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## THE CIA NAKED PHOTOS SCANDAL IS A WAKE-UP CALL

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3/28/2016

Just as the ugly spectre of torture has reared its head once again in the US presidential race, the Guardian has revealed shocking new details of the US government's brutality during the Bush era.

Classified pictures showing CIA captives bruised, blindfolded and bound raise new questions about US's willingness to use 'sexual humiliation' on suspects  
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As the Guardian's Spencer Ackerman reported today, the CIA took photographs of its prisoners while they were naked, bound and some bruised, just before they were to be shipped off to some of the world's worst dictators at the time – which included Assad, Mubarak and Gaddafi – for torture. The photos were described by a former US official as “very gruesome”.

The report is a stark reminder that the US continues to keep secret, to this day, some of the worst actions of the Bush administration. And it's all the more relevant given that after the tragic terrorist attack in Brussels, torture has once again become central to the US political debate. On national television immediately following the attacks, the Republican presidential frontrunner

Donald Trump again called for waterboarding – a war crime Japanese soldiers were prosecuted for after the second world war. Trump has also repeatedly claimed he would do “much worse” than waterboarding to captives as president.

Almost worse is the fact that the US media is again feeding into the idea that this should even be up for debate. Today Show anchor Savannah Guthrie, in an interview with Trump, said “some people think that kind of harsh interrogation technique” – the GOP’s cowardly euphemism for illegal torture – “works ... and others say that it doesn’t work.” Really? Can she – or anyone – point to a single interrogation expert who thinks torture “works”, besides Bush administration hacks who have never interrogated anyone in their lives?

But let’s put aside the immoral question of “does torture work” for a minute, because it’s essentially like asking “does slavery work”. Waterboarding and other forms of torture used by the US during the Bush administration are blatantly illegal – by statute, by treaty and by the constitution.

But because the Obama administration shamefully refused to prosecute the architects of the torture program – and the Justice Department lawyers who gave them legal cover – war crimes are now merely portrayed as a policy dispute between the two political parties.

Right now, the full Senate CIA torture report, which may shed more light on the photographs that the Guardian reported on, remains locked in a Justice Department safe, where it has sat untouched and unread by investigators in a cynical attempt to prevent it from being made available to the public through the Freedom of Information Act. Separately, the Obama administration has been fighting the ACLU tooth and nail over the release of another set of photos showing how the US military tortured prisoners in overseas prisons shortly after 9/11. A judge has repeatedly ordered the government to release them, but they have been dragging their feet for months.

And so it falls to courageous whistleblowers and investigative journalists to expose the truth. And it’s a truth that all Americans need to hear. Stripping suspects, taking humiliating photographs of them, sending them around the world into the hands of torturers: these sound like the actions of a crazed dictatorship. They should be the stuff of nightmares. In fact, they’re the stuff of American policy in the 21st century. This is the latest in a series of wake-up calls. We ignore it at our peril.