



National Religious Campaign Against Torture

www.nrcat.org
campaign@nrcat.org

UPHOLD U.S. COMMITMENT TO COMMON ARTICLE 3 OF THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS

Dear Senator,

The U.S. commitment to Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions is a centerpiece of our commitment to fairness and justice and has, but for recent events, helped to make the U.S. a world leader in setting standards for treatment of detainees. Americans should be proud and supportive of the Geneva Conventions—we have worked hard to ensure that they reflect our moral commitments. We played a major role in negotiating the 1977 Additional Protocols to update the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The President's proposed "Military Commissions Act of 2006," released to the public last week, would put this country in violation of the Geneva Conventions. The President's proposal would weaken the Common Article 3 standards in our U.S. statutes. Common Article 3 is a centerpiece of U.S. commitment to fairness and justice, and has made the U.S. the world leader in setting standards for treatment of detainees. As a result, our soldiers and citizens abroad are safer from retaliatory and punitive treatment; we defeat those who would make martyrs of the tortured and the abused; and our nation is safer and more secure.

The president's proposed "Military Commissions Act of 2006," released to the public last week, would significantly weaken Common Article 3 standards from the War Crimes Act. It would retroactively immunize U.S. personnel and policy makers who have conducted abusive interrogations. It would also deny basic protections of fairness and justice common to the jurisprudence of all modern nations.

We ask you to oppose precipitous action on this legislation. Nothing about the events of the past month justifies emergency treatment of a matter so critical to our nation's treatment of others, our position of international leadership, and our national security. History will either look back on this post 9/11 era in the U.S., and in particular this vote on the president's proposed bill, as the time when the U.S. abandoned statutory commitment to its long-held moral values for a shameful lesser standard, or as the time when Congress reiterated U.S. commitment to its basic moral values. A matter of this importance should be studied and reviewed in the appropriate committees prior to coming to a floor vote.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), a campaign of national, regional, and local religious organizations, brings together people of faith committed to ensure that the United States does not engage in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of anyone, without exceptions. Though we represent different religious traditions, and we might express ourselves using different words and points of reference, we are unified in our belief that U.S.-sponsored torture must end.

This letter arises from our deep conviction with respect to torture and inhumane treatment. We urge you to stand by our country's commitment to the Geneva Conventions. Moreover, any legislation on a subject with these moral ramifications should receive extensive consideration, including public hearings, in the appropriate committees of jurisdiction before being considered by the full House or Senate, particularly legislation that would permit torture and cruel, humiliating and degrading treatment of any U.S. detainee by any U.S. personnel.

With deep respect for the moral principles that make America "the shining city on the hill," and in faith,

Jeanne E. Herrick-Stare, Chair of NRCAT's Coordinating Committee

Attachments:

"Torture is a Moral Issue" *New York Times* advertisement, June 13, 2006, signed by thirty national religious leaders.
"Torture is a Moral Issue" statement, signed by heads of 21 denominations and faith groups.

Torture is a Moral Issue

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

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.

Rev. William J. Byron, SJ

Research Professor, Loyola College in Maryland

President Jimmy Carter

Nobel laureate

Archbishop Demetrios

Primate, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Rev. Dr. Bob Edgar

General Secretary, National Council of Churches

Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein

Executive Vice President, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Dr. David P. Gushee

Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy,
Union University in Tennessee

Rev. Ted Haggard

President, National Association of Evangelicals

Dr. Maher Hathout

Muslim Public Affairs Council

Dr. Stanley Hauerwas

Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics,
Duke University

Gary Haugen

President, International Justice Mission

Dr. Roberta Hestenes

Minister-at-Large, World Vision

Dr. George Hunsinger

McCord Professor of Theology,
Princeton Theological Seminary

Rev. Kermit D. Johnson

Chaplain (Major General), U.S. Army (ret.)

Honorable Thomas H. Kean

Former Governor of New Jersey

Rev. Joseph Lowery

Co-Founder, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Frederica Mathewes-Green

Author and commentator

Theodore Cardinal McCarrick

Archbishop of Washington

Dr. Brian McLaren

Founder, Cedar Ridge Community Church,
Spencerville, Maryland

Dr. Richard Mouw

President, Fuller Theological Seminary

Prof. Mary Ellen O'Connell

Robert and Marion Short Professor of Law,
University of Notre Dame

Rabbi David Saperstein

Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Dr. Glen Stassen

Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics,
Fuller Theological Seminary

Dr. Leonard Sweet

E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism, Drew University

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed

National Director, Islamic Society of North America

Dr. Frank A. Thomas

Editor of The African-American Pulpit; Pastor,
Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis

Rev. Jim Wallis

Editor-in-Chief/Executive Director, Sojourners

Dr. Rick Warren

Founder and Pastor, Saddleback Church

Elie Wiesel

Nobel laureate

Dr. Nicholas Wolterstorff

Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology,
Yale University

Organizations listed for identification purposes only.

Are you a person of faith who wants to end torture?

Please visit our website at www.nrcat.org for more information.

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Founder: Dr. George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary



National Religious Campaign
Against Torture

Torture is a Moral Issue

National Denominational and Faith Group Leaders Join in Statement Denouncing Torture

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Rabbi Alvin Berkun

President, The Rabbinical Assembly

Most Rev. Metropolitan Christopher

Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada

Archbishop Nicolae Condrea

Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada

Archbishop Demetrios

Primate, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Rabbi Daniel Ehrenkrantz

President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

Rabbi Jerome M. Epstein

Executive Vice President, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold

Presiding Bishop, The Episcopal Church

The Reverend Mark S. Hanson

Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey

Executive Director, Alliance of Baptists

Bishop Janice Riggie Huie

President, Council of Bishops, The United Methodist Church

Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Rev. A. Roy Medley

General Secretary, American Baptist Churches USA

Metropolitan Philip

Primate, The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Rabbi Brant Rosen

President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Dr. Tarunjit Singh

Secretary General, World Sikh Council - American Region

Rev. William G. Sinkford

President, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed

Secretary General, Islamic Society of North America

Rev. John H. Thomas

President, United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins

General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. David L. Wickmann

President, Provincial Elders Conference, Moravian Church, Northern and Southern Provinces

Rabbi Eric Yoffie

President, Union for Reform Judaism