



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

November 7, 2012

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chair
Senate Committee on Intelligence
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Intelligence
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein and Senator Chambliss:

It is our understanding that the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has concluded its investigation into interrogation practices, including torture, used by the Central Intelligence Agency and is preparing its final report. This report has been several years in the making and represents an important effort to shed light on practices that have placed in jeopardy our nation's reputation of defending human rights.

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I would note that the U.S. bishops have long registered their absolute opposition to torture. In Catholic teaching, torture is an intrinsic evil that cannot be justified under any circumstances. Torture violates the human dignity of each person. It is degrading to all involved, not only the victim. It also compromises the perpetrator and the society that tolerates its practice. It has a corrosive effect and diminishes our moral credibility in the world. Furthermore, a number of former CIA, FBI and military experts have stated that torture is not an effective technique for producing reliable information. Instead the use of torture is counterproductive. Its use undermines security cooperation with other nations that reject torture and can motivate terrorist recruits who then attack us.

The USCCB joined with several other groups in advocating for an executive order that would ban the practice of torture by the U.S. government and was gratified when that order was issued in 2009. We have been advocating for legislation that would turn that executive order into law. Having the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence finalize and release the full report on CIA interrogation techniques would go a long way to ensuring that the public becomes aware of past practices, and of the illegality and ineffectiveness of torture. Subjecting these practices to public scrutiny would help ensure that our government does not engage in torture again.

I urge you, as a member of this Select Committee, to adopt and release the full report on CIA interrogation practices. The report will allow the truth to see the light of day. It is time for the United States government to take a clear stance against torture so that we can regain our moral standing in the world as a defender of human rights for all.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United State Conference of Catholic Bishops

cc: Members of Senate Committee on Intelligence