

What Can I Do?

- ✓ **Pray** that we may together find the courage and wisdom to remain a nation that does not resort to torture in times of terror.
- ✓ **Call** your elected officials this week and tell Congress to reject legislation that would permit abusive interrogations as well as the use of evidence obtained through cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

Sen. Charles E. Schumer at 202-224-6542 and
Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton at 202-224-4451

Go to Take Action at the www.nrcat.org site for talking points.

For other actions, contact Amnesty International or go to their Act Now webpage at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/stoptorture/actions.do>
- ✓ **Sign** the National Religious Campaign Against Torture petition.
- ✓ **Circulate** the statement among your friends, family, and community.
- ✓ **Create** an information table for your congregation.
- ✓ **Organize** an educational event or discussion for your congregation. Speakers can include torture survivors, activists, religious leaders, and human rights lawyers
- ✓ **Post** *Witness Against Torture* posters to express your opposition to indefinite detentions (www.witnesstorture.org).
- ✓ **Host a candlelight ceremony** or vigil against the use of torture.
- ✓ **Put on a reading** of the Center for Constitutional Rights' play *Guantanamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*. (1)
- ✓ **Organize a group to go see** *The Road to Guantanamo* and use Amnesty International's Action Guide. (2)
- ✓ **Host a screening** of PBS Frontline's "The Torture Question" which details the use of torture and inhuman treatment in the U.S.-led "war on terror." (3)
- ✓ **Participate** in the activities of the Metro New York Religious Campaign to End Torture.



For help in organizing any local activities, please call 646-213-0083 or write to SayNoToTorture@yahoo.com. Let us know what you are doing or plan to do!

(1) Call the Center for Constitutional Rights at 212-614-6464 or go to <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/gac/grp/readings/>.

(2) Call Amnesty International at 202-544-0200 or go to http://www.roadtoguantanamo.com/RTG_Action_Guide.pdf

(3) Learn more about the film at (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/torture/>). You can request a loan copy from Amnesty International USA by calling 202-544-0200 or writing dtorture@aiusa.org.

A Statement of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions hold dear. It degrades everyone involved -- policy-makers, perpetrators, and victims. It contradicts our nation's most cherished ideals. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable.

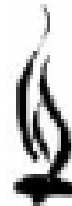
Torture and inhumane treatment have long been banned by U.S. treaty obligations, and are punishable by criminal statute. Recent developments, however, have created new uncertainties. By reaffirming the ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment as well as torture, the McCain amendment, now signed into law, is a step in the right direction. Yet its implementation remains unclear.

The President's signing statement, which he issued when he signed the McCain Amendment into law, implies that the President does not believe he is bound by the amendment in his role as commander in chief. The possibility remains open that inhumane methods of interrogation will continue.

Furthermore, in a troubling development, for the first time in our nation's history, legislation has now been signed into law that effectively permits evidence obtained by torture to be used in a court of law. The military tribunals that are trying some terrorist suspects are now expressly permitted to consider information obtained under coercive interrogation techniques, including degrading and inhumane techniques and torture.

We urge Congress and the President to remove all ambiguities by prohibiting:

- Exemptions from the human rights standards of international law for any arm of our government.
- The practice of extraordinary rendition, whereby suspects are apprehended and flown to countries that use torture as a means of interrogation.
- Any disconnection of "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" from the ban against "torture" so as to permit inhumane interrogation.
- The existence of secret U.S. prisons around the world.
- Any denial of Red Cross access to detainees held by our government overseas.



We also call for an independent investigation of the severe human rights abuses at U.S. installations like Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan.

Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed? Let America abolish torture now -- without exceptions.

Members of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture include:

- ✓ Adventist Peace Fellowship
- ✓ American Baptist Churches, USA
- ✓ Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- ✓ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- ✓ Evangelicals for Social Action
- ✓ Fellowship of Reconciliation
- ✓ Friends Committee on National Legislation
- ✓ Islamic Society of North America
- ✓ Jewish Council for Public Affairs
- ✓ National Council of Churches
- ✓ Rabbis for Human Rights
- ✓ The Episcopal Church
- ✓ The Presbyterian Church (USA)
- ✓ The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society
- ✓ Union for Reform Judaism
- ✓ Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- ✓ United Church of Christ
- ✓ World Sikh Council - American Region

Quick Facts on Torture

What is the definition of torture?

The U.N. Convention Against Torture (1984) defines torture as “any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person....” The Convention states “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.” The United States ratified the U.N. Convention and has instilled provisions of the Convention into U.S. federal law, such as in the War Crimes Act of 1996.

Have U.S. policies regarding torture changed since September 11, 2001?

- In 2002, directives from the U.S. Departments of Defense and Justice redefined torture and urged suspension of the Geneva Conventions to allow for harsh and degrading interrogation methods.
- In June 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Geneva Conventions do apply to “enemy combatants” and rejected military commissions.
- The Department of Defense subsequently affirmed the applicability of the Conventions to all detainees in their custody. However, they excluded CIA agents from its guidelines.
- The Bush administration is now calling on Congress to authorize the military commissions even though concerns remain about fair trial standards and evidence extracted under torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.
- A recently-leaked document revealed that the Bush administration also seeks to undermine Article Three of the Geneva Conventions, which would protect detainees from such treatment.

Who are “enemy combatants,” and are they protected by any laws?

The Bush administration has designated captured suspected terrorists as “enemy combatants.” The administration’s interpretation of this status denies detainees full protection under the Geneva Conventions as well as U.S. procedures of due process.

What is “extraordinary rendition”?

“Extraordinary rendition” refers to the forcible transfer of detainees from one country to another country known for its use of torture. Since September 11, 2001, there has been a significant increase in the covert transport of persons for the purpose of detention and interrogation, presenting a danger of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

What are “ghost prisoners” and “black sites”?

The U.S. government has admitted to holding so-called “high-value” detainees in secret CIA prisons, also known as “black sites,” but has never disclosed their locations or allowed access to them by the Red Cross, as is guaranteed by the Geneva Conventions. Amnesty International considers these “disappearances.” Recently, the Bush administration has transferred 14 of these “high-value” detainees to Guantánamo Bay. These detainees have not been charged.

Will our lax standards for detainees be used against our troops captured in battle?

Lifelong military professionals, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell and a group of retired U.S. generals against torture, have objected to inhumane interrogation and detention practices. They argue that such mistreatment could weaken protections against the abuse of U.S. military personnel and damage American credibility in opposing such practices when used against American citizens.

Who are the Guantánamo detainees?

Over 750 men from more than 40 countries have been held at Guantánamo since the first transfer of detainees in January 2002. Many were sold to the United States by Northern Alliance warlords and Pakistani authorities for \$5,000 a head. When the U.S. government first transferred detainees to Guantánamo, it asserted that Guantánamo was beyond the reach of U.S. and international law, creating a law-free zone



Prayer to End Torture

God of all life, deliver us from the harm that we do to your creation.

Open our eyes to the evil in our world,

to the situations that foster evil deeds upon your children,
to the ways that your children are treated as less than people created in your image,
to the hurt that comes from abuse by word and deed,
to the rationalizations and denial that keep this evil from being recognized.

Give us the courage and desire to change what we see and to challenge what we hear.

Open our eyes, God, for if we do not see, we cannot be fully alive.

Open our hearts to the suffering in our world,
to the prisoners beaten until they “confess,”
to those who are degraded until they act less than human,
to those who are tortured until they are broken in body and spirit,
to those who are the torturers and can see no other way.

Give us the courage and desire to change what we see and to challenge what we hear.



Open our hearts, God, for if we do not love, we cannot be fully alive.

Open our mouths to speak of your suffering people,
to tell of the pain of those being tortured,
to tell of the sorrow of their families,
to tell of the people and groups who are trying to make changes,
to tell of your love for all people, each and every one.

Give us the courage to add our voices to those who see another way.

Open our mouths, God, for if we do not speak out, we cannot be fully alive.

Open our hands to bring comfort to your suffering people,
to touch the wounds of those who have been tortured,
to hold the hands of those who mourn,
to join hands with those who seek an end to torture,
to extend friendship to those who are our enemies.

Give us the courage to open our hands to all those we meet.

Open our hands, God, for if we do not join hands across enemy lines, we cannot be fully alive.

All this we offer so that your shalom might reach around the world.

Amen.

(Based on a litany published in the National Leader’s Guide distributed by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.)