



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On 5th Anniversary of Executive Order Ending Use of Torture in War on Terror, President Obama Urged to Support Release of Senate Report on CIA Torture

St. Paul, MN & Washington – January 22, 2014, is the five-year anniversary of President Obama’s Executive Order ending the use of torture in U.S. counter-terrorism operations. In a letter sent today to the President, the Center for Victims of Torture™ and a coalition of other human rights organizations urge him to mark this important day in his presidency by publically supporting the release of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s 6,000 plus page report on the former CIA detention and interrogation program following September 11, 2001.

“The past use of torture and cruel treatment seriously jeopardized our national security and eroded our nation’s standing in the world,” said Curt Goering, executive director of CVT.

“Presidential leadership was absolutely essential to shutting down these unlawful, misguided, ineffective, and immoral policies. On his second day in office, President Obama demonstrated that leadership by swiftly ending the official abuse with an Executive Order ensuring legal and humane interrogations, and signaling to the world that we are committed to turning the page on a dark chapter in U.S. policy.

“As a leader in the Campaign to Ban Torture, which was instrumental in encouraging the President to sign such an Executive Order, CVT applauded his action back then, and we do so again today.

“However, more must be done to ultimately come to terms with the U.S. government’s previous descent into torture and cruel treatment. To start, the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on CIA torture must be released. It has been over a year since the committee adopted the report; the time is now to uncover the truth. The American people are entitled to a complete reporting of the facts, detailing how and why the CIA’s policies of torture and cruel treatment came to be used. Only when all the facts are known can we understand what went wrong and prevent such abuses from happening again in the future.

“Releasing the report has earned widespread support, including from Vice President Joe Biden; Senator John McCain; several retired military officers, national security experts, foreign policy experts, and religious leaders; and the bipartisan Task Force on Detainee Treatment.

“It is our hope President Obama will mark the fifth anniversary of his Executive Order by joining them in support of making the report public without delay.”

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FULL TEXT OF COALITION LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA:

January 22, 2014

President Barack Obama
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Upholding Executive Order 13491 Ensuring Lawful Interrogations

Dear President Obama:

We write to urge you to use the occasion of the 5th anniversary of your Executive Order 13491 (Ensuring Lawful Interrogations) to publicly support the release of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's study of the former CIA detention and interrogation program.

Five years ago today, you mandated "the safe, lawful, and humane treatment of individuals in United States custody" and sent a message to the world that the United States rejects torture and the false dichotomy between values and security.

Former Bush Administration and CIA officials continue to attack your decision. Claiming that secret information supports them, they argue that torture saved lives and your Executive Order 13491 makes America less safe. As you know, torture is not only illegal, it is immoral and – according to military and intelligence experts – ineffective and counterproductive. Yet the use of torture continues to be the subject of intense debate. To answer critics of your Executive Order and ensure that a future President does not revoke the order and engage in torture, we urge you to publicly support the release of the Intelligence Committee's report.

There are strong indications that the Committee's study vindicates your Executive Order and that the CIA repeatedly misled the Congress, the Justice Department and the White House about the torture program. If true, former officials who continue to claim that torture made the United States safer are now also grossly misleading the public. Releasing the Intelligence Committee report would be a significant step in establishing the truth and creating a bulwark against the possibility that torture will ever be used again.

We urge you to publicly support release of the Senate's important oversight report and help bring the truth about torture before the American people.

Sincerely,
American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International USA
The Center for Victims of Torture
The Constitution Project
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch

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National Religious Campaign Against Torture
Open Society Policy Center
Physicians for Human Rights

NOTE: CVT, in partnership with other human rights organizations, has compiled a list of political, religious, human rights, national security, foreign policy, and military leaders, and media who support releasing the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA torture. If you'd like a copy, please contact Brad Robideau at brobideau@cvt.org or 612.436.4886.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit headquartered in St. Paul, MN with an office in Washington, D.C. and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit www.cvt.org.