

Center for Constitutional Rights

Discrimination, Detention, and Deportation: Immigration & Refugees

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/blog/2016/09/09/what-911-showed-us-about-ourselves>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

The CCR blog

As New Yorkers, we at CCR all have our personal stories of that terrible day. As an organization, our 9/11 story is about how we sprang into action and how we have continued to respond to the political exploitation of 9/11. Because in no time at all, the government began to manipulate and stoke peoples fear and prejudice, always ready to rear its head, in order to press forward with a horrifying agenda.

Looking back, its almost hard to think of something we *havent* done to fight post-9/11 excesses. And weve done it shoulder to shoulder with our clients, our allies, and all of the communities standing up for justice. On this 15th anniversary, I took a look at some of the many cases that grew out of that response.

We were the first organization to challenge illegal indefinite detention at [Guantanamo](#). [Rasul v. Bush](#) the Supreme Court case that established habeas corpus rights for the detainees and allowed lawyers access to GITMO was filed just five months after 9/11, when no other organization was willing to speak up. We organized hundreds of lawyers to represent the men held there and have represented many clients ourselves.

We filed [Turkmen v. Ashcroft](#) only two months later, in April 2002, challenging the indiscriminate round up, detention, and abuse of Muslim immigrants. That case may end up before the Supreme Court this term.

Turkmen turned out to be the first of many ways in which we fought the ever-increasing apparatus of [Muslim surveillance](#) and discrimination. Weve challenged the [NYPDs blanket surveillance](#) of Muslims in New Jersey, the FBI's effort to use the No Fly List to [coerce Muslims into spying](#) and informing on their communities, the Bureau of Prisons targeting of Muslim prisoners in its punitive [Communications Management Units](#), and more.

We have also worked through every available avenue to hold those who designed, implemented, and provided the legal justification for the torture that followed 9/11. Weve pursued cases in multiple countries [Spain](#), [Canada](#), [Switzerland](#), [Germany](#), among others seeking to prosecute torture architects under the principle of universal jurisdiction. We challenged the [extraordinary rendition](#) of Canadian Citizen Maher Arar to Syria. Weve sued private military contractors for their role in the [torture at Abu Ghraib](#) ([twice](#), actually).

We also [sued Blackwater](#) for war crimes in Iraq, [represented protesters](#) here in New York opposed to the war, and have been working with Iraqi civil society groups and Iraq Veterans Against the War to hold the U.S. accountable for the [human costs of war](#).

The list of repressive and discriminatory fallout unleashed by 9/11 is longer still. It also includes [NSA surveillance](#), including [surveillance of lawyers](#), political prosecutions of [material support](#), and more.

The catalog of injustice born of 9/11 would fill a library: the Senate Torture Report alone is over 5,000 pages. We must remember, though, that politicians were able to use 9/11 to re-orient the politics of this era in part because what seems so exceptional about those politics prejudice, violence, repressive state policy is in truth written into the DNA of America from 1492 to the present. It's easy for politicians to bring out the worst in so many people because it is at best simmering just beneath the surface.

Its why, looking to the next 15 years, the next 50 years, we need to be ready to fight the abuses that will inevitably continue to be part of our history.

[View the discussion thread.](#)

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