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Center for Victims of Torture Applauds Presidential Executive Order Banning Torture

Executive Order Reflects Principles Called for by Bipartisan Coalition of National Security Experts, Retired Military Leaders & Intelligence Professionals

Washington, DC: Today, President Barack Obama signed an Executive Order that bans torture. Since June 2008, a bipartisan coalition of more than 200 retired military leaders, intelligence experts, security chiefs and faith leaders has called for the president to sign an Executive Order to ban torture and cruelty. The bipartisan group of supporters includes six former Secretaries of State or Defense, three former National Security Advisors, four former members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and more than forty retired flag officers.

This bipartisan coalition endorsed six principles of humane treatment contained in the *Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty*. The six principles in the Declaration were incorporated into President Obama's Executive Order. A complete list of signatories of the *Declaration of Principles* can be viewed at www.campaigntobantorture.org.

“With his signature, President Obama has signaled to the world the end of one era and the start of a new one where America's greatest strengths—our core values—are once again clear to the world,” said Douglas A. Johnson, Center for Victims of Torture's Executive Director. “National security and intelligence experts and retired military leaders have long warned that torture and cruelty jeopardize national security and place our courageous servicemen and women in danger.”

For the past eighteen months, the Minneapolis-based Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) has been building support for a Presidential Executive Order banning torture and Cruelty. The *Declaration of Principles* calls for an end to any practice that the U.S. would not like to see used on Americans, such as water boarding, through adherence to the “Golden Rule.” The *Declaration* also urges the President to: close gaps in U.S. interrogation policy by setting one national standard of treatment by which all interrogators must abide, including those in the CIA; ban secret prisons and grant the International Committee of the Red Cross access to U.S.-held detainees anywhere in the world; end rendition to countries that torture; ensure Congressional and judicial oversight

of detention and interrogation; and establish accountability for all who authorize, implement or fail in their duty to prevent torture and cruelty.

“We want to ensure that the task force which the President has charged with reviewing interrogation policy engages in an open process and that any changes to interrogation rules are transparent. Likewise, any new techniques developed must clearly adhere to 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,” said Douglas A. Johnson, CVT’s Executive Director.

For a complete list of signatories and the full statement, visit www.CampaignToBanTorture.org

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About the Campaign To Ban Torture

CVT was the first organization to call for an executive order banning torture and cruelty, and in 2007 began discussions with a bipartisan group of military, foreign policy and security policy leaders. This effort led to the creation of the Campaign to Ban Torture, a partnership among CVT, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and Evangelicals for Human Rights.

About CVT

Founded in 1985, CVT was the first comprehensive torture survivor rehabilitation facility in the United States, and the third in the world. CVT provides care to thousands of torture survivors at its clinics in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Earlier this year, CVT opened a rehabilitation program for Iraqi torture survivors living in Jordan. For more information, visit www.cvt.org.

Editor’s Note: For endorsers’ media availability, please contact Elizabeth Condon, econdon@cvt.org, 202-857-3283.



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Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture & 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.

