

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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

<http://www.nrcat.org/national-security/torture/the-torture-report/torture-report-quotes>

Campaign and Advocacy

Following the 2014 release of the executive summary of the Senate Intelligence Committee's 6,000 page Torture Report, faith leaders responded with calls for accountability and action by Congress. Here are some quotes from faith leaders:

Bishop Oscar Cant, Chair of the [Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), said: The Catholic Church firmly believes that torture is an 'intrinsic evil' that cannot be justified under any circumstance. The acts of torture described in the Senate Intelligence Committee's report violated the God-given human dignity inherent in all people and were unequivocally wrong. Congress and the President should act to strengthen the legal prohibitions against torture and to ensure that this never happens again."

Matt Hawthorne, Policy Director for the [National Religious Campaign Against Torture](#), said, The acts of torture described in the report are not just horrific, they also represent a brutal violation of our country's most basic values. Only now, that the truth has been exposed, can our nation begin healing from deep self-inflicted spiritual wounds. The CIA's torture program was not only wrong, but also by shattering our nation's moral authority it put lives at risk. Revealing the truth about the program is the first step toward ensuring that it is never repeated.

Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary of the [National Council of Churches \(NCC\), USA](#), said: The NCC has repeatedly stated that torture under any circumstance not only erodes the peace of the world but even the possibility of peace, since it destroys the trust required for diplomacy and other nonviolent means of seeking peace. This report clearly indicates the CIA broke that trust and we call upon our Congress and the Administration to take action to ensure this never happens again.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Executive Director of [Truah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights](#), said: "The report shows that the CIA committed immoral acts that violate basic concepts of *k'vod habriot*, human dignity, that apply to all human beings, friend and enemy. As a nation, we have much to repent for--and true *teshuvah*, repentance, requires both acknowledgement and accountability for what we have done. The report is a step toward acknowledgement. A step toward accountability would be for Congress to act to make clear that the CIA will never be allowed to torture again."

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed of the [Islamic Society of North America](#) said: The revelations about the use of torture have been a source of torture to many of us. We had taken pride in the fact that we have left behind many societies where it was a norm and that we had chosen to be part a nation that prided itself on its belief in human dignity and human rights.

Gerry Lee, former Executive Director of the [Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns](#), said: "This most recent report on the CIA's use of torture, with the terrible news that agents of our government used brutal and immoral methods to elicit information, should be the push needed to get our elected officials to put in place new laws that will permanently prevent the use of torture. Maryknoll missionaries have very often served in communities alongside torture survivors, and some have experienced torture themselves, and, as Christians, they know that it is horrific, dehumanizing behavior and its use must be stopped immediately."

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, former General Secretary, [American Baptist Churches](#), Chair of the Board, [National Council of Churches, USA](#), said: My heart is grieved that in our name others were tortured. Torture is contrary to every principle of the Christian faith. I live in the greater NYC area and was Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey during the 9-11 attack on the Twin Towers. I have seen the cost, when in the name of a people or a cause, any action can be justified. May God give us the moral courage to never again betray the core principles that have guided our nation as a leader in the struggle for human rights.

Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster, Director of Programs, [T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights](#) (formerly Rabbis for Human Rights-North America), said The acts described by the report are shocking to me as a rabbi and human rights activist who believes in the centrality of *k'vod habriot*, human dignity. Before we can truly repent as a nation, Congress must act to ensure that we never commit such immoral practices again.

Sr. Patricia Chappell, Executive Director, [Pax Christi USA](#), said: Pax Christi USA, the National Catholic Non-Violent Peace movement, is appalled at the lack of moral integrity of a nation and of individuals who justify the use of torture in the name of national security. The recently released report on the CIA use of torture is a travesty of justice and a flagrant violation of human rights, with no reverence for the dignity of human life of all concerned. Laws must be put in place NOW to prevent future atrocities.

Scott Wright, Director, [Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach](#), said: One of the basic tenets of our Christian faith is that human life is sacred. Torture is never justified, under any circumstances. The Senate Intelligence Committee's Torture Report is important, if for no other reason than it makes very clear that crimes were committed, laws were broken, and lies were told to the

American people by our government. We must never as a nation go down that path again.

Rev. Dr. Susan T. Henry-Crowe, General Secretary of the [United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society](#), said: Findings by the Senate Intelligence Committee that the United States engaged in cruel and torturous treatment against enemy combatants shock the conscience. In times of war, and in times of peace, humanity must be respected and honored as a cherished gift from God. The United Methodist Church condemns any government-sanctioned practices that violate these moral teachings.

Patrick Carolan, Executive Director of the [Franciscan Action Network](#), said: The Catholic Church views torture as an intrinsic evil, something that is always wrong. If we truly believe as Jesus taught us and St. Francis showed us by the example of his life that we are all connected as brothers and sisters we would never carry out such horrific acts as detailed in this report. We must stop demonizing the other by using torture under the false pretenses of security and safety.

Sandra Sorensen, Director of Washington Office of the [United Church of Christ](#), said: "Our faith teaches us that all human beings are made in the image of God, and to violate that image is a sin against the Creator. Torture is a violation of the image of God, and it is never justified. We are deeply saddened and troubled by this most recent report detailing our governments complicity in acts of torture. It is terribly disappointing that we seem unable to learn the lesson that violence only begets more violence, and is never the path to true and lasting security. The content of this report casts a deep shadow on the moral integrity of our nation, and calls into serious question our global leadership in the cause of human rights and justice. We must reset our nations moral compass by opposing the future use of such brutal practices with every fiber of our being, and point back to what our Creator intends: a world in which all people are treated with dignity and respect."

Brian D. McLaren, [author/speaker/activist](#), said: To the list of American sins that includes slavery, the Trail of Tears, segregation, and internment camps, we now know we must add this: the brutal torture of prisoners under the auspices of the CIA. Christians and other people of faith and conscience must stand tall and speak strongly and with one voice: torture is always immoral and must never be permitted again.

Paul Alexander, co-President of [Evangelicals for Social Action](#), said: It saddens me to learn that the CIA torture program was worse than even the pictures we've seen so far from Abu Ghraib. But I also applaud the courage of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in getting to the heart of the matter. I hope that we as a nation learn that torture is immoral, and that we never commit these horrific acts again.

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary of the [Friends Committee on National Legislation](#), said: Telling the truth about the role of the United States in acts of torture is an essential step in repairing our country's moral fiber and upholding our democratic ideals. This report shows the CIA engaged in brutal, immoral and illegal acts that are inconsistent with our belief in human dignity. Our public officials should take action to assure this never happens again.

Rick Love, Ph.D., President of [Peace Catalyst International](#) and author of *Grace & Truth: Toward Christlike Relationships with Muslims and Peace Catalysts: Resolving Conflict in Our Families, Organizations and Communities*, said: Torture is always wrong abusing the sacredness of human life, violating U.S. and international law. So I am grateful that the evil and ineffectiveness of torture perpetrated by the CIA has been exposed. I hope the findings of the Senate Intelligence Committee will put an end to torture as part of U.S. interrogation practices once and for all.

The Reverend J. Ed Bacon, Rector of [All Saints Church in Pasadena, CA](#), released this statement: "The report on torture released today by the Senate Intelligence Committee confirms what human rights and religious communities have known to be true for years: that our government engaged in a systematic program of torture involving acts of horrific brutality. This is a significant day in the moral history of our nation. Based on an examination of more than six million pages of documents, the report lays out in previously unknown detail the extent and utter brutality of the treatment of human beings in United States custody, as well as the duplicity of agents of our government. A core Christian value is that the truth will set you free. And the truth told in this report is that the very arguments against releasing it are in themselves arguments against torture implicitly acknowledging that torture threatens our national security and undermines its credibility. Thankfully, we have a history in America of admitting where we were wrong through after-incident reviews and learning from our mistakes. People of faith and communities of conscience can only react with horror and great anguish to the facts on detainee treatment after 9/11 detailed in the report. At the same time, the fact that this report was undertaken and a summary made public is commendable. We thank Senator Dianne Feinstein for her principled leadership for years in producing this report and now in making the findings public. And we applaud the moral leadership of Senator John McCain who broke with members of his party in a speech from the Senate floor lauding the release of the report and decrying the use of torture. While certainly a moral issue, for All Saints Church torture is also a religious issue. Our faith tradition requires that we recognize the sacred in every human being. It is for this reason that the Vestry of All Saints Church has passed a Resolution in Opposition to Torture and will continue to oppose torture in all forms, in all places."

Rev. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Senior Pastor of [Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, DC](#), said: "The new revelations of the use of torture by the United States are deeply grieving and a source of moral outrage. However, some of my own grief comes from the fact that I am not surprised. In a world in which many see and treat other people not as human subjects, replete with the divine image and inherent dignity imprinted upon all people, but rather as objects to be manipulated in any way that yields the good whatever those may be the door is thrown wide open for this kind of inhuman behavior. I pray that our collective fear and the subhuman impulses that it engenders will be replaced by a wisdom guided by 'the better angels of our nature.'"

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