

Out of Horror, Hope:

A Biblically Based Study of Torture's Ravages and Potential Responses in the Reformed Tradition

from the

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Single-Event Session :

What Is This Horror? How Can There Be Hope?

HANDOUTS

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Responsive prayer:

One: Gracious God, Omnipotent God, we live in a broken and fearful world,

Many: A world that permits our brothers and sisters to live in the constant fear of arrest,

One: A world where persecution and maltreatment have come to seem like business as usual.

Many: Those who abuse others may not be sadists but may believe they act for a noble cause, or they are following orders, or they forget it is wrong because everyone is doing it.

One: And so we pray for those who are tortured and those who torture and for ourselves.

Many: The knowledge of the existence of such pain tears us spiritually limb from limb!

One: Living God, through your Holy Spirit, give us courage to witness among all people to Christ as Lord and Savior.

Many: Help us to unmask idolatries in church and culture.

One: Let us hear the voices of peoples long silenced.

Many: Let us work with others for justice, freedom and peace.

One: And in gratitude to you for the gift of life itself, let us strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch for your new heaven and earth, praying,

Many: "Come, Lord Jesus!" Amen.

(By Deborah Bowsher, based on *A Brief Statement of Faith; Book of Confessions: 10.465-10.476* .)

Timeline: Our Involvement with Torture since September 11, 2001

No2Torture Group

Dr. William Kumbier, Lead Author
May, 2006

October 2001 — President George W. Bush orders bombing of suspected terrorist sites in Afghanistan. War in Afghanistan begins.

November 13, 2001 — President Bush issues a military order calling for “individuals subject to this order” (i.e., suspected terrorists and terrorist supporters) to be detained and to be tried, when tried, by military tribunals, rather than in U.S. district courts. Many of those subsequently detained are held at the American base in Guantánamo, Cuba. (Danner 78-82). Eventually over 500 detainees are held there.

January 2002 — In memos to President Bush dated January 18 and 25, White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales argues that the provisions governing prisoners of war in Geneva Convention II do not to apply to those captured who are, or who are suspected to be, linked to the Taliban or al Qaeda (Danner 83-87).

February 7, 2002 — President Bush decides to withhold protections offered by Geneva Convention III from captured al Qaeda and Taliban fighters and supporters. Bush states: “I . . . determine that none of the provisions of Geneva apply to our conflict with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere throughout the world” (quoted in Hersh 5). His decision is based on White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales’s contention that “the war against terrorism is a new kind of war . . . a new paradigm [that] renders obsolete Geneva’s strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions” (Danner 42).

NOTE: The key status-of-detainee documents that were exchanged at this time among the White House Counsel, the Department of Defense, the Department of State and the Department of Justice, including those quoted here, were not released until more than two years later, in June 2004.

August 2002 — A memorandum by Jay S. Bybee, head of the Office of Legal Counsel, Department of Justice, to Alberto Gonzales “redefines” torture: “Certain acts may be cruel, inhuman, or degrading, but still not produce pain and suffering of the requisite intensity to fall within [a legal] proscription against torture. . . . For an act to constitute torture. . . it must inflict pain that is difficult to endure. Physical pain amounting to torture must be equivalent in intensity to pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death” (quoted in Hersh 4-5).

December 2, 2002 — Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld approves U.S. military use of interrogation techniques including “yelling at detainees, use of stress positions, use of isolation, deprivation of light and auditory stimuli, use of hoods, use of twenty-hour interrogation, removal of clothing, use of mild physical contact, and “use of detainees’

individual phobias (such as fear of dogs) to induce stress.” Rumsfeld rescinds these instructions six weeks later and convenes a “working group to recommend suitable methods for Guantánamo” (Danner 43-44). What this working group recommended is not clear.

March 2003 — President Bush orders bombing of sites in Iraq; war against Iraq begins.

May 2003 — President Bush declares “major combat” in Iraq to be over.

August 2003 — A military intelligence captain in Iraq seeks clarification to distinguish “unlawful combatants” from “lawful combatants,” who are subject to protection under Geneva Conventions. He requests an interrogation techniques ‘wish list’ by August 17 (Danner 33). Later that month, Major General Geoffrey Miller, then commander of the base at Guantánamo, and later commander of Abu Ghraib, visits Iraq to review “current Iraqi theater ability to rapidly exploit internees for actionable intelligence” (Danner 20). Some contend that Miller visited Abu Ghraib for the purpose of “Gitmo-izing” Abu Ghraib (Hersh). According to reporter Seymour Hersh, it is in August 2003 that top secret intelligence acquisition strategies and techniques approved in 2001 by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld for use in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the “war on terror” — known as a “special access program” (SAP) — are authorized for use in Iraq prisons (Danner 46).

At some indefinite point, the leading military intelligence battalion at the Abu Ghraib detention facility in Iraq began to use interrogation techniques derived from what is known as the Joint Task Force (JTF) 121 interrogation policy, which “included the use of stress positions during fear-up harsh interrogation approaches. As well as the presence of military working dogs, yelling, loud music, and light control. The memo also included sleep management and isolation approaches.”

October 2003 — On October 12, Lt. General Ricardo Sanchez, overall commander in Iraq, issues a memorandum requiring interrogators at Abu Ghraib to work with military police guards to “manipulate our internees’ emotions and weaknesses” and to control the “lighting, heating . . . food, clothing, and shelter” of those they question” (Danner 12). It is later revealed that the subsequently widely publicized, scandalous abuses of prisoners at Abu Ghraib take place mainly in October and November 2003. Also, in its visits to Abu Ghraib in October 2003, the International Red Cross observes and eventually reports on abuses of internees.

November 6, 2003 — One of several reports by the International Red Cross, complaining of abuses at Abu Ghraib, is issued.

January 13, 2004 — Specialist Joseph Darby provides U.S. Army authorities with a “disk full of explicit images” of the abuses at Abu Ghraib.

January 21, 2004 — An anonymous Abu Ghraib prisoner, known as “Detainee-07,” makes a sworn statement to the U.S. military’s Criminal Investigation Division concerning abuses in

his internment and interrogation. This statement was obtained by the *Washington Post* and included, along with 12 other such accounts from prisoners, on the *Post*'s website.

February 26, 2004 — Major General Antonio M. Taguba, who was appointed to conduct an investigation into the interrogation activities at Abu Ghraib, submitted his findings in a report (the Taguba report) to his superior officers (Hersh 41). Among other things, the report concludes that between October and December 2003 there were numerous instances of “sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses” at Abu Ghraib, “perpetrated by soldiers of the 372nd Military Police Company, and also by members of the American intelligence community” (Hersh 22, 41).

April 28, 2004 — CBS television network releases the first publicized photos of the abuses at Abu Ghraib on its *60 Minutes II* broadcast. A story by journalist Seymour Hersh regarding the abuses is published shortly thereafter in the *New Yorker* (May 10), along with some of the photographs and quotations from the Taguba investigation.

May 2004 — As the Abu Ghraib scandal continues to unfold, the *New York Times* reports that top Iraqi commanders admitted they had learned “little about the insurgency” from Abu Ghraib interrogators. Later in May, the U.S. Senate holds hearings on Abu Ghraib.

June 2004 — Key documents are released to the press detailing the “struggles among senior officials within the executive branch [of the U.S. government] . . . over how to treat those prisoners captured in Afghanistan and later in Iraq, and what methods to use to interrogate them” (Danner 73). William Haynes, Pentagon general counsel, and other Administration spokespersons assure reporters that “no prisoners in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Cuba had been tortured” (Hersh 11). Also in June, the “U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Yaser Esam Hamdi, a U.S. citizen held for more than two years in military custody without charge or trial as an “enemy combatant” [rather than “prisoner of war”] was entitled to due process and habeas corpus review of his detention by the U.S. courts” (Amnesty International).

August 2004 — Final report by the Independent Panel to review Department of Defense investigations of Detention Operations (known as the Schlesinger report) is issued. The panel was headed by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, appointed to the panel by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld.

November 2004 — On November 8, U.S. district court judge James Robertson rules that military commissions used to try detainees must be halted because the commissions were in violation of the Geneva Conventions, the U.S. Constitution and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The so-called “commissions” are one of “three types of legal bodies created by the military to deal with detainees at Guantánamo” (New York Times: “Ruling Lets U.S. Restart Trials”). Judge Robertson’s decision was later to be reversed by a federal appeals court in July 2005.

May 2005 — Amnesty International releases a report citing the United States for human rights abuses against detainees at Guantánamo, in detention facilities in Iraq and elsewhere. It opens with this summary of human rights abuses by the U.S. In 2004:

Hundreds of detainees continued to be held without charge or trial at the US naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Thousands of people were detained during US military and security operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and routinely denied access to their families and lawyers.

Military investigations were initiated or conducted into allegations of torture and ill-treatment of detainees by US personnel in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and into reports of deaths in custody and ill-treatment by US forces elsewhere in Iraq, and in Afghanistan and Guantánamo. Evidence came to light that the US administration had sanctioned interrogation techniques that violated the UN Convention against Torture. Pre-trial military commission hearings opened in Guantánamo but were suspended pending a US court ruling.

President Bush criticizes the report as “absurd” in a press conference on May 31.

June 2005 — The *New York Times* (“Psychologists Warned”) reports that former interrogators at Guantánamo stated that psychiatrists and/or psychologists “counseled them on how to use a detainee’s fears and longings to increase distress.” A few weeks later, the American Psychological Association issued a report “telling its members of the ethical dangers of such activities.”

July 2005 — On July 14, the *New York Times* reports that a “high-level military investigation into complaints by FBI agents about the abuse of detainees at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, concluded . . . that their treatment was sometimes degrading but did not qualify as inhumane or as torture” (“Report Discredits”). Then, on July 14, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled unanimously that the U.S. military could “resume war crimes trials of terrorism suspects at Guantánamo.” The trials had been suspended by a district court decision in November 2004, which ruled that the military trials violated the Geneva Conventions, the U.S. Constitution and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (“Ruling Lets U.S. Restart Trials”).

August, 2005 — Approximately 520 detainees at Guantanamo begin a hunger strike to protest their indefinite detention and abuse. The military orders force feedings to counter what they claim to be “a form of suicide.” Medical groups protest saying that it is a violation of medical ethics to administer forced feeding.

September 9, 2005 — The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals rules that the government has the right to hold a US citizen, Jose Padilla, in indefinite military detention without accusing him of any crime. Before this ruling could be appealed to the Supreme Court, Padilla was indicted in civil court and transferred from military custody to federal custody in Miami, thus

avoiding a ruling on the legality of suspending habeas corpus protections for US citizens.

September, 2005 — Human Rights Watch issues a report with first hand accounts by members of the 82nd Airborne detailing the routine torture of detainees held near Fallujah. Capt. Ian Fishback's letter to Sen. John McCain protesting the practices helps to fuel Congressional efforts to restrain and define interrogation practices in what will come to be known as the McCain amendment.

October, 2005 — PBS airs a significant documentary “The Torture Question.”

November 2, 2005 — An article in the Washington Post by Dana Priest sparks international outrage over the practice of extraordinary rendition by the US. Extraordinary rendition involves capturing suspected terrorists and secretly transporting them for interrogation to third countries known to use abusive interrogation techniques. Priest's article alleges that some of these detainees are being held in secret prisons in Europe, setting off public outrage and official investigations.

December, 2005 — The McCain amendment is passed overwhelmingly by both the Senate and the House in spite of the threat of the first veto of the Bush administration. In response, President Bush drops his veto threat, however, in a signing statement, he claims the right to bypass the law. In addition, the law is weakened by amendments. Confessions obtained through torture may now be used in proceedings against the detainees, a first in US history. Further, access to US courts through *habeas corpus* is denied to the detainees.

May 18, 2006 — The UN Committee Against Torture publishes its list of conclusions and recommendations that are highly critical of US treatment of detainees, extraordinary renditions, secret detentions, etc.

May 18, 2006 — Judge T.S. Ellis 3rd of U.S. District Court dismissed a suit by Khaled al-Masri in which he sought redress for being abducted in Afghanistan by the CIA; Ellis ruled that "in the present circumstances, al- Masri's private interests must give way to the national interest in preserving state secrets."

Sources:

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Neil A. Lewis, “Ruling Lets U. S. Restart Trials at Guantánamo,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2005.

NRS **Jeremiah 38:4–13**

⁴Then the officials said to the king, "This man ought to be put to death, because he is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, and all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people, but their harm." ⁵King Zedekiah said, "Here he is; he is in your hands; for the king is powerless against you." ⁶So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. Now there was no water in the cistern, but only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud. ⁷Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,^a a eunuch in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. The king happened to be sitting at the Benjamin Gate, ⁸So Ebed-melech left the king's house and spoke to the king, ⁹"My lord king, these men have acted wickedly in all they did to the prophet Jeremiah by throwing him into the cistern to die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city." ¹⁰Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,^a "Take three men with you from here, and pull the prophet Jeremiah up from the cistern before he dies." ¹¹So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to the house of the king, to a wardrobe of¹ the storehouse, and took from there old rags and worn-out clothes, which he let down to Jeremiah in the cistern by ropes. ¹²Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian^a said to Jeremiah, "Just put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes." Jeremiah did so. ¹³Then they drew Jeremiah up by the ropes and pulled him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

^a**Or Nubian.**

Source: http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2005/resisting_torture.htm

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It's Time to Say No to Torture (Part 1, Excerpts)

by Doug King

[6-6-05]

A member of the church I attend, St. Luke Presbyterian in Wayzata, MN, is able to speak about this from first-hand experience. Born in El Salvador in 1958, René joined the Salvadoran military as a paratrooper in 1974, and two years later joined the Treasury Police. This was in the beginning of the political unrest in which the US military became heavily involved in El Salvador, working with the Salvadoran military and para-military groups to resist the efforts of the people who were engaged in a fight for greater political freedom and economic justice in their land.

René explained how he witnessed the use of torture to get information from detainees. Choking back tears, he recalls talking with one prisoner, a former professor, who was locked away and ignored, left with almost no food or water, reduced to nothing but skin covering his bones.

The torturers had been trained by U.S. agents in psychological interrogation techniques. He and his fellow soldiers had been convinced that Marxists were the enemy, and that any action to defeat them was justified.

Through this experience he learned that "torture is a weapon of mass terror," aimed at subduing people, not at gaining information. Under torture a person will say anything to satisfy the torturer – but then, getting information isn't the only goal. He learned too that once people have been subjected to torture they are rarely released, for they will tell what has happened to them. And that cannot be allowed to happen. (Though as we are witnessing again today, it does happen. The truth sometimes *does* get out.)

René says he can't sleep these days, because "a lot of the things that are happening now are the things that were happening then" in El Salvador, against the Marxists, "the enemy."

Source: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR510632005>
Amnesty International Executive Summary, Document Index AMR 51/063/2005

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5 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001, 212-807-8400, www.amnestyusa.org/

Appendix 3: Alleged detention and interrogation practices

The following are some of the detention or interrogation practices that are alleged to have been authorized or used by the USA during the "war on terror." Some appear to have been tailored to specific cultural or religious sensitivities of the detainees, thereby introducing a discriminatory element to the abuse. Techniques are often used in combination. Neither gender nor age has offered protection. Children, the elderly, women and men are reported to have been among the subjects of torture or ill-treatment. This list does not claim to be exhaustive.

- Abduction
- Barbed wire, forced to walk barefoot on
- Blindfolding
- "Burking" – hand over detainee's mouth/nose to prevent breathing
- Cell extraction, brutal/punitive use of
- Chemical/pepper spray, misuse of
- Cigarette burns
- Claustrophobia-inducing techniques, e.g. tied headfirst in sleeping bag, shut in lockers
- Death threats
- Dietary manipulation
- Dogs used to threaten and intimidate
- Dousing in cold water
- Electric shocks, threats of electric shocks
- Exposure to weather and temperature extremes, especially via air-conditioning
- Flags, wrapped in Israeli or US flags during or prior to interrogation
- Food and water deprivation
- Forced shaving, i.e. of head, body or facial hair
- Forcible injections, including with unidentified substances
- Ground, forced to lie on bare ground while agents stand on back or back of legs
- Hooding
- Hostage-taking, i.e. individuals detained to force surrender of relatives
- Humiliation, e.g. forced crawling, forced to make animal noises, being urinated upon
- Immersion in water to induce perception of drowning

- Incommunicado detention
- Induced perception of suffocation or asphyxiation
- Light deprivation
- Loud music, noise, yelling
- Mock execution
- Photography and videoing as humiliation
- Physical assault, e.g. punching, kicking, beatings with hands, hose, batons, guns, etc
- Physical exercise to the point of exhaustion, e.g. "ups and downs", carrying rocks
- Piling, i.e. detainee is sat on or jumped on by one or more people ("dog/pig pile")
- Prolonged interrogations, e.g. 20 hours
- Racial and religious taunts, humiliation
- Relatives, denial of access to, excessive censorship of communications with
- Religious intolerance, e.g. disrespect for Koran, religious rituals
- Secret detention
- Secret transfer
- Sensory deprivation
- Sexual humiliation
- Sexual assault
- Shackles and handcuffs, excessive and cruel use of. Includes "short shackling"
- Sleep adjustment
- Sleep deprivation
- Solitary confinement for prolonged periods, e.g. months or more than a year
- Stress positions, e.g. prolonged forced kneeling and standing
- Stripping, nudity, excessive or humiliating use of
- Strip searches, excessive or humiliating use of
- Strobe lighting
- Suspension, with use of handcuffs/shackles
- Threat of rape
- Threats of reprisals against relatives
- Threat of transfer to third country to inspire fear of torture or death
- Threat of transfer to Guantánamo
- Threats of torture or ill-treatment
- Twenty-four hour bright lighting
- Withdrawal of "comfort items", including religious items
- Withholding of information, e.g. not telling detainee where he is
- Withholding of medication
- Withholding of toilet facilities, leading to defecation

O God, Our Words Cannot Express

ST. ANNE CM ("O God, Our Help in Ages Past")

O God, our words cannot express
The pain we feel this day.
Enraged, uncertain, we confess
Our need to bow and pray.

We grieve for all who lost their lives...
And for each injured one.
We pray for children, husbands, wives
Whose grief has just begun.

O Lord, we're called to offer prayer
For all our leaders, too.
May they, amid such great despair,
Be wise in all they do.

We trust your mercy and your grace;
In you we will not fear!
May peace and justice now embrace!
Be with your people here!

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Source: <http://www.cvt.org/main.php/InsideCVT/WhatisTorture>

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WHAT IS TORTURE?

Torture is the intentional and systematic infliction of physical or psychological pain and suffering in order to punish, intimidate or gather information. CVT uses the definitions of torture determined by the United Nations and the World Medical Association...

"...the term 'torture' means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity." ([Article I, United Nations Convention Against Torture, 1984](#))

"...torture is defined as the deliberate, systematic or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority to force another person to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason." ([World Medical Association, Declaration of Tokyo, 1975](#))

- Amnesty International [<http://www.amnesty.org/stoptorture>] has gathered recent reports of torture and ill-treatment from more than 150 countries.
- Torture is a crime against humanity; as a strategic tool of repression, it is the single most effective weapon against democracy.
- The purpose of torture is to control populations by destroying individual leaders and frightening entire communities.
- Torture is rarely used to extract information from someone.
- Torture is a low-technology enterprise, mostly carried out through beatings.
- Psychological torture usually involves various kinds of threats and multiple forms of deprivation.
- Torture occurs in a political context that frequently employs various oppressive and repressive forms of governance; many of these are highly traumatic.
- It is a fundamental human right to live without fear of torture.

Torture is not an effective means of interrogation and does not yield useful or truthful information. It is, however, a highly effective means of controlling populations: torture destroys leaders, disintegrates opposition and terrorizes communities. Torture is never acceptable.

Source:

<http://www.cvt.org/main.php/Advocacy/TheCampaigntoStopTorture/WhatCVTknowsaboutTorture>

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(Underlining, bolding and color highlighting have been added for emphasis.)

EIGHT LESSONS ON TORTURE

Based on CVT's experience with torture survivors and understanding the systems in which they have been abused, CVT believes it is important that discussions about the U.S. use of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment not be shaped by speculation but rather through an understanding of how torture is actually used in the world. There are eight broad lessons CVT has learned from working with torture survivors:

1. Torture does not yield reliable information

Well-trained interrogators, within the military, the FBI, and the police have testified that torture does not work, is unreliable and distracting from the hard work of interrogation. Nearly every client at the Center for Victims of Torture, when subjected to torture, confessed to a crime they did not commit, gave up extraneous information, or supplied names of innocent friends or colleagues to their torturers. It is a great source of shame for our clients, who tell us they would have said anything their tormentors wanted them to say in order to get the pain to stop. Such extraneous information distracts, rather than supports, valid investigations.

2. Torture has a corrupting effect on the perpetrator

The relationship between the victim and the torturer is highly intimate, even if one-sided. It is filled with stress for the interrogator, balancing the job with the moral and ethical values of a person with family and friends. One way this cognitive dissonance is managed is through a group process that dehumanizes the victim. But still another way is to insure that some sort of confession is obtained to justify to the interrogator and to his superiors that pain and suffering was validly used.

3. Torture does not yield information quickly

Although eventually everyone will confess to something, it takes a lot of time. We know that many militaries and radical groups train their members to resist torture and to pass along false pieces of information during the process. **And those with strong religious or political beliefs that help them understand the purposes of torture used against them are most able to resist and to recover from its impact.**

4. Torture will not be used only against the guilty

Inherent in all of the scenario building is the assumption that we know, with great reliability, that we have the appropriate party who possesses knowledge that could save lives. But **our clients are living testimony that once used, torture becomes a fishing expedition to find information. It perverts the system which, seeking shortcuts to the hard work of investigation, relies increasingly on torture.** The estimate from the Red Cross was that at least 80 percent of those imprisoned at Abu Ghraib, for example, should never have been arrested, but were there because it was easier to arrest persons than to let them go (people feared letting go a terrorist more than protecting the innocent). The Israeli security system claimed to use its stress and duress techniques only where they had the most reliable information about the detainee's guilt. Yet human rights monitors estimate that they were used on over 8000 detainees. It is not credible to believe they had this precise information about so many.

5. Torture has never been confined to narrow conditions

Torture has often been justified by reference to a small number of people who know about the "ticking time bomb," but in practice, it has always been extended to a much wider population.

6. Psychological torture is damaging

When torture is defined as strictly a physical act, many believe that psychological coercion is okay. **CVT's clients say it was the psychological forms of torture that were the most debilitating over a long period.** The source of their nightmares, 15 and 20 years later, was the mock executions or hearing others being tortured. **The lack of self-esteem and depression were more related to scenarios of humiliation, consciously structured to demean the victim.** Many within the world treatment movement believe we have seen increasingly sophisticated forms of psychological torture over the past 20 years.

7. Stress and duress techniques are forms of torture

Many of these techniques were developed during Israel's struggle against terrorism, and so this example is often cited for effective interrogation techniques falling short of torture. But the Israeli Supreme Court concluded that they were illegitimate. **Every democratic nation's court system and international court which has reviewed them has concluded that they are forms of torture.**

8. We cannot use torture and still retain the moral high ground

The arguments we hear are not so different in form and content from those used by the repressive governments of CVT's clients, and which the U.S. has refused to accept from other nations that have used torture to combat their real or perceived enemies. Torture is not an effective or efficient producer of reliable information. But it is effective and efficient at producing fear and rage, both in the individuals tortured and in their broader communities.

Source:

<http://www.pcusa.org/iraq/gastatements/abuse.pdf>

A Resolution and Confession on the Torture and Abuse of Prisoners

The 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) adopted this resolution:

1. That it call upon the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while recognizing the honorable performance of the majority of coalition forces in rebuilding Iraq, to join with the commissioners to
 - a. reaffirm our support for human rights and the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War;
 - b. explicitly reject torture and abuse as methods of interrogation and treatment of prisoners for they are inconsistent with the Gospel; and
 - c. acknowledge we are inescapably part of our culture and offer our confession in repentance.
2. The treatment of those incarcerated in the naval base in Guantánamo, Cuba, and in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (and perhaps elsewhere), has highlighted serious legal and moral issues that cannot be ignored and must not be allowed to pass unexamined. Violations of international law as well as serious moral malfeasance are involved.

Such treatment is contrary to the Geneva Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949), particularly Articles 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18. Article 17, Fifth Paragraph, provides:

“Neither physical or mental torture nor any other form of coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.”

Objections to such practices have been voiced by lawyers within the armed services as well as by human rights organizations. Such practices have been deplored by a great majority of the citizens of our country, quite irrespective of their views as to the legitimacy of taking military action against Iraq. These actions have undercut American claims to a moral high ground and opened the way for enemies to maltreat

members of our own society that fall into their hands. Moreover, they constitute flagrant violations of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, to which the United States is a signatory. [Document available from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/prisonerwar.htm>]

As citizens of our country, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been urged to engage in repentance for these actions, even if their personal responsibility for them is indirect and minimal. That call for repentance is an indication of the extent to which these actions must be deplored.

But efforts must be made to ensure that such actions are eliminated from future practice. This can be done only if there is a complete and adequate understanding as to why they have arisen – a matter of present uncertainty and possible confusion.

3. Further, efforts must be made to ensure that such torture and abuse do not occur in the future. To that end, the 216th General Assembly (2004) directs the Stated Clerk to take the following actions:
 - a. Commend all who have brought this prison abuse to the attention of the public as well as all who have recognized the seriousness of the issues raised and the need to deal vigorously with the policy and administrative questions that are involved;
 - b. Urge the U.S. Congress to direct an appropriate independent and formal inquiry to determine what led to these events. This body should have full investigative powers and issue its findings publicly.
 - c. Urge government officials to develop safeguards that will serve to prevent such behavior from arising in the future.
4. Write and send a pastoral letter to the churches, communicating the intent of this resolution.

A Call to Say No! to Torture

October 12, 2005

The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 was a heartbreaking tragedy which we will never forget. That catastrophe is also an opportunity to witness to the power of God. Some have said that everything changed on the morning of 9/11, but it did not. We were challenged, but our beliefs and our society are stronger than a handful of terrorists. As Christians, we know that our hope and security come from one place only: our full trust and complete confidence in Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, instead of taking comfort from the strength we have in God, instead of drawing on our nation's standards of decency and justice, too often, we have given way to the temptation to fear and, in our fear, we have jeopardized some of the very things that we value most.

Due process has given way to secret detentions, justice has given way to expediency and humane treatment of prisoners has given way to torture. We are told that our country does not torture prisoners, but our heads and our hearts tell us differently. Hidden, institutionalized torture has become routine. Doing things beyond our borders, or having others do them for us, does nothing to lessen our responsibility.

Torture threatens the very nature of our society. Torture degrades us more than its victims. Torture puts us and our troops at risk from those seeking vengeance. We must adhere to our principles for our own sake, as well as out of concern for others. To be aware and be silent is to be complicit. As Christians and patriots we cannot be silent; we must say "no."

We must not let fear or hatred be our motivation individually or as a nation. Instead we must trust that "God is love... and perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God,' but hate their brothers or sisters are liars..." (1 John 4:10b, 18-20a).

As Presbyterians we are aware of God's sovereign call to witness to Christ's reconciling work of justice and love. Central to this are the hard tasks of speaking the truth to power and loving our enemies. While those who conspire to terrorize innocents must be brought to justice, we cannot achieve this by terrorizing others who may be innocent.

In response to a groundswell of concern, we invite all Presbyterians to join us in a three-month period of prayer, study, discussion and action focused on the treatment of those detained by and at the request of the United States and its allies in the four years since September 11, 2001. Our invitation is grounded in a growing concern we hear from Presbyterians who are theologically diverse, including those who have served with distinction in the Armed Forces and those who have spent their entire adult lives working for peace and the abolition of war. The 216th General Assembly spoke forcefully on matters regarding terrorism, violence, war and the use of torture. While not all Presbyterians agree with every action of the General Assembly, we are committed to pursuing honest discussion and seeking common ground to speak to these difficult issues. Therefore, we invite individuals and congregations:

To pray: We pray for those who are detained and their families, and we pray for our troops and their families. Those who serve their country must never be asked to treat prisoners in ways that are contrary to the law, their own conscience, or basic human dignity.

We pray for ourselves and our nation. We must strive to create a climate of religious tolerance and respect, rather than perpetuate a cycle of fear and vengeance. Expressing our outrage and demanding an end to torture in all its forms are the first steps.

To study: Abuse and torture are complex and difficult issues, but knowing the truth — even uncomfortable truths — can set us free to act. Therefore, a group of concerned Presbyterians has developed a curriculum to be used by congregations and others who wish to study the facts carefully in light of their faith.

To dialogue: We are called to be in thoughtful, respectful dialogue with one another, seeking common ground and listening carefully to one another when we disagree. In so doing, we know that our witness as followers of Jesus Christ becomes ever stronger and more faithful.

To speak out: Our faith and our constitution remind us that it is our duty to ask hard questions of those in power and to speak out whenever truth is compromised.

We call on the United States and its allies to invite an independent and impartial investigation of the conditions under which detainees are held and by whose orders they are being held. The truth must be convincingly told. For Jesus says, “Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not be known. Therefore, what you have said in the dark will be heard in the light and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.” (Luke 12:2–3)

We call for these investigations towards the goal of eliminating torture, and holding accountable all those who are responsible. We further call for the release of those who have not been charged with any crime, and demand fair and speedy trials for those who have been accused.

To these ends, we encourage Presbyterians to lift up their concerns with their elected officials. Current information and advocacy suggestions will be posted on the Act Now section of the Presbyterian Peacemaking website: www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/

To come together: All are invited to become part of a rapidly growing grassroots network by signing on at www.no2torture.org.

We also invite all those who are concerned to a meeting in Miami on January 6 and 7 to make a public witness and further organize our efforts to call upon our nation and allies to treat all detainees humanely and justly. More information about this gathering will be posted on the No2Torture and PC(USA) websites listed above.

We give thanks for the overwhelming grace that comes as a free gift from our God. We know, however, that the gift of God’s grace is not cheap, and we dare not cheapen it by living lives of timidity and fear. God commands that we seek the truth and say “no” to what is wrong, that we might be free to join with God and our neighbors to build what is just. The cross of Jesus Christ makes it clear that God’s love is stronger than torture and fear.

In faith and trust,

Rick Ufford-Chase
Moderator of the 216th General Assembly

Ed Brogan
Director, Presbyterian Council of Chaplains

Out of Horror, Hope — What We Can Do **No2Torture Group**

We can end our own complicity in torture, and, together, we can work to end involvement by the US and its allies. Here are some specific things that we, as Christians, can do:

Pray: We can pray for the captives, the captors, the others who suffer the consequences, our country, and ourselves. We can ask others to pray about these things with us.

Study: Abundant information is available on this complex topic. The www.No2Torture.org/ site lists links to Internet resources on the torture issue and provides the *Out of Horror, Hope* curriculum (free download); also see www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/. Volunteer speakers are even available from groups like CVT:

<http://www.cvt.org/main.php/Advocacy/SpeakersBureau/RequestForm>

Speak Out: This can take many forms, including:

- Share information with friends and relatives, as appropriate.
- Write a letter to the editor.
Tips & Sample Letters to the Editor: <http://www.cvt.org/file.php?ID=5312>
- Sign and/or circulate a petition; see www.no2torture.org/act/petitions/
- Organize a community forum on responding to acts of torture in our society.
- Write or call US government officials who can influence government policies on torture: the President, your senators and representatives. Addresses can be found through the official sites <http://www.house.gov/> and <http://www.senate.gov/>, or private sites like <http://www.congress.org/>.
_Sample letter to the president: <http://www.cvt.org/file.php?ID=5239>
_Sample letter to senators and representatives: <http://www.cvt.org/file.php?ID=5247>

For current information on pending policy and legislation visit the the Presbyterian Peacemaking website www.pcusa.org/peacemaking (click on “Act Now” and then on “Stopping Torture”). Invite friends to join you for an evening of discussion and letter writing.

Come together: All are invited to become part of a rapidly growing grassroots network by signing on at www.no2torture.org/ or the No2Torture Yahoo group. All are invited to our future meetings to make a public witness and organize further. More information will be posted on the No2Torture and PC(USA) websites. Those who can't attend might consider holding a prayer vigil with other concerned Presbyterians and friends from other faith traditions.

Source:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/stoptorture/document.do?id=B10C72B4FFC25C7180256FEA00424B4F>

Used with permission of Amnesty International USA
5 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001, 212-807-8400, www.amnestyusa.org/

(See full article for elaborations on the main points.)

Amnesty International's 12-Point Program for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by Agents of the State

1. Condemn torture and other ill-treatment
2. Ensure access to prisoners
3. No secret detention
4. Provide safeguards during detention and interrogation
5. Prohibit torture and other ill-treatment in law
6. Investigate
7. Prosecute
8. No use of statements extracted under torture or other ill-treatment
9. Provide effective training
10. Provide reparation
11. Ratify international treaties
12. Exercise international responsibility

Internet Resources on Torture Issues

Deborah E.H. Bowsher

September, 2005

American Civil Liberties Union:

<http://www.aclu.org/International/> and <http://action.aclu.org/torturefoia/>

Amnesty International USA: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/stoptorture/index.do>

Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT): <http://www.apr.ch/>

Center for Constitutional Rights: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/home.asp>

Center for Cooperative Research: <http://www.cooperativeresearch.net/timelines.jsp>

Timelines on torture, rendition and other topics.

Center for Victims of Torture (CVT): <http://www.cvt.org/>

Fellowship of Reconciliation: <http://www.forusa.org/programs/iraq/tortureresources.html>

Investigate Torture: Online Resources

Friends Comm. on Nat'l. Legislation (FCNL): http://www.fcnl.org/issues/issue.php?issue_id=70

Frontline (PBS), *The Torture Question*: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/torture/>

90-min. video program, interviews, readings, links...

Human Rights First: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

Monitors and reports on human rights abuses around the world.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: <http://www.lirs.org/InfoRes/links.htm#torture>

Resources for and about torture survivors

No2Torture: <http://www.no2torture.org/>

Grassroots Presbyterian (USA) group committed to ending torture and abuse of US detainees.

Physicians for Human Rights: <http://www.phrusa.org/>

Presbyterian Church (USA): Stopping Torture:

<http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/actnow/actnow.htm#stoptorture>

Rabbis for Human Rights-North America: <http://www.rhr-na.org/torture/torture.html>

School of the Americas Watch: <http://www.soaw.org/>

Human rights organization, especially as related to Latin America and SOA/WHINSEC.

Survivors International: <http://www.survivorsintl.org/index.html>

A San Francisco group serving survivors of torture.

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition: <http://www.tassc.org/>

A coalition of torture survivors working “towards the abolition of torture and ill treatment.”

UN OHCHR Committee against Torture: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/>

UN committee of independent experts that monitors the “Convention against Torture...”

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), Stop Torture Permanently (STOP):

<http://www.uusc.org/programs/STOP/index.html>

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Many of these are referenced in this curriculum. Many more can be found elsewhere on line. Articles not excerpted or reproduced here can be examined at the website listed.

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Responsive Confession:

Leader: Heavenly Creator, you have told us we do not live or die to ourselves,

People: Yet act as if life and death decisions are ours to make.

L: Through Christ you have revealed yourself as Lord of all Life,

P: Yet we've chosen to pass judgment on the lives of our brothers and sisters.

L: We know that one day you will judge us by how we have treated the most vulnerable,

P: Yet we still despise and dehumanize other human beings.

L: You tell us to love you with our hearts, minds and souls, and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

*P: And so we ask that, in your mercy, you teach us to be accountable to you. Bless us, O God, that we might leave our insecurities behind and instead come to show your compassion even to those who frighten us.
AMEN.*

By the No2Torture Group