

OMNI NEWSLETTER # 3 ON TORTURE, WAR CRIMES,

JUNE 26, 2011 (#1 October 5, 2007; #2 May 9, 2011)

<http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/>). Compiled by Dick Bennett, Building a Culture of Peace

JUNE 26 IS UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE

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“At a time when the legitimate aspirations of people in many regions of the world for greater freedom, dignity and a better life are too often met with violence and repression, I urge States to respect the fundamental rights of all people. Torture and other forms of cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment and punishment, wherever they occur and whatever the circumstances, can never be justified.”

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Message for the International Day in
Support of Victims of Torture 2011*

Torture victim from Congo Brazaville, undergoing rehabilitation in Vivre-Caprec, a torture rehabilitation centre, in Senegal. The centre is funded by the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Torture.

(OHCHR Photo)

Torture seeks to annihilate the victim's personality and denies the inherent dignity of the human being. The United Nations has condemned torture from the outset as one of the vilest acts perpetrated by human beings on their fellow human beings.

Torture is a crime under international law. According to all relevant instruments, it is absolutely prohibited and cannot be justified under any circumstances. This prohibition forms part of customary international law, which means that it is binding on every member of the international community, regardless of whether a State has ratified international treaties in which torture is expressly prohibited. The systematic or widespread practice of torture constitutes a crime against humanity.

On 12 December 1997, by [resolution 52/149](#), the UN General Assembly proclaimed 26 June the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, with a view to the total eradication of torture and the effective functioning of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ([resolution 39/46](#)), annex, which entered into force on 26 June 1987.

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Editorial

International Day In Support Of Victims Of Torture Observed Sunday

June 26, 2011, 12:58am <http://www.mb.com.ph/articles/324253/international-day-in-support-of-victims-of-torture-observed-sunday>

MANILA, Philippines — When the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the resolution to celebrate an annual International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, it emphasized that the lamentable phenomenon of torture is one of the most profound human rights abuses, taking a terrible toll on millions of individuals and their families.

Historically, the forms of torture really showed how inhuman such act perpetrated by elements of the state could be, from rape to blows to the soles of the feet, suffocation in water, burns, electric shocks, sleep deprivation, shaking and beating, all meant to break down an individual's personality.

From the first International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the UN and many democratic governments have established many programs to meet the needs of torture survivors. This includes the establishment of treatment centers and services. In the Philippines, which ratified all Human Rights covenants and treaties, the government has also extended the needed interventions for victims, led by the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. While the incidence of torture has been reduced significantly, we still find in our midst a number of victims.

In observing International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, let us not forget that torture is a crime under international law. According to all relevant instruments, it is absolutely

prohibited and cannot be justified under any circumstances. It is binding on every member of the international community, regardless of whether or not a state has ratified international treaties in which torture is expressly prohibited. The systematic or widespread practice of torture constitutes a crime against humanity.

While we can seek redress from such crime through the mechanisms of the United Nations, we are also empowered to take action, in our own country, to eliminate this detestable form of cruelty. Nothing can justify torture – at any time, at any place. Let us resolve to annihilate it and to assist those who have been its victims.

New Survey Finds Tolerance Of Torture In The US

[Security and Human Rights, Torture, USA](#) | Posted by: [Tom Parker](#),
April 20, 2011 at 8:24 AM
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Simulated waterboarding torture © Amnesty International

Last week to mark the 150 anniversary of the American Civil War the American Red Cross released a [survey of US attitudes to international humanitarian law](#) which revealed a shocking tolerance of torture across American society.

The Red Cross survey found that 59% of the 502 teenagers and 51% of the 1,019 adults polled believed that it was sometimes acceptable to torture enemy fighters to obtain important military information.

41% of teenagers and 30% of adults also accepted the logical corollary that it might therefore sometimes be acceptable for enemy forces to torture captured American POWs. The survey powerfully suggests just how far the norm against torture in American public life has been eroded.

Giants of American public life like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln have spoken out against torture but the evidence seems to suggest that, for now at least, the ants have carried the day.

An American public weaned on a diet of hard-charging maverick cop shows like 24, video games like Modern Warfare, and the obfuscating legal maneuvers of Bush's torture team has drunk the kool aid and, despite all evidence to the contrary, concluded torture works.

In the real world, [torture](#) carried out at Abu Ghraib and Bagram provided ammunition to Al Qaeda and the Taliban that got countless US servicemen, and Iraqi and Afghan civilians, killed and produced **little or no intelligence of any value**.

We all bear some of the responsibility for not pushing back harder against the moral compromises and outrages on human dignity born out of the 'Global War on Terror'. We have not just let ourselves down in the process, we have also let down our children.

An America at ease with the torture of its prisoners and even its own servicemen is the real legacy of the Bush administration, and it is a legacy that President Obama has done little to redress.

[Accountability matters](#). We can't just turn the page – we need to make the change. Until those who broke the law are brought to book and justice is seen to be done what kind of example do we expect to set for our children?

A second interesting, albeit somewhat contradictory, finding from the Red Cross survey concerned support for holding war criminals judicially accountable for their actions. 66% of youths and 79% of adults supported the trial and punishment of individuals who broke the 'rules of war'.

In a week where the Head of the Federal Aviation Authority's Air Traffic Organization, [Hank Krakowski, promptly resigned](#) after several cases emerged of air traffic controllers sleeping on duty, the

contrast between accountability in the FAA and that in the defense and intelligence community could not be more stark.

Accountability for torture is every bit as much a public safety issue as ringing the changes at the FAA. As Darius Rejali, author of *[Torture and Democracy](#)*, has demonstrated so convincingly in his work the bacillus of torture migrates inevitably from the battlefield to the precinct.

If we don't want to want our kids to grow up thinking torture is as American as apple pie, we must redouble our efforts to press for justice. Torture is, and has always been, against the law. When laws are broken we punish the transgressors – it's Civics 101.

We can't afford to give torturers a free pass – thanks to the American Red Cross we now know precisely what kind of example that sets for our children.

Tags: [abu ghraib](#), [accountability for torture](#), [American Red Cross](#), [Darius Rejali](#), [Demand Accountability for Torture](#), [fair trials](#), [illegal and indefinite detention](#), [security with human rights](#), [torture](#)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, April 20th, 2011 at 8:24 am and is filed under [Security and Human Rights](#), [Torture](#), [USA](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. Both comments and pings are currently closed.

9 Responses to “New Survey Finds Tolerance Of Torture In The US”

Read More <http://blog.amnestyusa.org/waronterror/new-survey-finds-tolerance-of-torture-in-the-us/>

“Newsweek's Nostalgia for Arab Dictatorships”

06/13/2011 by Peter Hart (from FAIR's Blog)

If you feel like there hasn't been enough attention paid to the fact that the democratic movements in the Arab world are undermining the power of U.S. elites to have troublemakers tortured and/or killed, rest assured that **Newsweek's** Christopher Dickey **has you covered this week (6/12/11)**:

Among American spies there's more than a little nostalgia for the bad old days. You know, back before dictators started toppling in the Middle East; back when suspected bad guys could be snatched off a street somewhere and delivered to the not-so-tender mercies of interrogators in their home countries; back when thuggish tyrants, however ugly, were at least predictable.

It's not a philosophical thing, just a practical one. Confronted by the cold realities of this year's Arab Spring, many intelligence and counterterrorism professionals now see major dangers looming near at hand, while the good news--a freer, fairer, more equitable and stable Arab world--remains somewhere over the horizon. "All this celebration of democracy is just bullshit," says one senior intelligence officer who's spent decades fighting terrorism and finds his job getting harder, not easier, because of recent

developments. "You take the lid off and you don't know what's going to happen. I think disaster is lurking."

Dickey uses Egypt as one example, explaining that at one point dictator Hosni Mubarak was making plans to hand over power to feared intelligence chief Omar Suleiman. The U.S. supported that idea, but Egyptians weren't especially keen on handing over power to Mubarak's torture chief. Losing this vital link is apparently bad news for U.S. policymakers--though Dickey undercuts the point when he recalls this history:

The "rendition" program continued in close cooperation with Suleiman after 9/11, but the Bush administration evidently pushed hard for the kind of intelligence it wanted rather than the kind it needed. One captured Qaeda operative, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, was tortured by the Egyptians until he confessed there were operational links between his organization and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, although in fact there were no such links. "They were killing me," al-Libi was quoted as telling the FBI later. "I had to tell them something."

The premise of the article is that maintaining close ties to Mubarak and his ilk is vital to U.S. interests, and that the current upheaval is bad news. This example would seem to offer rather compelling evidence to the contrary.

BOOKS

***American Torture: From the Cold War to Abu Ghraib and Beyond
The Torture Debate in America
Truth, Torture, and the American Way: The History and Consequences of...***

The United States and Torture: Interrogation, Incarceration, and Abuse

END NEWSLETTER #3 ON TORTURE

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