

**USCMA Resolution Condemning Torture
2006 Annual Meeting
South Bend, Indiana**

Let it be resolved that:

We, USCMA members, many of whom are missionaries who have worked with people suffering the effects of torture in countries around the world, recognize our moral obligation to condemn torture in all of its forms especially in areas under the control of the US government.

Therefore, USCMA endorses the following statement of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT):

TORTURE IS A MORAL ISSUE

Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions hold dear. It degrades everyone involved -- policy-makers, perpetrators and victims. It contradicts our nation's most cherished ideals. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable.

Torture and inhumane treatment have long been banned by U.S. treaty obligations, and are punishable by criminal statute. Recent developments, however, have created new uncertainties. By reaffirming the ban on cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment as well as torture, the McCain amendment, now signed into law, is a step in the right direction. Yet its implementation remains unclear.

The President's signing statement, which he issued when he signed the McCain Amendment into law, implies that the President does not believe he is bound by the amendment in his role as commander in chief. The possibility remains open that inhumane methods of interrogation will continue.

Furthermore, in a troubling development, for the first time in our nation's history, legislation has now been signed into law that effectively permits evidence obtained by torture to be used in a court of law. The military tribunals that are trying some terrorist suspects are now expressly permitted to consider information obtained under coercive interrogation techniques, including degrading and inhumane techniques and torture.

We urge Congress and the President to remove all ambiguities by prohibiting:

- *Exemptions from the human rights standards of international law for any arm of our government.*
- *The practice of extraordinary rendition, whereby suspects are apprehended and flown to countries that use torture as a means of interrogation.*
- *Any disconnection of "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" from the ban against "torture" so as to permit inhumane interrogation.*
- *The existence of secret U.S. prisons around the world.*
- *Any denial of Red Cross access to detainees held by our government overseas.*

We also call for an independent investigation of the severe human rights abuses at U.S. installations like Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan.

Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation.

What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed?

Let America abolish torture now -- without exceptions.

Additional Call for Specific Actions:

- Encourage USCMA members to use their resources of education, preaching and advocacy to eliminate use of torture which is contrary to both natural law and human dignity, and in fundamental opposition to God's salvific love for humanity;
- To individually promote the endorsement of the NRCAT statement (<http://nrcat.org/statement.aspx>) and the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) Resolution Condemning Torture (<http://www.cmsm.org/justice-statements/statement-2006resolution.shtml>)

Other Useful Resources and Links:

- Torture: Religious Ethics and National Security by John Perry, SJ, Orbis Books (2006 Pax Christi USA Book Award)
- "Silence on Suffering: Where are the voices from the Christian community on cruel and degrading treatment of detainees?" by Gary Haugen which appeared in *Christianity Today*, October 2005.
- Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC) <http://www.tassc.org/>
- Center for the Victims of Torture <http://www.cvt.org>