

Why congregations and other organizations must continue their anti-torture work in 2010

- 1.) President Obama's executive order only halted torture - he does not have the authority to end it completely. In order to end it completely these steps must occur:
 - a.) We need a thorough investigation into how our government came to use torture. Only by thoroughly understanding the breakdown in policy-making that occurred that lead to the use of torture will we be able to ensure that it never happens again. An investigation of this sort must have the authority of the U.S. government, and must be initiated by either the President or the Congress. To date neither has initiated such an investigation.
 - b.) We need legislation to make permanent the terms of President's executive order. An executive order can be changed unilaterally by this or any future President. So, while President Obama has halted our use of torture, the next Administration could revoke his executive order. Congress must pass legislation codifying the principles of the executive order to ensure that they are made permanent.
- 2.) While an incredible step, President Obama's executive order did not solve all of our immediate problems.
 - a.) The prison at Guantanamo Bay remains as a symbol of our country's use of torture. To date, no plan has been released to deal with all of the detainees at Guantanamo.
 - b.) The executive order improved the restrictions on rendition, and was clearly intended to end rendition for torture. That being said, in the end, current policy is to rely on diplomatic assurances in order to ensure that detainees are not rendered to torture. In the past, diplomatic assurances have not proved sufficient for this purpose.
 - c.) The executive order mandated that all U.S. interrogations of detainees follow the guidelines in the Army Field Manual. This was a hugely important step, but it is not the final step. The Army Field Manual includes an appendix, Appendix M, which allows for the use of pro-longed isolation, sleep deprivation, and sensory deprivation. The Field Manual must be modified to clearly prohibit these techniques.
 - d.) The Task Force which was charged with creating recommendations for implementing some aspects of the executive order recommended the creation of a "High Value Interrogation" group to interrogate high value detainees. So far almost nothing has been made public about this group.
- 3.) The American people are not persuaded that torture is wrong. In fact, during the past year the polling on torture has gotten worse - more than 50% of Americans now support the use of torture in some instances.
 - a.) This demonstrates how corrupting the use of torture has been to the soul of our nation and the souls of our people. We must begin to heal this corruption.
 - b.) So long as the majority of the American people support the use of torture, we will always be at risk of electing more politicians who support the use of torture. The greatest protection against our government's use of torture is a shared understanding that torture is always wrong.
 - c.) A massive education campaign is needed to help the American people better understand this issue. Letters to the editor, Op-eds, Bible (and other religious texts) studies, and the like are needed.