

What Can We Do?

Polls tell us that many Americans, including many Christians, still believe that torture is acceptable in the name of national security. To change the situation, we must change public opinion.

✚ **Get Informed**

Find resources and networks dedicated to this issue at www.no2torture.org.

✚ **Inform Others**

Share our free curriculum, "Out of Horror, Hope," with your congregation. Invite a No2Torture speaker to your next group meeting. Pledge to talk to five people who are unconvinced. Find a format that fits your situation.

✚ **Advocate**

Write letters to the editor and to your senators and representatives.

✚ **Get Connected**

Join the No2torture conversations on the web. Stay tuned for announcements about regional gatherings.

✚ **Work for Healing**

Support groups that work to heal the trauma of torture.

✚ **Pray!**

The power of God will prevail.

✚ *We affirm*

that all people are made in God's image and redeemed by God's love; as such, they must be treated with respect.

✚ *We reject*

any action or system which abuses anyone, anywhere.

✚ *We affirm*

that our hope and security come from God alone; this truth must guide and limit all earthly power.

✚ *We reject*

claims that torture makes us safer as a nation or a world.

✚ *We affirm*

that it is the Church's role, and our patriotic duty, to call our nation to account when it acts outside moral bounds.

✚ *We demand*

an independent investigation up the chain of command.

For more information:

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A Faith-based, Grass-roots, Initiative

Supporting True Security and
Witnessing to Our Beliefs by Saying
No! to Torture

No2Torture.org

Launched from within the
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
open to all who wish
to make common cause.

Frequently Asked Questions

✚ What is torture?

The UN Convention Against Torture defines torture as the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, for interrogation, intimidation, etc.

✚ What are the effects of torture?

Studies find that torture does long-term, devastating damage to survivors. It also traumatizes perpetrators. Part of supporting our troops means making sure they are never asked to torture.

✚ What about psychological torture or using "stress" positions?

Many studies have shown that so-called "no touch" torture techniques such as threats, nudity, use of mind-altering drugs, sensory deprivation, and/or forced standing or squatting can also cause severe suffering and long-term damage. The best test is asking ourselves how we want our soldiers to be treated when they are taken captive.

✚ Can't captives be interrogated?

Legitimate authorities have the right to interrogate prisoners, but cruel, inhuman or degrading means are forbidden. There are grey areas -- it's never comfortable to be a captive -- but the reported treatment is far over the line.

✚ Isn't torture illegal?

Torture is forbidden by international treaties to which the US is a party, such as the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention Against Torture. Further, domestic laws make it a felony for civilians or military personnel to engage in torture. There are no exceptions. Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is also forbidden.

✚ Doesn't our government assure us that we do not torture?

We are repeatedly assured that only a few low-ranking individuals were responsible for the abuses revealed in Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. However, the patterns, number of abuses, and memoranda which have been made public strongly suggest origins high up the chain of command.

✚ Doesn't recent legislation prohibit abusive interrogation techniques?

Popularly referred to as the McCain Amendment, the intent of this law was to draw clear boundaries for acceptable interrogation techniques for both civilians and military. Unfortunately, an amendment attached to the bill made confessions obtained through torture admissible in court, for the first time in US history. In addition, in his signing statement, President Bush claimed the right to bypass the law.

✚ Don't we need torture as a tool to fight the war on terror?

Torture is ineffective, yielding false statements as people say anything to stop the pain. In addition, it fuels international hatred and makes our service personnel targets for revenge.

✚ What is "extraordinary rendition?"

As the term is currently used, extraordinary rendition means sending detainees to other countries to be interrogated. The US has sent prisoners to countries that are known to use torture.

✚ Is extraordinary rendition legal?

The Convention Against Torture prohibits sending someone to another state if there are "substantial grounds" to believe that s/he is in danger of being tortured there.

What does scripture say?

Scripture is clear that we must be motivated by faith and not fear. At its core, the Bible upholds the essential dignity of all and the sovereignty of God, who demands justice and forbids revenge.

"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." (Hebrews 13:3 NRSV)

✚ What does the PC(U.S.A.) say?

Our Confessions affirm the dignity and worth of every human being. General Assemblies have consistently spoken against the use of torture and abuse. In addition, Moderator of the 216th GA Rick Ufford-Chase and Director of Presbyterian Military Chaplains Ed Brogan have called for the whole church to study, pray and take action on this issue.

✚ What can be done?

Religious groups from many traditions and across the theological spectrum, military leaders, human rights activists, international and constitutional law scholars, and citizens from all political perspectives are calling for:

- ◆ The US to enforce existing prohibitions in US and international law against torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- ◆ An independent investigation up the chain of command in relation to allegations of torture and abusive treatment of those held in US custody.