

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.ctpost.com/opinion/article/Moral-leadership-requires-facing-our-faults-4407318.php>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Successful nations, like families, are held together by spiritual truths such as honesty, justice, integrity, faith, hope, love and forgiveness. Society is safe because of these shared values, not despite them.

As a united front of groups of all faiths who hold sacred these values, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture has made it its mission to ensure that Americans learn the truth about the torture authorized and carried out by U.S. government officials during the post-9/11 era. In December, the [Senate Intelligence Committee](#) adopted a 6,000-page detailed report on its three-year investigation into the CIA's use of torture -- and I join people of faith across the country in calling on the committee to release that report to the public.

Currently, the committee's account is confidential, so the facts on torture remain hidden from the American public. Americans deserve to learn the true history of the use of torture by our leaders, so we each have the chance to evaluate the negative impact on our country's moral legacy domestically and internationally, as well as its utter uselessness in the war against terror.

The recent film "Zero Dark Thirty" has confused matters -- and has brought the issue of torture in intelligence-gathering to the fore. The convincing narrative conveys torture as justified when it leads to killing our most hated enemies -- enemies that, as the movie dramatically reminds us, brutally killed thousands of our loved ones on 9/11. The problem with this narrative is that it is based on fiction, a fiction that has left many Americans confused as to the facts.

We, as Americans -- a people of values and of conscience -- must fight for these misconceptions to be clarified, so that we know the truth about the history of torture in our nation. Unfortunately, ridding the world of its "bad guys" isn't as simple as it is portrayed in "Zero Dark Thirty" -- torture is not a silver bullet for solving the world's problems or punishing the world's worst criminals. It's critical that the American people have access to the facts and know the truth, so they aren't fooled into believing an oversimplified and downright false narrative.

Sen. [John McCain](#), a former ex officio member of the Senate Intelligence Committee and therefore familiar with the committee's still-confidential report, has said, "It was not torture, or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees that got us the major leads that ultimately enabled our intelligence community to find [Osama bin Laden](#)."

In fact, McCain directly criticized "Zero Dark Thirty," accusing the filmmakers of falling "hook, line and sinker" for a false accounting of how the United States obtained the intelligence to track down bin Laden.

According to Col. [Lawrence Wilkerson](#), former chief of staff to Secretary of State [Colin Powell](#), who served under President Bush: "None of this enhanced interrogation worked."

"[Torture techniques] did not, as Cheney has alleged, lead to the killing of bin Laden," says Wilkerson.

I believe that any nation that hides from the truth will not long survive, just as a people who sacrifice their humanity for enhanced security will lose both their humanity and their security. The release of the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on torture would be a positive step in the right direction and would set the record straight that not only is torture against our values, but it just doesn't work.

So what if the report's findings embarrass us? I argue that refusing to acknowledge our mistakes is the true embarrassment. Some say releasing the report will endanger us, but in reality, we are far safer ending torture than hiding its history. Some say we no longer torture, so why open old wounds? With the report public, we will make greater strides to rid ourselves of this stain upon our good name while sending the message that we will never again ignore our national values by torturing anyone, anywhere, any time.

In the history of the world, the United States' greatest moments were driven by our international moral leadership toward freedom, liberty and justice for all people, while our times of greatest failure were guided by immoral behavior such as slavery, wars of choice, lies, conquest, secret prisons and torture. The first step toward true international leadership and security is fighting to know the facts. Our future as a moral force in the world depends on it.

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