



It has been over a year since the first torture photographs emerged from Abu Ghraib. These horrors were not isolated cases. Rather, under the cover of its “War on Terror,” the Bush administration has made torture part of the U.S. government’s standard operating procedure.

“The detention facility at Guantánamo Bay has become the ‘gulag of our times.’”
— foreword to Amnesty
International Report 2005

In late 2001, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld secretly approved a “special access program” directed against suspected members of al Qaeda, according to a *New Yorker* article by Seymour Hersh. The program permits the assassination, capture, and/or forceful interrogation of al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan – or anywhere in the world.

Despite the Abu Ghraib scandal, Rumsfeld’s program continues in full force. In an April 2005 publication, Human Rights Watch reports that the Bush administration now routinely kidnaps, tortures, and has even killed an unknown number of people in “dozens of U.S. detention facilities worldwide.”

Besides being inhumane, torture is illegal. The U.S. has signed the United Nations

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Punishment. “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever,” reads one of its Articles, “whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”

Responsibility for torture goes right to the top of the Bush administration, to Rumsfeld and Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez. They set up the programs that green-lighted torture and cooked up the arguments claiming it was legal. But it is the bit players who are taking the fall, not the higher ups who wrote the script.

“Rendition”: Outsourcing Torture

In addition to running its own detention centers, the U.S. government sends prisoners to countries where they can legally be tortured. This procedure is known as “rendition.” Human Rights Watch knows of 100-150 detainees who have been “rendered” to countries that are known to practice torture. Rendition is illegal under Article 3 of the United Nations *Convention Against Torture*.

Perhaps the most famous case concerns Canadian businessman Maher Arar. During a layover at New York’s JFK airport in September 2002, the FBI arrested Arar and deported him to Syria, where he was held in a tiny, grave-like cell for ten months, repeatedly beaten, and tortured. Only his wife’s ceaseless campaigning secured his release. The Canadian government is conducting an inquiry into Arar’s ordeal.

“The next day I was taken upstairs again. The beating started that day and was very intense for a week, and then less intense for another week. That second and the third days were the worst. I could hear other prisoners being tortured and screaming and screaming.”
— Maher Arar

Privatizing Interrogation

It is hard to enforce accountability on U.S. government agencies. It is even harder to hold anyone responsible when the government contracts out torture to private companies. Torture committed by private contractors dwells in a legal twilight zone, especially when it is done outside the United States, where U.S. laws may not apply.

Two private U.S. companies, CACI International of Arlington, Virginia, and Titan of San Diego, California, supplied interrogators and translators to the 205th Military Intelligence Brigade at Abu Ghraib. Affiliated Computer Services, Inc., a small subsidiary of Lockheed Martin Corporation, provides interrogators to the detention center at Guantánamo Bay. Intelligence contracting is big business.

“One estimate compiled from interviews with military experts suggests that as much as 50 percent of the \$40 billion given annually to the 15 intelligence agencies in the U.S. is now spent on private contractors.”

— Pratap Chatterjee of
CorpWatch.com

Human rights organizations are working to bring some of these companies to justice. The Center for Constitutional Rights has filed suit against CACI International and Titan for their part in the Abu Ghraib abuses.

You Can Help Stop Torture

There are many ways to raise your voice and help stop the Bush administration's continued use of torture.

1. Support the United Nations International Day in Solidarity with Victims of Torture, Sunday, June 26, 2005.

Amnesty International is organizing a nationwide response.

www.amnestyusa.org
or call 212-807-8400

Read Amnesty International's 2005 Report and join their Online Action Center to help free individual victims of torture around the world.

2. Support the Center for Constitutional Rights' campaign to stop torture.

www.ccr-ny.org
or call 212-614-6464

3. Don't let torture be the “business as usual” that no one speaks up about!

Talk to friends, co-workers, and family about U.S. involvement. Ask organizations you are a member of to take a public stand against torture. Picket your local military recruiting centers with signs reading “Don't enlist in torture!”

4. Donate to anti-torture groups like Amnesty International, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and Human Rights Watch.

www.hrw.org
or call 212-290-4700



www.war-times.org