.org](#)

Roger Waters, musician, songwriter, Each Small Candle- tribute to a torture victim

Frank Goldsmith and Robin Kirk, Co-chairs, [North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture](#)

Nancy Talanian, No More Guantánamos

Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

Rev. Emma Jordan-Simpson, Executive Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation

Sue Udry, Executive Director, Defending Rights and Dissent

David Swanson, Executive Director, World Beyond War; author, *Torture is Foreplay for War*

Alfred W. McCoy, author, *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation from the Cold War to the War on Terror*

Marjorie Cohen, Atty, author *The United States And Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration, And Abuse*

Rebecca Gordon, author, *Mainstreaming Torture*

Jeffrey S. Kaye, author, *Cover-Up at Guantanamo*

Norman Solomon, Author, *War Made Easy*

Matthew W. Daloisio, Atty, Witness Against Torture

Helen Sklar, Certified Specialist in Immigration Law, represented torture victims from all over the world in asylum proceedings

Angela Edman, Esq, Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC)

Art Laffin, Catholic Worker House

Bogdan Dzakovic, Son of WWII torture victim

Sandra and Ulis Williams, Activists, School of the Americas Watch

Martin Melkonian, Teachers for Human Rights

Uwe Jacobs, Psychologist, Survivors International

David Segal, Executive Director, Demand Progress

Linda Lewis, Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence

Dr. Mary Helen White, Physicians for Human Rights, works with torture victims

C. Peter Dougherty, Co Founder, Meta Peace Team

Sara Olson, Women Against Military Madness, Tackling Torture Committee