

2009 REPORT

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

NRCAT realized the fruit of its previous year's efforts on January 22, 2009 when President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order halting torture just two days after taking the Oath of Office. Despite President Obama's Executive Order, there is much more to be done to assure that government-sanctioned torture ends once and for all.

This report describes NRCAT's work during the calendar year of 2009 and has several sections:

- History and goals.
- Deepening and broadening the involvement of the religious community in ending U.S.-sponsored torture.
- Programmatic opportunities designed to educate and increase the commitment of people of faith across the nation that torture is always wrong.
- Efforts to impact legislation that would end U.S.-sponsored torture.
- A planning process to determine if NRCAT should expand its areas of work in 2010.

History

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) was launched during the conference, "Theology, International Law and Torture: A Conference on Human Rights and Religious Commitment," which was held on January 13-16, 2006, at Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. George Hunsinger, Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, convened the conference to better equip the multiple religious communities to take a more prominent role in the effort to end U.S.-sponsored torture. 150 leaders of a variety of faiths attended the Conference.

The organization that Hunsinger created after the release of the Abu Ghraib photos, Church Folks for a Better America, and its fiscal agent, the Coalition for Peace Action in Princeton, NJ, contracted with the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, a national ecumenical research center located at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, to help plan and promote the conference and develop plans for a new national religious organization working to end U.S.-sponsored torture.

Preparations for the January 2006 conference included a November 17, 2005 meeting at the Friends Committee on National Legislation in Washington, DC, of staff people of various national faith group bodies and those in the religious community who were already working on the issue. Those attending began to discuss the possibility of developing an ongoing national religious anti-torture campaign.

The Churches' Center staffed NRCAT from January 2006 to May 7, 2007 and, in June 2006, became its fiscal agent. NRCAT incorporated in March 2007 in the District of Columbia and was granted its 501(c)(3) status by the IRS in June 2007. On May 9, 2007, NRCAT hired Rev. Richard Killmer as its executive director and additional staff people were hired later in 2007, 2008, and 2009. There is a Board of Directors of twelve people responsible for its work.

NRCAT is a 501 (c)(3) organization which has an "h" election so that it is able to spend up to 20% of its expenditures on lobbying. In December 2007, the NRCAT Action Fund, a 501 (c)(4) organization, was created. It is responsible for lobbying and election campaign activities such as urging people of faith to ask questions of candidates for President, the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives about torture.

In 2009 NRCAT had seven permanent staff: Executive Director, Director for Administration, Director for Policy, Associate Director for Policy, Director for Program Coordination, Director of Finance, and the Project Manager for Evangelicals for Human Rights. It has also hired contract staff for several of its projects as well as several interns.

NRCAT's fund raising efforts have been successful. Foundations, religious organizations, large donors and individual people of faith gave NRCAT over \$700,000 in 2009.

Key Programs and Accomplishments

A Google search reports 187,000 hits for the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. The organization has not only engaged in significant program activities, it has also established a solid infrastructure that is well-equipped to continue the work toward its goal of ending U.S.-sponsored torture. At the June 2009 retreat of the NRCAT Board of Directors, the Board agreed to begin a planning process to determine if NRCAT should expand its focus to include two new areas of work: ending torture in U.S. prisons and advocating for U.S. policies and practices that will help end torture by other governments. On December 10, 2009 it agreed to expand into these areas. A more comprehensive description of this planning process is found at the end of this report.

Goals

The goals of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture are to:

1. Bring about changes in U.S. policy to prohibit -- without exception -- all U.S.-sponsored torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees, including all policies that allow for, or encourage, such torture or treatment.
2. Expand the moral consensus among the American people that torture is never acceptable.
3. Encourage and enable national denominations, faith groups, national and regional religious organizations, congregations, and individual people of faith to engage actively in efforts to end U.S.-sponsored torture.

NRCAT's key programs and accomplishments, since its genesis in January 2006, can be viewed within a framework of three broad objectives:

- I. Deepening and broadening the involvement of the religious community in ending U.S.-sponsored torture.
- II. Providing programmatic opportunities to the religious community, especially congregations, for addressing this issue.
- III. Helping people of faith advocate for specific legislation and policies regarding torture and making policy-makers aware of religious perspectives on torture-related issues.

I. Deepening and broadening the involvement of the religious community in ending U.S.-sponsored torture.

1. NRCAT has more than 270 religious member organizations. These include: evangelical Christians, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, mainline Protestants, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Bahá'is, and Buddhists. 104 organizations are Participating Members, who name a voting representative to the Participating Members Council (PMC), contribute financially to the organization, and agree to use and support NRCAT programs. 166 Endorsing Members name a non-voting representative to the PMC and agree to use and support NRCAT programs. NRCAT regularly sends emails to its member religious organizations with information to send to their constituents about current legislation and NRCAT programs, as well as suggestions for engaging their congregations & members in the effort to end U.S.-sponsored torture.

Member organizations include national denominational and faith group bodies, regional entities such as state ecumenical agencies, and local religious organizations and congregations.

2. Over 52,000 people of faith have endorsed "Torture is a Moral Issue" – NRCAT's Statement of Conscience, the Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty or NRCAT's statement on a Commission of Inquiry. Endorsers are integral partners in the campaign to end U.S.-sponsored torture. NRCAT sends information about current NRCAT programs, pending legislation in Congress, and suggestions for helping their congregations engage in efforts to end torture.

3. There are six interfaith regional anti-torture organizations that are Participating Members of NRCAT and who maintain a close working relationship with us. Five of these were formed in conjunction with, or because of, NRCAT's work. The six regional organizations are: Bay Area Religious Campaign Against Torture (BARCAT) in California, Los Angeles Region Religious Campaign Against Torture (LARRCAT), Metro New York Religious Campaign Against Torture (MNYRCAT), Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice in Connecticut, Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture (WRRCAT), and the Washington State Religious Campaign Against Torture (WSRCAT).

4. NRCAT has a special relationship with several national anti-torture faith-based organizations. These include: Evangelicals for Human Rights (EHR), an organization created by NRCAT, Rabbis for Human Rights – North America, and No2Torture (a Presbyterian group). NRCAT has also developed the Roman Catholic Leadership Council, which has had a full program including preparing study material for Catholic parishes. Their work is described below.

5. NRCAT created Evangelicals for Human Rights (EHR) in 2006. The EHR Steering Committee has 12 members that provide EHR with inroads into the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), Fuller Theological Seminary, Sojourners, and the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC). EHR has also continued to strengthen its relationship with the National Association of Evangelicals. See below for a description of the major conference, *Religious Faith, Torture, and our National Soul* to which EHR provided leadership.

6. NRCAT has enabled national denominations and faith groups to work to end U.S.-sponsored torture. In addition to providing these bodies with concrete programs that congregations can implement, NRCAT also furnishes these organizations with numerous opportunities to educate their members about current legislation before the U.S. Congress.

NRCAT has also had a presence at the national gatherings of national denominational and faith group bodies. These include: the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, three conventions of the Islamic Society of North America, two conferences of Rabbis for Human Rights – North America, the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, and the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

NRCAT serves as an informational conduit to staff members of the national denominational bodies about legislation before Congress.

7. NRCAT has created 21 state and regional partnerships. These include the six state or regional organizations described in number 3 above, state ecumenical agencies and other organizations. The 21 states where these partners are located are: Arizona, California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The partners in many of these states are ecumenical and interfaith agencies. NRCAT also operates a grant-making capacity which makes small grants to many of these partners.

NRCAT has also joined with partners to co-sponsor various events to raise public awareness about the issue of U.S.-sponsored torture. NRCAT co-sponsored a conference with the Bay Area Religious Campaign Against Torture in June, organized by the Santa Clara County Council of Churches. The two-day conference, titled “Torture is a Moral Issue,” featured speakers from a variety of backgrounds, including torture survivors, former CIA analysts, Army interrogators, and members of the clergy. In Salt Lake City, NRCAT co-sponsored a major demonstration during which supporters expressed their concern over the U.S. government’s use of torture. In October, NRCAT co-sponsored an important program organized by the Los Angeles Region Religious Campaign Against Torture on “Islamophobia and Torture.”

II. Providing programmatic opportunities to the religious community, especially congregations, for addressing this issue.

1. Presidential Executive Order

Throughout 2008 and into 2009, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) joined with Evangelicals for Human Rights and the Center for Victims of Torture to generate support for an executive order to be issued by the President of the United States. The three organizations used the statement they had prepared for their work - *Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty*. There were three phases of their work together in 2008; the first began in October 2007.

The third and final phase of this campaign (November 2008 to January 2009) focused on post-election efforts to convince political leaders and high level staff to encourage the newly-elected President to issue an Executive Order ending torture upon his assumption of the office of the presidency. The primary goal of this phase, of course, was to convince the President-elect's advisors and other senior administrative officials of the political, moral, and practical value of taking such an action. Strategies for doing so involved local grassroots organizing, talking with Members of Congress, and high-level contacts with members of the transition team.

In January, NRCAT launched a final grassroots effort to unite the religious community in calling for President-elect Obama to issue an executive order ending torture. Called "Countdown to End Torture: Ten Days of Prayer," this initiative featured a "countdown clock" on the NRCAT website, marking the final 10 days before the inauguration, and a call to religious congregations to include an interfaith prayer on torture in a worship service during that period. More than 200 congregations informed us of their participation in the Countdown initiative.

During this same period, NRCAT's leadership engaged in a number of high-level efforts to demonstrate to the Transition Team the importance of an executive order based on the *Declaration*. NRCAT convinced nearly three dozen prominent religious leaders, representing the diversity of America's faith traditions, to sign a letter to President-elect Obama calling on him to end torture. On Wednesday, January 14, NRCAT organized a national press teleconference involving some of these religious leaders and two representatives of the intelligence community to highlight the "Countdown to End Torture." On the same day, 17 NRCAT staff, board and religious leaders met with members of the Transition Team to deliver the signed letter and the list of people of faith who had endorsed the *Declaration of Principles*.

NRCAT followed up two days later, on Friday, January 16, with an interfaith phone call to again reiterate to the Transition Team the importance of the executive order. On the day of the phone call, the press began publishing stories claiming that the President-elect was considering the possibility of allowing the CIA to use secret interrogation techniques from a "classified annex" – NRCAT leaders were able to immediately tell the Transition Team that that would be a mistake.

Media coverage for the "Countdown to End Torture" activities was extraordinary. Among the more than 50 stories were 3 mentions of NRCAT in *The New York Times* within a one-week period.

On January 22, 2009, President Obama issued an Executive Order halting torture.

2. Advocating for a Commission of Inquiry

In February 2009, NRCAT launched efforts to urge the Obama administration to establish a “Commission of Inquiry” to investigate U.S.-sponsored torture, and to recommended safeguards to make sure that torture never happens again.

On March 3, NRCAT released a statement calling for an impartial, nonpartisan, and independent Commission, with signatures from 25 senior religious leaders. The statement urged the creation of such a Commission, which would have the power to subpoena witnesses and to investigate the roles elements of our government played in the torture of detainees, and would ensure the development of safeguards against any future practices of torture.

NRCAT began to collect endorsements from individual people of faith for its statement on a Commission of Inquiry. Almost 7000 people have endorsed the statement, and NRCAT produced a promotional web sticker for organizations to use on their websites to encourage more individual endorsements. Several of NRCAT’s members have posted the web sticker.

The organization also urged religious organizations to endorse the statement as well. Fifty -five religious organizations have endorsed the statement, including the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the Islamic Society of North America and the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

On March 15, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) released a report indicating that the ill-treatment of U.S. held detainees constituted torture, as practices were cruel, inhuman, and degrading. In response, NRCAT released a statement reiterating its call for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry.

On March 25, NRCAT issued a letter to Attorney General Holder, asking him to appoint a Special Counsel to investigate criminal acts relating to the confinement and interrogation of detainees since Sept. 11, 2001. The letter was sent in response to the release of the ICRC report that concluded that detainees held in the War on Terror had been subjected to torture. The report showed that a limited investigation would be insufficient, as officials from the lowest CIA officer to the highest levels of the Executive Branch may be criminally culpable for approving and implementing the use of torture. Therefore, NRCAT urged Attorney General Holder to refer the investigation to a Special Counsel so that the investigation could include a review of the conduct of very top officials of the Bush administration. This is necessary as the appearance of absolute impartiality in determining future prosecution is critical to the public’s support and understanding of such prosecutions and the laws at issue. A button on the NRCAT home page links to letters and other information on criminal investigations.

On April 16, NRCAT sent letters to the leadership of both houses of Congress renewing its call for a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the authorization and use of torture in light of the ICRC report on torture, as well the release of Department of Justice memos written in 2005 (and one from 2002) that demonstrate that officials at the highest level of the U.S. government had approved the use of torture. The letter, sent to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader John Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, emphasized the moral imperative of establishing a commission at this time, as it

would provide a complete picture of past torture practices to ensure that such practices do not occur again.

Late in April, NRCAT joined with 18 faith-based, human rights, and justice organizations to launch a campaign urging President Obama to create a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the Bush administration's torture practices. The coalition called for a Commission to look into the facts and circumstances of abuses, report on lessons learned, and recommend measures that would prevent any future abuses. NRCAT also joined with human rights organizations in promoting a Commission call-in week, during which organizations urged their members to call their representatives in Congress and urge them to establish a Commission.

In May, NRCAT began to organize a major religious witness event for June 11 in front of the White House asking for a Commission of Inquiry. Heads of faith groups and religious institutions were asked to provide leadership and a request was made for a meeting with senior White House staff.

At noon on June 11, eight heads of faith groups and other religious institutions joined other prominent clergy in standing with NRCAT at a public witness in front of the White House (in Lafayette Square), calling for a Commission of Inquiry on Torture. The religious leaders issued a strong plea to President Obama to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate U.S.-sponsored torture that occurred post-9/11. Over 300 people of faith were in attendance.

The heads of faith groups and other religious organizations speaking included the Rev. Dr. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ; Rabbi Steve Gutow, Executive Director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs; the Rev. William Sinkford, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations; Marie Dennis, Co-President, Pax Christi International (the Catholic Peace Movement); Dr. Ingrid Mattson, President of the Islamic Society of North America; Archbishop Michael Seneco, Presiding Bishop of the North American Old Catholic Church; and the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Legate of the Armenian Church in America, led a water blessing of the crowd to bless them in their efforts to end U.S.-sponsored torture forever.

Prior to the public witness, the senior religious leaders held a press conference at 11 a.m. at the National Press Club during which they discussed the letter to President Obama (signed by more than 50 prominent religious leaders) that they delivered to the White House that afternoon. Statements of the eight senior religious leaders issued at the press conference on June 11 are available at www.nrcat.org/coi.

At 2 p.m., a delegation of 33 religious leaders met with senior administration officials in the White House. "This is an extremely important day for the religious community," said Rev. Richard Killmer, NRCAT's executive director before the meeting. "This diverse group of religious leaders from around the country has assembled in Washington to advocate for a Commission of Inquiry to investigate torture practices since 9/11. Only through an investigation of what happened can we be sure that torture will never happen again. As details about our nation's involvement in torture continue to be made public, we believe the need for an

independent, non-partisan commission to investigate all relevant facts is more important than ever. We hope that President Obama will agree.”

At least eight staff from four different offices within the Administration, including the Office of the White House Counsel, the Office of Public Engagement and the Homeland Security Administration, met with the NRCAT delegation.

After the meeting Rev. Killmer issued this statement: “We were pleased to have the opportunity today to meet with Obama administration officials to discuss our strong support for the establishment of an independent, non-partisan Commission of Inquiry to investigate the development and implementation of a program of torture by the United States in the years after 9/11. Unfortunately, as is known publicly, President Obama does not currently support the establishment of an investigative Commission. However, the officials with whom we met heard our concerns and welcomed our input. This is not the end of this process; it is merely the beginning. As events continue to unfold, we will advocate for a Commission of Inquiry that can uncover all of the facts. We cannot simply bury our past, for as the Bible says, ‘the truth shall make us free.’”

NRCAT has continued to meet with White House staff on a Commission of Inquiry and has had six such meetings since June 11.

3. Heads of Denominations and Faith Groups

NRCAT has worked with a variety of groups within the religious community to end U.S.-sponsored torture. One of these groups has been the heads of faith groups. A major request to this group has been to sign letters and endorse statements.

There are now 30 heads of denominations and faith groups that have endorsed NRCAT’s Statement of Conscience “Torture is a Moral Issue.” The list continues to grow and can be viewed at http://www.nrcat.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=46.

In addition, there were other letters and activities from heads of faith groups and other senior religious leaders including:

- Twenty-eight endorsed the *Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty* – asking the President to issue an executive order ending torture.
- Twenty-seven signed a letter to the Senate asking their support for legislation which would have guaranteed the International Committee of the Red Cross access to U.S.-held detainees.
- Thirty-four asked President-elect Obama to issue an executive order ending torture.
- Thirty-three said thank you to President Obama for issuing the executive order.
- Twenty-five endorsed NRCAT’s statement on a Commission of Inquiry.
- Eight heads of faith groups and religious institutions provided leadership to the religious witness in front of the White House on June 11 asking the President to establish a Commission of Inquiry.
- Forty-seven senior religious leaders across the country sent a letter to all Members of the Congress asking them to support the closing of the Detention Center at Guantanamo.

4. NRCAT's Catholic Leadership Council

NRCAT organized a group of leaders from six Catholic organizations to provide leadership to the 51 Catholic organizations that are members of NRCAT. It met monthly and had a rich program in 2009. During the year its accomplishments included:

- A curriculum on torture called “Torture is a Moral Issue” for Catholic parishes produced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The curriculum has been published and is on both the NRCAT and USCCB websites. There have been numerous articles in the Catholic press about this new material.
- Contracting with a writer to produce study material based on the curriculum published by the USCCB. Published by JustFaith, it is called *In the Footsteps of the Crucified: Torture is Never Justified*. This 8-session, intensive program of group study and dialogue is now available for use in Catholic parishes.
- A conference at Catholic University on March 19 called “Torture, Conscience and Catholic Moral Teaching,” co-sponsored with two departments of Catholic University in Washington, DC. It explored the decisions of conscience by Catholics in the public arena regarding the use of torture. A more complete description of the conference is found in the next item in this report.

5. A Catholic Conference

The Catholic Leadership Council of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, the Life Cycle Institute, and the Center for International Social Development of the Catholic University of America sponsored an important conference on March 19, 2009 at Catholic University called “Torture, Conscience and the Catholic Moral Tradition.” It explored the decisions of conscience by Catholics in the public arena regarding the use of torture.

Speakers included: Doug Cassel, Director of the Center on Civil and Human Rights at Notre Dame University; Steve Colecchi, Director of the Office of International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; Maryann Cusimano Love, Associate Professor of International Politics, Catholic University of America; Colonel Patrick Lang, former Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East and Director for the Human Intelligence Collection; George Lopez, Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Notre Dame University; Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, Co-Director of the Center on Religion and Culture, Fordham University; and General Anthony Taguba, Chief Investigator of Abu Ghraib.

6. Workshop at Ecumenical Advocacy Days

Ecumenical Advocacy Days is an annual event that brings Christians from around the country to lobby their Members of Congress on a variety of issues. In March 2009, NRCAT and the Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture co-sponsored a major workshop called “Next Steps in Ending U.S.-sponsored Torture” featuring Matthew Alexander, a former military interrogator; Scott Horton a writer at Harper’s magazine; and George Hunsinger, Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.

7. Produced and promoted new video “Ending U.S.-Sponsored Torture Forever”

In April, NRCAT produced *Ending U.S. Sponsored Torture Forever*, a twenty-minute video with a companion study guide. More than 300 copies of the study resource were distributed to religious institutions with the intention of increasing the number of individuals who believe that

torture is wrong. The video includes commentary by Matthew Alexander, a former interrogator, and George Hunsinger, founder of NRCAT, and prominent religious leaders. Around the same time, NRCAT also produced new bumper stickers and banners that called for lawmakers to investigate past uses of torture, as well as establish legislation to prevent torture from happening again. NRCAT also produced an updated and revised version of the “Torture is a Moral Issue” brochure.

During the fall, NRCAT revised and expanded the video, adding a powerful interview with Stephen Colecchi of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. At the same time, NRCAT worked with its allies to develop six versions of a detailed discussion guide for specific faith groups: Catholic, evangelical Christian, Jewish, mainline Protestant, Muslim and Unitarian Universalist.

In November, NRCAT launched a campaign to have at least 300 congregations in 30 or more states show the video and use the discussion guides before April 1, 2010. A primary goal of the campaign is to reach new congregations that have not previously collaborated with NRCAT. A professional evaluator helped NRCAT develop a survey instrument to evaluate the effectiveness of the resource and discussions by having participants respond to a few simple questions, including the same question used by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life in recent polls. The results of the survey will help NRCAT improve future resources, and some of the aggregate data will be made available on the NRCAT website.

8. Improved website

21,992 unique visitors used the general NRCAT website this year; and over 10,000 used NRCAT’s online action center. NRCAT made numerous changes to its website to make navigation easier as well as provide more information and resources. In addition to updating and revising the structure and content of the NRCAT website, NRCAT has provided a number of grassroots advocacy tools and initiatives for supporters to use in being visible and vocal in their own communities. For example, the website has provided sample letters to the editor, as well as several sample letters to lawmakers and other public officials. The website also provides information on securing meetings with in-district congressional staff. The website provides numerous resources on torture that congregations can use in worship and study.

In addition, NRCAT has expanded its use of social media, creating a FaceBook fan page to replace its FaceBook group. Relationships continue to develop with bloggers to encourage them to repost NRCAT email messages and original content of their own anti-torture activities.

9. Advent Resource

NRCAT contracted with a Protestant minister to develop a lectionary-based resource for Christian clergy to use during Advent 2009. With sections for all four Sundays in Advent, as well as Christmas Eve, the new resource provided commentary on the scriptures and sermon notes that help connect the scriptures with today’s national dialogue on the use of torture. With an introduction and a bibliography, the 15-page document combined scholarly research and exegesis of the lectionary readings with a conversational tone that made it easy to build upon the ideas in developing sermons.

10. Grants to partners

In 2009, NRCAT awarded more than \$40,000 in grants to partners. These funds were utilized by faith communities nationwide in their efforts to end the use of torture on the national level while garnering support on the local level. Partner organizations have held demonstrations, organized conferences, and organized various other projects to spread awareness of the issue of torture. These events and projects have encouraged other people of faith to be vocal about torture in their communities, and to urge their elected officials to take action in calling for a comprehensive inquiry into the use of torture by their government.

11. Extensive media Coverage

NRCAT's various projects and efforts to bring an end to U.S.-sponsored torture have not only yielded positive results, but extensive media coverage as well. While there were 176 stories in the press concerning NRCAT's activities in 2008, there were 287 stories in 2009. These articles have appeared in a variety of sources, ranging from large national media outlets like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press*, and smaller, local outlets like *The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*. NRCAT has also held numerous press conferences during the 12 month period. Our press releases during 2009 were:

- 1/9/09 Broad Coalition of Prominent Religious Leaders Urge President-Elect Obama to Sign Executive Order Ending Torture On the Day He Takes Office
- 1/14/09 Religious Delegation Meets with Obama Transition Team to Push for Executive Order Ending Torture On the Day Obama Takes Office
- 1/18/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Opposes Any Classified Annex On Presidential Executive Order Ending Torture
- 1/22/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Lauds President Obama for Issuing Executive Order Ending Torture -- Expresses Caution about the Task Force
- 1/23/09 Prominent Faith Leaders thank President Obama for the Executive Order of January 22, 2009
- 3/3/09 Prominent Religious Leaders Call for "Commission of Inquiry" on Torture as Senator Leahy Launches Hearings to Establish "Truth" Commission
- 3/16/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Reiterates Call for "Commission of Inquiry" in Light of Leaked ICRC Report Detailing Horrific Acts of Torture by U.S. Agents
- 4/16/09 Following Leak of ICRC Report and Release of Office of Legal Counsel Memos, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) Urges Immediate Congressional Approval of a Commission of Inquiry

- 4/23/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) Calls Any Delay of Commission on Torture a Mistake; Asks President Obama to Act if Congress Doesn't
- 4/28/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Joins 18 Other Organizations in Calling for an Independent, Non-partisan Commission to Investigate Torture
- 5/7/09 In the Wake of Pew Survey Showing Support for Torture Among Various Religious Denominations, Religious Leaders Call for Commission of Inquiry and Greater Discussions of Torture Within Congregations
- 6/11/09 Prominent Religious Leaders Urge President Obama to Create a “Commission of Inquiry” on U.S.-Sponsored Torture
- 6/11/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Issues Statement Following Delegation Meeting with Obama Administration Officials
- 7/22/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Statement on the Delay of the Release of the Special Task Force Recommendations on Interrogation and Transfer Policies
- 8/24/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) Says Shocking CIA Inspector General Report Demonstrates Need for a Commission of Inquiry
- 8/24/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) Commends the Attorney General for Appointing a Prosecutor with a Limited Mandate, but Says It Is Not Enough
- 9/25/09 Senate Republicans Quit Bipartisan Investigation into Torture: National Religious Campaign Against Torture Responds by Calling for Truth
- 11/12/09 Faith Leaders Nationwide Call on Congress to Close Guantanamo Now
- 12/11/09 National Religious Campaign Against Torture Tells Holder, “Release OPR Report Now!”

III. Helping people of faith advocate for specific legislation and policies regarding torture. Making policy-makers aware of religious perspectives on torture-related issues.

NRCAT uses several tools in its efforts to impact policy. These include:

1. Fact sheets on pending legislation and other issues that are placed on the NRCAT website and otherwise distributed to NRCAT supporters in order to inform them of the issues.
2. Bulletin inserts on issues (normally calling for a specific action – like contacting Members of Congress) that NRCAT supporters are encouraged to place in their worship bulletins.
3. Letters from NRCAT leadership to Congressional leadership, Committee Chairs, and

- other Members of Congress. Blast faxes to all Members of Congress.
4. Emails to NRCAT's member religious organizations to encourage them to urge their constituents to take particular actions.
 5. Emails to NRCAT's individual supporters to request particular actions.
 6. Providing written testimony to Congressional hearings.
 7. Sample emails that NRCAT supporters and visitors to the NRCAT website can send to their Members of Congress, the Executive branch agencies, and the Administration.
 8. Sample op-eds and letters to the editors that NRCAT supporters are urged to re-write and send to their local news outlets.
 9. Direct lobbying of Congressional staff by NRCAT staff.
 10. Phone calls and emails to Congressional staff.
 11. Press releases on NRCAT's work and in response to relevant events.
 12. Work through state ecumenical agencies to intensively lobby particular Members of Congress.
 13. Arranging opportunities for the Washington-based staff of denominations and faith groups to visit the staff people of key Members of Congress to discuss particular pieces of legislation.
 14. Call-in days in which NRCAT supporters are encouraged to call their Members about a current piece of legislation.
 15. Advocacy Days in which our supporters meet with their Members and/or their staff in-district.
 16. Interfaith lobbying days in which NRCAT staff and Washington-based denominational representatives lobby key congressional staffers.
 17. Organizing letters that are sent by the heads of faith groups and other senior religious leaders to key government officials on particular issues.

Quick Glance

41,485 email messages were sent to the Administration and the Congress through NRCAT.

Report on Policy Issues in 2009

Using the tools described above, the policy issues that NRCAT addressed in 2009, in cooperation with the NRCAT Action Fund, included:

1. **Monitoring the Special Task Force:** President Obama's Executive Order on Interrogation and Transfer Policies set up a Special Task Force to review the Army Field Manual guidelines on interrogations and to consider how to prevent rendition to torture. On August 24, 2009, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that the President had agreed to the Task Force's recommendations – including one single, public, humane standard for all interrogations by all government agencies and new safeguards against rendition for torture (sending detainees for interrogation to other countries that are known to torture). The Task Force recommended that all federal agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), use the interrogation standards in the Army Field Manual. Prior to this decision, NRCAT lobbied very aggressively for a single, public standard for conducting all interrogations and met with the special task force to make this recommendation. In addition, thousands of NRCAT's supporters wrote to the Administration in favor of a single, humane, public standard for interrogations.

2. **Commission of Inquiry:** In order to put a permanent end to our country's use of torture, our nation needs to first know exactly what happened. The United States needs an independent, government-sponsored Commission of Inquiry (COI) to investigate the nature of U.S.-sponsored torture and steps taken that led to its use, and then to make recommendations for preventing the use of torture in the future. During 2009 NRCAT lobbied both members of the Administration and Members of Congress in support of a Commission. In particular, representatives of NRCAT met with White House officials six times. In response to White House concerns about the subpoena powers and the goals of the original Commission idea, NRCAT wrote and submitted a new proposal to the White House, touting the idea of a very "forward-looking" Commission. Unfortunately, in the end, the White House rejected any type of a Commission. The creation of a COI, however, will remain a long term goal of NRCAT.
3. **Videotaping Interrogations:** Videotaping interrogations is important to protect both the detainee and the interrogator. During 2008, NRCAT lobbied in support of Representative Rush Holt's videotaping amendment (which would have required the videotaping of interrogations of detainees in DOD custody). However, the amendment did not survive the conference committee on the FY 2009 Defense Authorization bill. In 2009, NRCAT lobbied very aggressively in support of the videotaping amendment (asking our supporters to contact their Members in support of the amendment and having our staff meet with the staff of many of the Defense Authorization conferees about the issue), and the amendment was included in the final version of the FY 2010 Defense Authorization bill and signed into law by the President.
4. **Closing Guantanamo:** The detention center at Guantanamo Bay is a symbol of our country's use of torture. If the U.S. is to restore its reputation in the world, the U.S. government will need to close Guantanamo. During 2009, NRCAT worked to prevent Congress from placing unduly onerous restrictions on the President in his efforts to close Guantanamo. In particular, during the fall of 2009, NRCAT staff lobbied Members on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to defeat the harmful restrictions in the 2010 funding bills.
5. **ICRC Access:** Between 2001 and 2008, the CIA operated a number of semi-secret prisons in eastern Europe, the Middle East and other countries. No one other than the CIA and former detainees knows for certain what happened in most of those prisons – but there is evidence that detainees were abused. One possible way to prevent the torture of detainees in the future is to ensure that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is granted access to all U.S.-held detainees. Legislation to ensure ICRC access passed the Senate (with NRCAT's support) in 2008. In the fall of 2009, NRCAT began discussing with other human rights groups the possibility of renewing a push for this measure during 2010. This is likely to be an important 2010 goal for NRCAT.
6. **The "Golden Rule":** Torture was clearly illegal during 2001-2008, yet lawyers from the Department of Justice were able to misinterpret the law in such a way as to justify acts that most people believe were torture. In the future, legislation based on the "Golden Rule" could make it harder for lawyers to misinterpret the law regarding torture by

requiring the President to publicly proclaim that each and every approved interrogation technique would be both legal and moral if used upon a captured American. In the fall of 2009, NRCAT began working with other human rights groups to draft legislation on the Golden Rule and ran the idea past several potentially sympathetic Hill offices to see what sort of response it would get. Since it has received a very positive response, NRCAT expects that promoting this legislation will be a significant part of its 2010 agenda.

7. **Select Committee on Interrogation Policy:** A Commission of Inquiry is only one of the possible ways to conduct a thorough investigation into our past use of torture. Another possible venue for such an investigation would be a select committee of the House or Senate. In 2009, NRCAT staff met with approximately 90 House offices to discuss the possibility of establishing a Select Committee to review our past interrogation policies in order to make recommendations for preventing the future use of torture. While it has been an uphill battle to convince moderate Members of the need for investigating our past use of torture, NRCAT is still committed to achieving accountability and will likely continue to pursue this possibility in 2010.
8. **Torture Victims Relief Act:** The Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA) would provide funds to centers for torture victims around the world that help heal the damage done to victims of torture. As perpetrators of torture, our country must begin to undo the damage it has caused by helping victims of torture around the world. In 2009, NRCAT encouraged its supporters to contact their Members of Congress in support of TVRA. NRCAT will continue to work on this issue in 2010, supporting the efforts of the Center for Victims of Torture.

Direct Lobbying

During 2009, Matt Hawthorne (Policy Director) and Heather Rice (Associate Policy Director) met with the offices of 101 Members of Congress, including 89 House visits and 12 visits to Senate offices. The majority of these visits focused on the Rush Holt videotaping amendment and on a House Select Committee to investigate torture. Other visit topics included Guantanamo, ICRC access, and the Golden Rule.

From July 30 to September 18, Matt and Heather made 26 visits (12 Senate and 14 House) to encourage members of the conference committee on the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act to include the Rush Holt videotaping amendment, a provision that requires the DOD to videotape the interrogation of detainees in its custody, in the final version of the bill. On Oct. 7, the conference committee agreed on a final version, and it included a version of the Rush Holt videotaping provision. The videotaping provision was signed into law as part of the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act by President Obama on October 28.

Since May, NRCAT has sought the establishment of a Select Committee of the House to investigate our use of torture since 9/11 and to issue recommendations to prevent its future use. At this point, the focus is on finding members of the minority party who are willing to co-sponsor a resolution to establish a Select Committee.

Recently, NRCAT expanded its lobbying focus to include a number of other issues. NRCAT staff have spoken with 7 House offices about considering legislation that would codify the Executive Order provision allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross access to all detainees; have discussed the possibility of “Golden Rule” legislation with 6 offices; and have encouraged 12 Members (11 House visits, 1 Senate visit) to resist efforts to prevent the closure of Guantanamo.

NRCAT Planning Process

At the June 2009 retreat of the NRCAT Board of Directors, the Board agreed to begin a planning process to determine if NRCAT should expand its focus to include two new areas of work: ending torture in U.S. prisons and advocating for U.S. policies and practices that will help end torture by other governments.

The planning process for torture in U.S. prisons included a Planning Meeting held on November 4-5 in Washington, DC, with experts on conditions in U.S. prisons, those from the faith community engaged in criminal justice issues, and members of the Board, staff and other leaders of NRCAT. A paper was prepared for the Board that described the recommendations of the Planning Meeting. The paper includes a description of the problem, a discussion of the reasons why NRCAT should consider an expansion into the arena of working to end torture in U.S. prisons, and a list of the goals, objectives and tasks should the Board decide to do so.

NRCAT also asked Barbara Frey, director of the Human Rights Program at the University of Minnesota, to prepare a white paper exploring whether NRCAT can and should play a role in advocating for U.S. policies and practices that help end torture by other governments. The paper includes a description of the problem of systemic torture in the world today, a discussion of why NRCAT is well situated to expand its work to address U.S. foreign policy with respect to torture by foreign governments and a list of recommended goals, objectives and tasks for NRCAT in this area.

On December 10, 2009, the Board voted to expand into both areas. NRCAT will begin to implement these projects with existing staff and will raise funds for these projects from foundations and other funders in order to expand these efforts.