



National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

WHO IS THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE?

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) mobilizes people of faith to end torture in U.S. policy, practice, and culture. A nationally recognized interfaith membership organization based in Washington, D.C., NRCAT is comprised of more than 300 religious organizations and more than 75,000 individuals have participated in our programs and activities. Our diverse partners share a common commitment to advancing the values of human dignity, human rights, and an end to torture, without exception. To achieve its mission, NRCAT engages in grassroots organizing, public education, and state and national policy advocacy.

NRCAT began as a response amongst 150 faith leaders convened by Dr. George Hunsinger, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, seeking a moral accounting for harrowing reports of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib. From this hunger for a collective interfaith voice to end U.S.-sponsored torture, NRCAT was founded in 2006.

Today, NRCAT's national membership includes representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Members include national denominations and religious groups, regional interfaith and ecumenical organizations, and local congregations.

As NRCAT nears its 20th anniversary, we are gravely concerned about the proliferation of migrant detention in the U.S. and the on-going abuses in the U.S. criminal legal system including the widespread torture of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers. NRCAT maintains a National Network of Solitary Confinement Survivors, whose work is guided by NRCAT's U.S. Prisons Program Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is comprised of eleven distinguished members, each of whom represents a distinctive voice in the fight to end the torture of solitary confinement in the U.S. criminal legal system while also being a leading voice in the movement to end mass incarceration and detention more broadly. NRCAT also has a national Board of Directors made up of primarily directors and policy staff of national religious denominations and organizations.



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WHAT WE BELIEVE

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), a coalition of religious organizations grounded in the core values of our diverse religious traditions and sharing a deep compassion for all humanity, believes that:

All persons, whether friends, strangers, or enemies, possess a basic human dignity and inherent rights to the support of community and the protection of law and therefore should in no instances be subjected to the threat or practice of torture.

Torture in any form is an illegal and criminal action and its use degrades humanity and wounds the soul of all involved, including the tortured, torturers, those who approve of torture's use, and those that stand by in silence.

Any nation or society that uses and tolerates the use of torture is diminished; its collective moral authority and voice for justice are eroded.

Torture, like any injustice present in our world, is a threat to all persons.

It is imperative for our nation, through its government and citizens, (1) to eschew the use of torture in any and all of our policies... international, military, security, and penal and (2) to work to remove torture anywhere it is currently condoned. Abolition of torture will make possible greater bonds of security, community and human flourishing.



Through faith put into action in collaboration with others of good will, **A WORLD FREE OF TORTURE IS POSSIBLE.**

INTERFAITH PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR WORK IN U.S. PRISONS

- **GOD-GIVEN DIGNITY:** Holding people in solitary confinement for years and decades until they become mentally broken is immoral because it violates the inherent God-given dignity and worth of every person.
- **COMMUNITY:** Community and fellowship are essential to our faith traditions. Solitary confinement severely restricts the ability to grow and develop spiritually and mentally through the company of others.
- **PRESERVING AND RENEWING THE MIND:** Prolonged solitary confinement can lead to paranoia, delusions, and other long-term mental effects.
- **HEALING:** Solitary confinement does not transform behavior in a positive way. We should not deny the opportunity for rehabilitation by holding people who are incarcerated in solitary confinement.
- **RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:** People of faith are called to bring justice, not vengeance. Vengeful punishment is beyond the bounds of justice.
- **DEFENDING THE WEAK:** We are called to stand with those in our community whose voices have been silenced- the poor, orphaned, and imprisoned. As people of faith, we must be advocates for justice and catalysts for transparency in prisons.
- **GOD'S GIFTS OF DAY AND NIGHT:** Solitary confinement conditions rob people of God's gift of night and darkness for sleep as lights are often left permanently on in a windowless cell.



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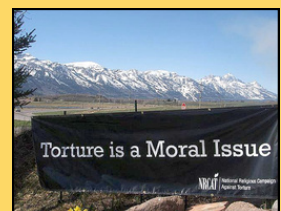
For support with any of these actions, contact Laura Markle Downton at ldownton@nr.cat.org

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ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

- Sign our petition, the National Pledge: A Moral Call to End the Torture of Solitary Confinement
- Invite your faith community to **become a member** of NRCAT
- Display an **anti-torture banner** publicly at your house of worship; contact Rev. T.C. Morrow at tmorrow@nr.cat.org to order a banner
- Wear **NRCAT gear**, available at our Bonfire store
- Host a **vigil** on the 23rd of each month to remember the people held in solitary confinement 23 hours a day or join a monthly Close Guantánamo vigil on the first Wednesday of the month
- Tune in to our quarterly **“how to” webinar series** for faith advocates; previous sessions available on the NRCAT YouTube channel
- Host a **solitary survivor** or NRCAT faith ambassador to speak to your religious community about ending torture
- Invite your faith community to **make a financial contribution** to NRCAT, whether one-time, annually, or as a special fundraiser
- Host a **screening of a NRCAT affiliated film**, such as Torture in Our Name, The Strike, or the Humans Out of Solitary series; Videos and discussion guides available here
- Follow **NRCAT on social media** and share our posts
- Sign up for Solitary Watch's Lifelines to Solitary program and **become a penpal** with someone currently in solitary confinement
- Write a **Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed** on the moral imperative to end torture
- If you or members of your congregation have experienced solitary confinement, you are invited to **join the NRCAT National Network of Solitary Survivors**
- Join an **Unlock the Box state anti-solitary campaign** to connect with others and bring about policy change in your area





National Religious Campaign Against Torture

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) invites national, regional, and local religious organizations that endorse NRCAT's mission statement to apply for membership. Religious organizations, whether local, regional, or national in scope, are invited to become Participating or Endorsing members. Secular organizations are invited to become Adjunct members. Join our over 300 member organizations today.

Endorsing Members:

- Are religious organizations
- Support NRCAT's mission statement: "The National Religious Campaign Against Torture mobilizes people of faith to end torture in U.S. policy, practice and culture."
- Agree to consider using and promoting NRCAT resources and programs

Participating Members:

- Are religious organizations
- Support NRCAT's mission statement
- Agree to consider using and promoting NRCAT resources and programs
- Name a representative to the Participating Members' Council, which meets by annually by Zoom
- Make an annual financial contribution to NRCAT (the amount is at the individual member organization's discretion)

Adjunct Members:

- Are secular organizations
- Support NRCAT's mission statement
- Work in concert with people of faith committed to ending torture in U.S. policy, practice and culture

NRCAT is entirely supported by contributions of members, individuals, and private foundations. Individuals can show support for NRCAT's work mission and work by donating here.

**Is your congregation or organization ready to become a member of NRCAT?
Visit nrcat.org or [click here to fill out the membership form](#).**

If you have questions or would like to discuss membership options, please contact Laura Markle Downton, Director of Faith and Community Engagement, at ldownton@nrcat.org.



**Praying
Advocating
Singing
Marching
Bearing Witness
Working
Testifying**
...for a Torture-Free Future



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Against Torture

PRAYER FOR A TORTURE-FREE FUTURE

God whom we call by many names and know in many ways,
we confess that too often your children violate one another,
inflicting hurt and harm on each other.

We pray for our brothers and sisters who endure torture.
May they experience your healing presence and care,
binding the wounds they endure.

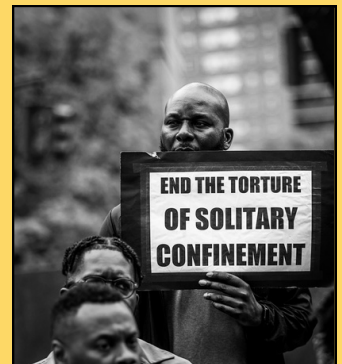
We pray for our brothers and sisters who inflict torture.
May they experience your healing presence and care,
binding the wounds they receive as they wound others.

We pray for our brothers and sisters who authorize torture.
May they experience your healing presence and care,
breaking the hold of fear and anger upon them.

We pray for ourselves acknowledging our responsibility for acts of torture.
May we experience your healing presence and care:
leading us to learn the realities of torture,
leading us to pray and study,
leading us to come together for dialogue,
leading us to speak for the end of torture in our country and around your world.

Amen.

Our thanks to Rev. Mark Koenig, former Director of the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations, for this prayer.



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SCRIPTURE FROM 3 ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS

Jewish Teachings on Torture

The Torah and the teachings of Rabbis (including the Talmud and the Midrash) contain many teachings that emphasize the importance of human dignity and inherent human sacredness, leading to a rejection of torture.

- *Exodus 23:9* – “You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.”
- *Genesis Rabbah 24* – “Ben Azzai taught: ‘This is the line of Adam’ (Genesis 5:1) is the most important concept in the Torah. Rabbi Akiva taught: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ (Leviticus 19:18) is a greater concept, so that no one should say: ‘Because I have been dishonored, let my fellow person be dishonored.’ Rabbi Tanhuma taught, ‘If you do thus, know that the person you have dishonored was created in the image of God.’”
- *Mishna, Pirkei Avot 2:10* – “Rabbi Eliezer said, ‘Other people’s dignity should be as precious to you as your own.’”

Islamic Teachings on Torture

Both the Qur’an and the Hadeeth 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 – whether dead or alive and regardless of religion or race – is a sacred trust. Torture clearly violates that trust.

- *Qur’an (17:70)* – “Now, indeed, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above most of Our creation.”
- *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:
 - “The Prophet said that you should help your brothers whether they were oppressors or oppressed. They asked the Prophet how could one help a brother who is the oppressor. The Prophet replied that you help the victim of oppression by showing them sympathy and the perpetrator of oppression by moving him out of the oppressive mode.”
 - “You should show mercy to your people on earth, otherwise the One above you in the heavens will not show His mercy to you.”

Christian Scriptures on Torture

The Christian Scriptures are full of teachings that lead to a rejection of the use of torture. (All quotations from the New Revised Standard Version.)

- *Luke 6:27-28, 31* – “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”
- *Romans 12: 17, 19-21* – “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ... Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
- *Hebrews 13:3* – “Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.”

* This resource is based off of “Resources for the Faith Shared Initiative” (2011), created in honor of June 26th, the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. It was created by NRCAT along with founding member groups *T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights* (formerly *Rabbis for Human Rights-North America*) and the *Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)*.