



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

June 10, 2015

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator,

As deliberations over the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act continue, I write to express support for an amendment offered by Senators John McCain and Dianne Feinstein that would prohibit all U.S. government agencies and their agents from using torture as an interrogation technique.

The amendment would:

- Require all U.S. government agencies (including the CIA) to limit interrogation techniques to those set out in the Army Field Manual;
- Require the Army Field Manual be updated regularly and remain available to the public to reflect best interrogation techniques designed to elicit statements without the use or threat of force; and
- Require the International Committee of the Red Cross be given access to all detainees.

These provisions are ones that the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have long supported in trying to ban the practice of torture by the U.S. government.

The Army Field Manual 2-22.3 prescribes uniform standards for interrogating persons detained by the Department of Defense. A guiding principle of the Field Manual echoes the Golden Rule: “In attempting to determine if a contemplated approach or technique should be considered prohibited, and therefore should not be included in an interrogation plan, consider ... if the proposed approach technique were used by the enemy against one of your fellow soldiers, would you believe the soldier had been abused?” (5-76)

The McCain-Feinstein amendment seeks to ensure that Army Field Manual’s standard is also the same standard used by other governmental agencies, including the CIA. Adhering to these standards and ensuring access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit detainees in international armed conflicts would make a substantial contribution to our nation’s efforts to uphold our international obligations under the Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture. The amendment would help restore the moral credibility of the United States.

In Catholic teaching, torture is an intrinsic evil that cannot be justified under any circumstances as it violates the dignity of the human person, both victim and perpetrator, and degrades any society that tolerates it. We urge all Senators to support the McCain-Feinstein amendment that would help to ensure that laws are enacted so that our government does not engage in torture ever again.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces

Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace