

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/28289-reflections-on-torture-the-real-reason-why?tmpl=component&print=1>

Reflections on Torture: The Real Reason Why

By Emanuel E. Garcia
1/2/2015



Locals and reporters gather outside the compound where Osama bin Laden was killed by U.S. Navy Seals the day before, in Abbottabad, Pakistan, May 3, 2011. A report released by the Senate Intelligence Committee on Dec. 9, 2014 discredits the often-repeated notion that the torture of detainees was instrumental in locating bin Laden

The release of the Senate Intelligence Committee's executive summary on torture has brought this criminal activity into the realm of public discussion.

Many have argued against torture from both humanist (it's illegal and immoral) and practical (it doesn't work) perspectives, and have offered various reasons for its employment by the United States. The New York Times editorial board, just three days before Christmas, (December 22, 2014) urged prosecution of torturers and their "bosses." Presumably this includes not only CIA operatives, but also those at the highest levels of government, including former President Bush.

Predictably enough, Dick Cheney on "Meet the Press," has unabashedly and unrepentantly avowed that he would employ torture again, and a Washington Post-ABC News poll indicates that a majority of the US public believes torture was justified in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Torture is illegal according to US law and also the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which defines it as:

any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

Given well-established knowledge that torture, as a means of gathering accurate information, does not "work" (see for example, Costanzo and Gerrity's study), and that the use of torture by the Bush administration in the wake of 9/11 did not lead to any credible intelligence benefit, one must ask why, then, torture would have been so relentlessly and systematically employed. Why would such gratuitous, sadistic criminality have been authorized by the state?

Some have implied that those who torture, fully aware of its lack of efficacy, cannily use it to generate evidence for an already established line of action; for example, if you want people to believe that Iraq was behind the 9/11 attacks, then simply extract a confession under torture to support your agenda. However if confessions of terrorist plots or future schemes are necessary, there are far easier ways to obtain them, and they include bribery and/or simple fabrication. And indeed these are time-worn approaches that have an established legacy and, given the shield of protective secrecy that envelops the "deep state" and its agencies (the CIA etc.), could not easily be disproved or even investigated.

I assert that torture has a very specific political function that *has nothing to do with the gathering of "intelligence," but everything to do with the projection of the image of the state as a lawless and fearsome entity* to its citizens and to the rest of the world, capable of the most heinous and cruel depravity, and thus sending the message that it is not to be disobeyed. This is the same psychological "logic" behind extrajudicial murder (assassinations, drone killings) and the Guantánamo Bay prison, where due process is openly violated.

It must be kept in mind that the extent of the so-called secret renditions, and the horrendous abuse that has taken place in prisons such as Abu Ghraib and the like - and which have resulted in fatalities - ensure that many people end up knowing and promulgating reports of atrocities that are "officially" not taking place. Prisoners' families, guards, the torturers themselves, ancillary personnel - all will have witnessed, assisted or have heard about or have been touched by these activities. Word on the street and word throughout the international community inevitably filters out: Torture becomes a very public "secret" - and as a result, not unlike Stalin's gulag or the Chilean *desaparecidos*, the state as perpetrator is all the more to be feared. This aspect of display is itself *a deliberate part of state strategy*.

For an especially informative historical example, one need look no further than to the treatment of a peace-advocating, rabble-rousing Jew born some 2,000 years ago.

Jesus Christ was condemned to death by the Roman government - but it was not enough simply to execute him (and others who ran afoul of the state). He was subjected to what is quite graphically known and understood by hundreds of millions to have been a particularly cruel and merciless form of torture: having been condemned, having to carry the means of his death on his back, having to parade in front of loved ones and strangers, exposed to the pity, humiliation and the depravity, the strangled kindness and the indisputable fear of onlookers, so that he might slowly bleed to death, naked and racked with pain, in full public view.

In this famous example, the use of torture to send a message could not have been clearer. That it simultaneously gratified the sadistic urges of governing officials and their associates, and that this gratification was employed "institutionally" to enhance the power of the governing authority seems beyond question.

And it is equally beyond question now that behind the smoke screen of our current-day torture apologists in government are identical motivating forces.