

**Out of Horror, Hope:**  
**A Biblically Based Study of Torture's Ravages and**  
**Potential Responses in the Reformed Tradition**  
*from the*  
No2Torture Group (studyguide@No2Torture.org)

**Third Session:**  
***Moving from Fear to Love***  
**HANDOUTS**

***List of Handouts:***

1. *Eight Lessons on Torture* from the Center for Victims of Torture
2. *Abu Ghraib — One Year Later* [Excerpts] by Physicians for Human Rights

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**Source:**

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

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717 E. River Road, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-436-4800, [www.cvt.org/](http://www.cvt.org/)

(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://phrusa.org/research/torture/news\\_2005-05-01.html](http://phrusa.org/research/torture/news_2005-05-01.html)

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Two Arrow St., Suite 301, Cambridge, MA 02138, 617-695-0041, [www.phrusa.org/](http://www.phrusa.org/)

## **Abu Ghraib — One Year Later: Comprehensive Report Documents** **Use of Psychological Torture by US Forces [Excerpts]**

One year after the release of scandalous photographs of US personnel torturing Iraqi detainees at the US-run Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, a new report provides extensive evidence that psychological torture was systematic and central to the interrogation process of detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo.

The 135-page report, *Break Them Down: Systematic Use of Psychological Torture by US Forces*, by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), is the first comprehensive review of the use of psychological torture by US forces. The report also examines the devastating health consequences of psychological coercion and explains how a regime of psychological torture was put into place in the US "war on terror."

"What the now infamous images from Abu Ghraib do not show is that psychological torture has been at the center of treatment and interrogation of detainees," said Leonard Rubenstein, PHR's Executive Director. "The Bush Administration decided to 'take the gloves off' in interrogations and 'break' prisoners."

Techniques of psychological torture used have included sensory deprivation, isolation, sleep deprivation, forced nudity, the use of military working dogs to instill fear, cultural and sexual humiliation, mock executions, and the threat of violence or death toward detainees or their loved ones. A source familiar with conditions at Guantánamo told PHR that deprivation of sensory stimulation and over-stimulation led to self-harm and suicide attempts...

... The PHR report reviews extensive clinical experience and studies that have revealed the destructive health consequences of psychological torture such as memory impairment, severe depression with vegetative symptoms, somatic complaints of headache and back pain, nightmares, feeling of shame and humiliation, and reduced capacity to concentrate. One of the PHR's sources familiar with Guantánamo said that detainees there suffer from incoherent speech, disorientation, delusions, and paranoia.

*Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) mobilizes the health professions to advance the health and dignity of all people by protecting human rights. As a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, PHR shared the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.*