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## Obama's Cowardly Response to Torture Revelations

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The United States tortures.

That much became undeniably clear this week when the Senate Intelligence Committee released the executive summary of its report on the CIA's interrogation and detention program under the Bush administration.

The secret's been out, but the five-year investigation exposed in gruesome detail the horrific and inhumane methods employed by the CIA, as well as the repeated lies the agency told the White House, Congress, and the press.

After taking office in 2009 President Obama did ban the use of torture through an executive order, and to this day says that the practice was inconsistent with our values as a nation. But that one stroke of the pen doesn't match up with the rest of his actions.

The ethos of this administration has been to look forward and not backwards. This has meant letting the architects of the Bush torture regime escape prosecution and any semblance of accountability despite clear violations of international law.

In the days since the report's release, the president has provided comments in which he praised the intelligence community as "heroes" and "patriots," and implored us to believe that agonizing choices were made in haste in response to 9/11.

An official statement from the White House called the CIA's program "troubling" and the methods "harsh." Telling someone they've put on a few pounds is harsh. Anal rape, sleep deprivation, and dehumanizing psychological abuse are war crimes.

The only man to go to prison in relation to torture is John Kiriakou, a CIA whistleblower who was the first to inform the public that the program existed.

This administration has repeatedly used the states secrets privilege in court to prevent victims of extraordinary rendition from finding justice, and has allowed military commissions to supersede our federal court system. Not only does Guantanamo Bay remain open, but 68 detainees who have been cleared for release, remain imprisoned indefinitely.

No one at the CIA has suffered any consequences for spying on the Senate Intelligence Committee in response to their efforts to put the report together. There are valid questions as to why the committee didn't interview officials directly, but the Obama administration has only served as a further impediment to this process. The White House refused to hand over more than 9,000 CIA documents to the committee, and is in a legal battle with the *New York Times* to release 1,700 documents from a Department of Justice investigation. Just a few of many reasons outgoing Senator Mark Udall has accused the administration of a cover up.

None of this sends the message that America has renounced torture.

The media for its part, hasn't helped. When Dick Cheney and Michael Hayden appear on every major news network and are given free rein to justify their actions, torture is given a platform.

Of course, there are exceptions. Thanks to the kind of investigative reporting that this administration prefers to punish we also know that torture or proxy torture has continued under Obama's watch in Afghanistan and Somalia. Handing off prisoners to war lords who abuse them doesn't make our hands clean.

The tendency to look to the future instead of the past has also allowed for new and dangerous precedents to be set where American citizens and unidentified "militants" are killed via drone strikes.

So let's cut the talk of fundamental American values that the rest of the world should admire. Obama may not want to dwell on the past, but history will, and his legacy on torture will be one of acceptance.