

Stop Torture of Detainees

[October 24, 2005] Your voice in opposition to torture is key right now. Staff for a House-Senate conference committee is meeting now to consider legislation curbing the use of torture of detainees by U.S. personnel.

If your representative is on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, please contact them today, urging him or her to retain the McCain Amendment to the 2006 military appropriations bill, an amendment that prohibits U.S.-sponsored torture. Ask your representative to allow no loopholes to be added to the bills provisions in conference committee. Give your support to members of the House defense appropriations subcommittee to take a stand against the use of torture. Give them the strength of an overwhelming constituent response against torture, cruelty, and abuse in U.S. interrogation and detention policy.

Please tell three friends who live in your congressional district about this message and ask them to take action as well.

Background

The "McCain amendment" to the military appropriations bill passed in the Senate in a stunning 90-9 bi-partisan vote. The amendment would require that all Defense Department interrogations follow the Army Field Manual's standards for humane treatment, and that treatment of all prisoners in U.S. government control conform to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. (The U.S. is a signatory to the UN Convention Against Torture.)

Senator McCain's amendment reinforces the guidelines set in place by U.S. statutes, treaty obligations, and military regulations, as well as international law and humanitarian standards. This amendment would give the military and intelligence agency command structure a clear, unambiguous standard for treatment of foreign captives during detention and interrogation.

There is no similar language in the House version of the military appropriations bill, so it is particularly important that House conferees agree to inclusion of the McCain amendment in the final version of the bill.

The president has threatened to veto the military appropriations bill if it includes the McCain amendment. Your representative is on the House defense appropriations subcommittee and, within days, will probably be named to the conference committee to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the military appropriations bill. Members of this conference committee will be under tremendous pressure from senior Republican leadership and from the president to strip the McCain amendment from the appropriations bill or gut its clarity with loopholes. In addition, the defense appropriations subcommittee does not usually hear substantive matters concerning human rights. These representatives will be well-served by constituent comments.

For further background information about the McCain Amendment, including the text of the Amendment, see FCNL's web site.

Talking Points on Torture

Torture is morally repugnant and contrary to the values upon which the U.S. was built;

Torture by the U.S. puts U.S. troops in grave danger of being tortured in response;

Torture by the U.S. feeds violent anti-U.S. groups around the world with new recruits who sign up in anger and revulsion at the U.S. detention and interrogation tactics;

Torture by the U.S. exposes U.S. diplomatic efforts supporting human rights to charges of hypocrisy;

Torture is less productive and less reliable than "friendly" (even though also coercive) interrogation strategies;

Torture violates U.S. statutes and international treaties to which the U.S. is a party.

Members of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee

California: Randy Cunningham (CA-50th)

Florida: Bill Young (FL-10th)

Georgia: Jack Kingston (GA-1st)

Indiana: Peter Visclosky (IN-1st)

Kansas: Todd Tiahrt (KS-4th)

Minnesota: Martin Sabo (MN-5th)

Mississippi: Roger Wicker (MS-1st)

New Jersey: Rodney Frelinghuysen (NJ-11th)

Ohio: David Hobson (OH-7th), Marcy Kaptur (OH-9th)

Pennsylvania: John Murtha (PA-12th)

Texas: Kay Granger (TX-12th), Henry Bonilla (TX-23rd)

Virginia: James Moran (VA-8th)

Washington: Norman Dicks (WA-6th)

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Sample Letter

I cannot urge you strongly enough to retain the McCain provision prohibiting U.S. sponsored torture, without any weakening loopholes, in the 2006 Defense Department appropriations bill in conference committee.

I am appalled and disgusted by the stream of reports of torture, cruelty and abuse at the hands of U.S. forces abroad. Torture is morally repugnant and contrary to the values upon which the U.S. was built. Torture by U.S. forces provokes further terrorist attacks and retaliatory cruelty to U.S. troops. The McCain amendment gives clear standards and expectations to officers and enlisted personnel alike. Please retain the McCain provision as passed by the Senate.

Thank you.