

November 12 - A National Day of Witness for a Presidential Order to Ban Torture

Delegations of religious leaders will organize visits with Members of Congress or their staff in local district offices all across the country on Wednesday, November 12. These delegations will ask the Members of Congress to help urge the newly-elected President to issue an Executive Order banning torture as one of his first official actions. These meetings will occur during the week following the election to stress the urgency of this issue and the need for a new Administration and Congress to act quickly to restore the rule of law and respect for human rights.

The local visits will include 4 primary components:

- 1) Present the Member of Congress with a list of names from their state who have endorsed the "Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty." (see below)
- 2) Ask the Member of Congress to endorse the Declaration of Principles;
- 3) Ask the Member of Congress to personally urge the President-elect to issue an Executive

Order; and

4) Ask the Member of Congress to support National Religious Coalition Against Torture's (NRCAT) call for a Select Committee of Congress to conduct a full investigation into the use of torture by U.S. personnel since 9/11 to make sure that U.S.-sponsored torture never happens again.

There will also be a solemn procession and public witness at the White House in Washington, DC on that day.

For more info: <http://www.nrcat.org/>

"No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for torture."
-- The U.N. Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

ACTION:

In the spirit of President-elect Obama,

1. Call the Congregational switchboard (202-224-3121) and ask for your Senators / Congressperson by name. The operator will connect you. If you don't know their name, tell the operator your zip code and s/he will connect you. Urge these elected representatives to do steps 1-3 above.
2. President-elect Obama has an input website: <http://change.gov/page/s/contact> Personally urge him to issue an Executive Order in compliance with the Declaration of Principles below.

Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order On Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty

Though we come from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life, we agree that the use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment against prisoners is immoral, unwise, and un-American.

In our effort to secure ourselves, we have resorted to tactics which do not work, which endanger US personnel abroad, which discourage political, military, and intelligence cooperation from our allies, and which ultimately do not enhance our security.

Our President must lead us by our core principles. We must be better than our enemies, and our treatment of prisoners captured in the battle against terrorism must reflect our character and values as Americans.

Therefore, we believe the President of the United States should issue an Executive Order that provides as follows:

The "Golden Rule." We will not authorize or use any methods of interrogation that we would not find acceptable if used against Americans, be they civilians or soldiers.

One national standard. We will have one national standard for all US personnel and agencies for the interrogation and treatment of prisoners. Currently, the best expression of that standard is the US Army Field Manual, which will be used until any other interrogation technique has been approved based on the Golden Rule principle.

The rule of law. We will acknowledge all prisoners to our courts or the International Red Cross. We will in no circumstance hold persons in secret prisons or engage in disappearances. In all cases, prisoners will have the opportunity to prove their innocence in ways that fully conform to American principles of fairness.

Duty to protect. We acknowledge our historical commitment to end the use of torture and cruelty in the world. The US will not transfer any person to countries that use torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

Checks and balances. Congress and the courts play an invaluable role in protecting the values and institutions of our nation and must have and will have access to the information they need to be fully informed about our detention and interrogation policies.

Clarity and accountability. All US personnel—whether soldiers or intelligence staff—deserve the certainty that they are implementing policy that complies fully with the law. Henceforth all US officials who authorize, implement, or fail in their duty to prevent the use of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners will be held accountable, regardless of rank or position.

This initiative is coordinated by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, Evangelicals for Human Rights, and the Center for Victims of Torture.

Note: Other peace leaflets produced by 8th Day Center can be found at www.8thdaycenter.org/resources/leaflets.html You may wish to use them for your own vigils, in classrooms, etc.

8th Day Center for Justice

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President-elect Obama said in Chicago, November 4, 2008: “This victory alone is not the change we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were....It can’t happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice.”

