

## TORTURE IS A MORAL ISSUE

### *A Statement of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture*

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

Torture and inhumane treatment have long been banned by U.S. treaty obligations, and are punishable by criminal statute. Recent developments, however, have created new uncertainties. By reaffirming the ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment as well as torture, the McCain amendment, now signed into law, is a step in the right direction. Yet its implementation remains unclear.

The President's signing statement, which he issued when he signed the McCain Amendment into law, implies that the President does not believe he is bound by the amendment in his role as commander in chief. The possibility remains open that inhumane methods of interrogation will continue.

Furthermore, in a troubling development, for the first time in our nation's history, legislation has now been signed into law that effectively permits evidence obtained by torture to be used in a court of law. The military tribunals that are trying some terrorist suspects are now expressly permitted to consider information obtained under coercive interrogation techniques, including degrading and inhumane techniques and torture.

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.

#### **Initial Endorsers (partial). (Institutions listed for identification purposes only.)**

Abdullahi Amhed An-Na'im, Emory Law School; Fr. William Byron, Loyola College in Maryland; Tony Campolo, Eastern Baptist University; Fr. John Chryssavgis, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Richard Cizek, vice president, National Association of Evangelicals; Bishop Dimitrios Couchell, ecumenical officer, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America; Robert Edgar, general secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ; Mohammad Omar Farooq, Upper Iowa University; Barbara Green, director, Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy; David Gushee, Union University; Stanley Hauerwas, Duke University; Fr. David Hollenbach, SJ, director, Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Boston College; Kermit D. Johnson, Chaplain (Major General), U.S. Army (ret.); Mary Ellen O'Connell, Notre Dame Law School; Sr. Dianna Ortiz, director, Torture and Survivors Support Coalition; Peter Paris, Princeton Theological Seminary; Rabbi David Saperstein, director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary; Sayyid M. Syeed, secretary general, Islamic Society of North America; Ron Sider, president, Evangelicals for Social Action; Tarunjit Singh, secretary general, World Sikh Council; Kathryn Tanner, University of Chicago; John Thomas, president, United Church of Christ; Rick Ufford-Chase, moderator, Presbyterian Church (USA); Joe Volk, executive secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation; Rabbi Brian Walt, executive director, Rabbis for Human Rights; Jim Wallis, Sojourners; Nicholas Wolterstorff, Yale University Coordinator: George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary

Are you a person of faith who wants to end torture? Endorse our statement: online at [www.ncrat.org](http://www.ncrat.org) or by mail at National Religious Campaign Against Torture, 40 Witherspoon St., Princeton, NJ 08542. Your tax-deductible contribution payable to NCRAT/PAEF will help us to keep working against the torture abuse scandal. This statement was adopted by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture at its founding conference in Princeton, January 2006.

We urge Congress and the President to remove all ambiguities by prohibiting:

- Exemptions from the human rights standards of international law for any arm of our government.
- The practice of extraordinary rendition, whereby suspects are apprehended and flown to countries that use torture as a means of interrogation.
- Any disconnection of "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" from the ban against "torture" so as to permit inhumane interrogation.
- The existence of secret U.S. prisons around the world.
- Any denial of Red Cross access to detainees held by our government overseas.

We also call for an independent investigation of the severe human rights abuses at U.S. installations like Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan.