

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.nrcat.org/about/nrcat-press-releases/333-bybee-and-bradbury-torture-memos>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

For Immediate Release April 16, 2009

Following Leak of ICRC Report and Release of Office of Legal Counsel Memos, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) Urges Immediate Congressional Approval of a Commission of Inquiry

NRCAT: We must, as a nation, address the fact that high-ranking officials in our government authorized torture and that agents representing our country carried out acts of torture in our name.

WASHINGTON, DC Today, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) sent letters to the leadership of both houses of Congress renewing its call for a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the authorization and use of torture in light of recent revelations confirming the widespread use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees after 9/11. [The text of this letter is included below.]

The recent revelations include:

In response to these events, NRCAT has reiterated and strengthened its call for a Commission of Inquiry. In the letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader John Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, NRCAT's President, Linda Gustitus, and Executive Director, Rev. Richard Killmer, emphasized the moral imperative of establishing such a commission at this time.

We must, as a nation, address the fact that high-ranking officials in our government authorized torture and that agents representing our country carried out acts of torture in our name, Gustitus said. "A Commission of Inquiry is critical to develop the complete picture of what the United States did, how many people were involved and affected, and how such a heinous policy was approved. Without that record, we have no guarantee we can prevent it from happening in the future."

Killmer added, "We need to know how we reached a point at which Justice Department lawyers and top White House officials, including the President and Vice President, thought a few words written in a memo could overturn not only international treaties and domestic laws, but also more than 200 years of steadfast moral opposition to torture in this country."

The only question now," Killmer concluded, "is whether we can learn from these horrific acts, condemn them resoundingly as a nation, and enact policies and procedures so that our children and grandchildren grow up in a world where we can truly say, America does not torture.

For more information about NRCAT's call for a Commission of Inquiry
Click Call for a Commission of Inquiry at www.tortureisamoralissue.org

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The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a growing membership organization committed to ending U.S.-sponsored torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Since its formation in January 2006, more than 250 religious groups have joined NRCAT, including representatives from the Roman Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Bahai, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and faith groups, regional organizations and local congregations.

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The following is the text of one of the letters sent today to leaders in both the U.S. House and Senate:

April 16, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senate Majority Leader Reid:

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), a campaign of over 250 religious organizations working together to abolish U.S.-sponsored torture, asks you to support the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the authorization of and use of torture as an interrogation technique after September 11th, 2001.

On March 15, excerpts of an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) report, describing horrific abuse of detainees, were made public. In those excerpts, the ICRC went so far as to state that the U.S. had used torture as an interrogation technique. Earlier today, the Department of Justice released three Office of Legal Counsel memos written in 2005 and another memo from 2002 that demonstrate that the use of torture was authorized and approved of by officials in the highest levels of the U.S. government.

A great nation does not hide from the truth, and these revelations must not be ignored. Establishing a non-partisan Commission of Inquiry, fully funded, provided subpoena power, and tasked with the responsibility to fully investigate and report on the use of torture on detainees, is the only appropriate response.

Thank you for your efforts to end U.S.-sponsored torture. Please continue your important work by supporting the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry.

Sincerely,

Linda Gustitus
President

Rev. Richard Killmer
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

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