

Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity



Torture Awareness Month 2014 Toolkit

Every June, human rights and faith organizations join together to mark Torture Awareness Month because on June 26, 1987, the nations of the world took a major step against the immoral and abhorrent practice of torture. On that day, the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT for short) entered into force and the United Nations later declared June 26th the “International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.” This June, we will honor survivors of torture, take action to ensure that the truth of the clandestine U.S. torture program after 9/11 is made public, and pray for national repentance and healing toward the restoration of human dignity for all.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) invites you, and your local church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or faith community, to join people of faith throughout the world in commemorating Torture Awareness Month. We have prepared a toolkit to assist you and your congregation plan educational, advocacy and worship events.

TOOLKIT CONTENTS

Activity and Advocacy ideas – See pages 3-4

Worship Resources including sermon notes, prayers, meditations, and poems - See pages 5-6

A **Factsheet** and educational resources on the Senate Intelligence Committee’s Torture Report

- See pages 7-8 or download at www.nrcat.org/SSCI-Background

A **Bulletin insert** with educational material and an interfaith prayer:

- See pages 9-10 or download at www.nrcat.org/June2014BulletinInsert

A **Poster** for promotion of Torture Awareness Month is available in two formats:

- 8.5” by 11” PDF: See page 11 or download at www.nrcat.org/June2014Poster
- 8.5” by 11” Word document: For you to customize as needed, at www.nrcat.org/June2014CustomPoster

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact:
Paz Artaza-Regan, our Director of Program & Outreach, at
partaza-regan@nrcat.org or 202-547-1920.

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Join us! Together we can learn, pray and act to make sure that we “Expose the Truth of U.S. Torture and Restore Human Dignity.” Let us pray for forgiveness for what our government did in our name in the post 9/11 era, and take action to ensure torture, in all its forms, is abolished forever.



National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

Mary Button

Now's the Time to Prevent U.S.-Sponsored Torture

A full decade after the first public disclosures of U.S. torture of 9/11 detainees surfaced in the media, the United States is now confronted with the details of the horror and abuse of these detainees in Guantanamo, secret CIA prisons, and in the field. The report on CIA torture of the Senate Intelligence Committee (which voted on April 3, 2014 to declassify the report's 400-page summary and findings) and the report by The Constitution Project's *Task Force on Detainee Treatment* are finally exposing investigated facts on the torture program that was done in our name.

According to Senator Dianne Feinstein, Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, the report describes a "brutal" interrogation program "far more harsh" than the CIA has revealed. It reportedly documents that the CIA repeatedly lied to Congress, the Justice Department and the White House.

The evidence is irrefutable – the United States, without a doubt, tortured. Our nation, once regarded as a defender of human rights, broke national and international law and long-held moral codes. For people of faith, torture violates the basic dignity of the human person, and degrades everyone.

At no time in the eight year history of NRCAT is the role of the faith community more important than it is now. Our years of organizing educational events, engaging in advocacy, holding worship and prayer services, and shaping the moral understanding of torture through op-eds and letters to the editor have paid off. We now have the factual basis to push the nation to act.

Those who are answerable to the U.S. public – the President, the CIA, Congress, and the Justice Department – owe a debt to the faith community for keeping torture in the forefront. They now must work with us to remedy the past and ban U.S. sponsored torture in the future.

We have prepared this Torture Awareness Month Toolkit to help you study, pray and take action.

Together we can shine the light to expose the truth of the U.S. torture program and create a future where human dignity is restored.

~ Rev. Ron Stief
Executive Director



Our thanks to all who contributed to this toolkit, including worship resource writers and the poster artist.

Mary Button is an artist and social activist whose work combines theology and storytelling. Her work has been exhibited across the United States and the United Kingdom, with exhibitions at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York City and Cambridge University, to name a few. She currently serves First Congregational Church in Memphis, TN as their Minister of Visual Art. For more information on her work, please visit marybutton.com.

Ideas for Your Torture Awareness Month Activities

To mark Torture Awareness Month, NRCAT invites you and your congregation to plan activities and events lifting up issues relating to torture. Below is a list of possible activities that you and others in your faith community could participate in during June. Contact Paz Artaza-Regan (partaza-regan@nrcat.org or 202-547-1920) to discuss your plans or to seek ideas and assistance for your activities and events.

- Use NRCAT's Torture Awareness Month customizable poster to promote your activities. Download a Word document you can customize at www.nrcat.org/June2014CustomPoster.
- Urge your congregation to use worship resources addressing torture during worship services in June. A variety of resources are available at www.nrcat.org/June2014Worship.
- The NRCAT bulletin insert (with an interfaith prayer and background information) is an easy and convenient way to lift up these issues within your congregation. You are welcome to customize it for your community. Download at www.nrcat.org/June2014BulletinInsert or see pages 9-10 below.
- Collect names on the NRCAT petition, "Let Our Torture Report Go," within your congregation or community. A hardcopy version of the petition is available for download at www.nrcat.org/June2014Petition.
- Promote NRCAT's Action Alert on the Torture Report to friends and others in your congregation. We will update the action alert as necessary, including throughout June - www.nrcat.org/June2014Action.
- Organize an educational event with a screening of NRCAT's 11-minute film "No Doubt, It Was Torture" in your congregation or community. A discussion guide for the film is available. Preview the film and download the discussion guide at www.nrcat.org/NoDoubtFilm. This film is available at no cost for anyone doing an event, please contact Paz at partaza-regan@nrcat.org for a free DVD.

Join the Campaign

Is your congregation or faith organization interested in joining NRCAT? Go to www.nrcat.org/become-a-member.

Join other people of faith in anti-torture efforts as an individual supporter. Go to www.nrcat.org/Supporter.

Continued on next page

The focus for this year's Torture Awareness Month is the Senate Intelligence Committee's Torture Report and ensuring that it is made public. However, we invite you to also explore some interconnecting issues such as indefinite detention and force feeding at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center and the torture of solitary confinement that happens every day in our prisons and immigration detention centers.

More at www.nrcat.org

Ideas for Your Torture Awareness Month Activities

- Order, display and distribute NRCAT banners or bumper stickers - www.nrcat.org/Store.
- Organize a vigil or other public event on June 26 to mark UN International Day in Support of Torture Victims, or on another day in June to mark Torture Awareness Month.
- Host a table with literature and information from NRCAT at your place of worship or another venue. Possible materials include the Factsheet on pages 7-8, also available at www.nrcat.org/SSCI-Background.
- Lift up other issues such as Guantanamo, torture in U.S. prisons, and anti-Muslim bias during Torture Awareness Month. More at www.nrcat.org.
- Use social media to promote anti-torture messages during June. Be sure to tag or mention us when you Tweet or write a Facebook status update. Samples posts and Tweets at www.nrcat.org/June2014SocialMedia.

Support our Work

Will you partner with us in this critical work by making a tax-deductible gift? **You can make a secure online donation at www.nrcat.org/donate.** When you do, you are joining thousands of people of faith who are standing up and saying torture, in any form and for any reason, is wrong.

Torture is *always* wrong.

www.nrcat.org

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If your congregation already owns a NRCAT banner we encourage you to display it during June, take a picture and tweet or Facebook it. If it doesn't, you may wish to order a banner to mark the month with a strong anti-torture public witness.

To order a banner, go to www.nrcat.org/Store.

Let us know what you plan to do! NRCAT is always happy to assist you in planning and promotion. Also, if you would like, we will list your event so others can connect with you. Contact Paz Artaza-Regan at partaza-regan@nrcat.org or 202-547-1920 to help with your event or let us know your plans for June.

“No Doubt, It Was Torture” is an 11 minute film that describes the key findings from The Constitution Project’s Task Force on Detainee Treatment and offers responses from several religious traditions to the problem of U.S.-sponsored torture. After a two-year investigation, the Task Force concluded that there is no doubt that the United States engaged in torture of detainees taken into custody after 9/11, that the torture was authorized at the highest levels of government, and that the use of torture was clearly illegal.

Screen the video in your congregations or community! The video and accompanying resources are available at www.nrcat.org/NoDoubtFilm

**NO DOUBT, IT WAS
TORTURE**

Worship Resources

Christian Prayer

Living God, when you were born among us
through your holy Son, Jesus,
We had no room for you.
We sent you to the stable.
When you spoke to us on hillsides and on
beaches, in towns and homes,
And even in the Temple,
We argued with you and misunderstood you
in a hundred different ways.
Sometimes we said you had a demon,
Or we called you a companion of sinners.
When you were arrested,
Like Peter we pulled out a sword,
As if the justice of God could be
accomplished through human violence.
When you were led away,
With the disciples we abandoned you.
And when you were tortured,
We protected ourselves.

In the centuries since your night of torture,
We have too often been more closely aligned
with the torturers
than with you.
Sometimes in your own name we tortured
those we labeled
Heretics.
Even now, we too often vocally or tacitly
approve
Torture of those deemed enemies,
Even though you called us to love our
enemies,
And to treat others as we would be treated.

Heal us, Lord.
Just as you taught us to see your own image
In the hungry, naked, imprisoned, and alone,
Help us to see your image in those who are
tortured.
And let us stand with you so that neither they
nor we
Are further dehumanized
Through the tragic disregard of your image
In every human being.
Amen.

By Rev. Brian D. McLaren (brianmclaren.net)

Misheberach for Victims of Torture

May the One who blessed our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah, be filled with compassion for all victims of torture. May the Holy One send a healing of body and a healing of soul to those who have suffered torture, whether at the hands of agents of our own country or at the hands of others. May those who engage in torture cease and desist, and turn away from this path that corrupts their souls and debases the Great Name of God. May we never remain silent in the face of torture, and may we heed the words of Your Torah, “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” By our prayers and actions may we attain forgiveness for what we have allowed to occur. May we be worthy to do good deeds in Your eyes and for Your Presence to return to our midst. And let us say Amen.

Thanks to Rabbi Gilah Langner for writing this blessing. For more, visit www.truah.org/issues/campaigns/torture.html



Shine a light on the truth.
Restore human dignity.

Islamic Teachings on Torture

Both the Qur'an and the Hadeeth (collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) declare that God has invested the children of Adam with dignity, thus prohibiting any treatment that strips another person of that dignity. Treating with respect the human body of all persons – regardless of religion or race – is a sacred trust. Torture clearly violates that trust.

Qur'an (5:8) – “O you who believe, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is acquainted with what you do.”

The following sayings of the Prophet have been taken from the *Encyclopedia of Hadeeth*.

“Allah will punish those on the day of judgment who torture people in this world.”

“You should show mercy to your people on earth, otherwise the One above you in the heavens will not show His mercy to you.”

Worship Resources



Buddhist Peace Prayer

May all beings be Peaceful, Happy and Well.
May all beings have Dignity, Love and Respect.
May all beings work to end Torture and relieve Suffering.
May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of Understanding and Love.
May I learn to identify and see the sources of anger, craving and delusion in myself.
May I learn to Forgive myself for eyes clouded by delusion and fear.
May all efforts to relieve Suffering be successful.

This prayer was written by Rev. Brian Vaughn (International Buddhist Temple, New Hartford, CT) for use during NRCAT's "Ten Days of Prayer: Countdown to an End to Torture" – January 11-20, 2009.

Interfaith Prayer

Great God of Justice, though we know you by many names and in many ways, as your people we gather around this single prayer, which we lift up to You: turn us from the coercion of torture.

Stay our hand if we seek to cause pain to gather information.

Remind us that truth is never willing to pay the price of cruelty, but seeks the path of integrity to find its final home. Amen.

By Bishop Stephen Charleston

Links to More Resources

Interfaith Resources

are available at:
www.nrcat.org/June2014Interfaith

Christian Resources

are available at:
www.nrcat.org/June2014Christian

Jewish Resources

are available at:
www.nrcat.org/June2014Jewish

Muslim Resources

are available at:
www.nrcat.org/June2014Muslim

Educational Resources

are available at:
www.nrcat.org/June2014Education

Sermon Notes

are available at:
www.nrcat.org/June2014Sermon

For general resources go to
www.nrcat.org/June2014Resources



Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity

THE TORTURE REPORT

What it is

Why it matters

What you can do

WHAT THE REPORT IS: The Torture Report is a 6,000 page document that is the result of a four year investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee into the CIA's rendition, detention, and interrogation practices during the post-9/11 era. It was adopted with a bipartisan 9-6 vote by the Senate Intelligence Committee in 2012. On April 3, 2014, in a bipartisan 11-3 vote, the Committee agreed to make public the 400 page executive summary and findings of the report.

WHAT THE REPORT DESCRIBES: Although the report is currently classified, statements by officials who have read the report suggest that it describes the CIA's use of morally abhorrent and horrific acts of torture during the detention and interrogations of suspected terrorists after 9/11. It is also said to show that torture did not provide critical intelligence leading to Osama bin Laden and that there is no reason to believe that evidence obtained through torture could not have been obtained through other, moral and legal, means.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE REPORT: The Senate Intelligence Committee voted to make the executive summary and findings of the Torture Report public and now awaits declassification. Unfortunately, President Obama chose to put the CIA in charge of redacting the report, which creates a potentially serious conflict of interest - the CIA is in charge of redacting a report that is critical of the CIA. Even prior to the vote to release, the CIA attempted to obstruct the Committee's investigation by restricting its access to information, spying on its computers, and attempting to intimidate Committee staff who were conducting the investigation.

When you say "torture," what are you really talking about?

We already know that the CIA waterboarded detainees, subjected them to sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, isolation, extremes of heat and cold, and beatings.

The CIA also forced detainees to remain awake, in stress positions, unable to use the toilet, or relax, for up to a week at a time.

The CIA used secret overseas prisons and worked with other countries to torture detainees. The report may reveal additional details about this, Guantanamo, or the role of medical professionals.

WHY THE REPORT MATTERS – THE MORAL VIEW:

The public has not only the right to know the truth about the abuses carried out by the U.S. government – in our name – it also has an obligation to know. The CIA may often operate in the shadows, but it is ultimately responsible to our elected leaders, and they are ultimately responsible to us. As citizens in a democracy, it is important to know what took place, review it in terms of our faith values, and determine what the next steps should be.

As people of faith, we believe that torture is a sin against humanity and against God. Torture violates the God-given dignity and worth of every person. We bear a fundamental duty to protect that dignity and worth. Together we can shine the light and expose the truth of the U.S. torture program and create a future where human dignity is restored.

WHY THE REPORT MATTERS – THE LEGAL VIEW: Unfortunately, current law was insufficient to prevent the Bush Administration, the CIA, and unethical lawyers from twisting the law in a way that was used to authorize torture. We must expose the truth of the U.S. torture program so that we can put in place stronger laws that will more effectively prevent torture in the future.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: During the next few months, the CIA will review and redact the to-be-released portions of the report. The redactions need to be minimal and should not block the release of embarrassing information, or information that is critical of the CIA or the torture program.

You can make a difference by acting now:

- Contact the President and tell him that you expect him to take personal responsibility for strict oversight of the redaction process. President Obama banned torture on his second full day in office. Now he needs to ensure that the CIA doesn't cover it up. We have a letter you can send at www.nrcat.org/GetInvolved
- Consider organizing an educational event using the short film “No Doubt, It Was Torture.” Watch the 11 minute film and lead a discussion using the study guide designed for a one-hour session at www.nrcat.org/NoDoubtFilm
- Put your Facebook and Twitter accounts into action to share anti-torture messages. We have samples at www.nrcat.org/GetInvolved
- Be ready to respond once the executive summary, findings, and conclusions are made public. Join the National Religious Campaign Against Torture's e-mail list to be sure you are contacted with opportunities to ask your legislators to put into law new anti-torture safeguards or write an op-ed or letter to the editor.

**For more information and links to all these activities, go to:
www.nrcat.org/GetInvolved**

LEARN. PRAY. ACT.

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 National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

A PRAYER FOR RESTORATION

One: Liberator from Injustice, You knock on the doors of our souls, calling us to become a people of conscience. As a people of conscience give us the courage to ask:

All: How much longer will we stand by and bear witness to the cadence of those marching to the justification of torture? How much longer will we accept the lies and betrayals of yesterday's and today's leaders? How much longer will we watch the dignity of our sisters and brothers be crushed beneath the torturers' boots with the complicity of our government?

One: In the pages of history yet to be written, where will our names fall? With those who chose to stand on the sidelines and absent themselves from the struggle? Or those who take action against that great wrong no matter the cost to themselves?

All: Liberator from Injustice, You knock on the doors of our souls, calling us to become a people of action. As a people of action, we turn to you for moral guidance and daring strength.

One: May we grow in our recognition of the responsibility to labor for the worldwide abolition of torture. May we grow in our readiness to defy our government's involvement in torture and call for full disclosure of what it has committed in our name.

All: May we grow stronger in our resolve to end the sin of torture in all corners of the Earth. May we grow in our compassion for the tortured as they seek to restore their dignity and trust in humanity. May we grow in our understanding that those who torture are also in need of healing. May we become your vessels of conscience and action—carrying the promise of a better tomorrow. Amen

~ By Sister Dianna Ortiz, OSU (Education for Justice Project of the Center of Concern). Sr. Dianna, an Ursuline nun, survived torture in Guatemala while serving as a missionary in the 1980's. She helped found the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International.

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Exposing the Truth of U.S. Torture: Restoring Human Dignity

“Torture” is a word that evokes horror and a deep sense of spiritual wrongness. It is associated with many of the worst eras of human history and is used today by the world’s worst tyrants. It is cruel, violent, immoral, and illegal. Torture destroys our God-given human dignity, and is a sin no one should engage in or be complicit in.

Unfortunately, out of fear, ignorance, anger, and a misguided attempt for safety, U.S. leaders chose to use torture as a means of interrogating suspected terrorists. The use of torture violated our morality and laws, and it ran contrary to the advice of experienced interrogators - who generally agree that using torture is detrimental to obtaining useful intelligence.

Five years ago, our government banned the use of torture as an interrogation method. Since then little information has been made public about the use of torture on 9/11 detainees. However, with an 11-3 bipartisan vote this spring, the Senate Intelligence Committee decided to make public a summary of its report describing the results of its investigation into our government’s use of torture. The report details the horrors of a shameful chapter of our history. It is currently being declassified.

The facts in the report will give us critical footing to put in place permanent legal safeguards to prevent the use of torture in the future. By exposing the truth of U.S. torture, the facts are a starting point to support national repentance and healing toward the restoration of human dignity for all.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Please help ensure that the truth about the torture program is made public and that our leaders use this information to permanently abolish the use of torture. Our leaders need to hear that torture should never again be done in our name.

**To learn more and join in this important effort, go to:
www.nrnat.org/GetInvolved**



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JUNE
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