



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

TORTURE // WITHOUT SCARS //

“ENHANCED INTERROGATION” is a euphemism coined by proponents of coercive interrogation that allow for abusive treatment of detainees. These interrogation practices include physical and psychological pain, and are intended to “break down” prisoners.

“Enhanced” or abusive interrogation is used widely around the world. The United States officially permitted these techniques for a time after Sept. 11, 2001, and some continue to call for a return to “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

Torture rehabilitation professionals, including clinicians at the Center for Victims of Torture™, are familiar with the physical and psychological wounds caused by “enhanced interrogation,” such as sexual humiliation, stress positions, sleep deprivation for up to 180 hours, sensory overload, sensory deprivation and mock executions. From a medical, scientific and clinical perspective, such abuse constitutes torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The art pieces reflect forms of abuse similar to those documented in photographs of “enhanced interrogation techniques” used and once authorized as U.S. policy. The information is based on the expertise of torture rehabilitation professionals who are familiar with the physical and psychological trauma caused by these interrogation methods – methods used worldwide by repressive regimes.

FORCED NAKEDNESS AND SEXUAL HUMILIATION

Forced nakedness creates a power differential, stripping the victims of their identity, inducing immediate shame and creating an environment where the threat of sexual and physical assault is always present. The effects of sexual humiliation, including forced nakedness, include posttraumatic stress disorder and major depression. Victims often have flashbacks or nightmares about their experiences, and both men and women feel shame, grief and fear.

“I mean, in my eyes, definitely that, humiliate, intimidate, hurt, and show you that what’s coming is actually worse than what you’re just going through,” Bishir Al-Rawi on being stripped of his clothes. Al-Rawi was held at Guantanamo for four years before his release in March 2007 without charge.



ART CREATED BY SURVIVOR OF
SEXUAL TORTURE.



PHOTO FROM ABU GHRAIB DEPICTS SEXUAL
DEGRADATION OF DETAINEES.

FORCED STRESS POSITIONS

Stress positions are commonly used by repressive regimes. These positions force a prisoner into a painful physical position, such as forced standing, awkward sitting positions or suspending the body for a prolonged period of time. Stress positions can lead to long term or even permanent damage, including nerve, joint and circulatory damage, and muscle and joint pain.

"All I can remember is the constant pain I was going through. Just pain, because we were sitting in one position, and hands are tied together, and the handcuffs that they put on, they put them on really tight so you'd lose feeling in your hand, and if you tried to move your wrist, they'd start digging into your wrist as well." Shafiq Rasul, held in Afghanistan and Guantanamo before his transfer to England. British authorities released Rasul without charge within 36 hours of his transfer.



PHOTO FROM ABU GHRAIB



ART CREATED BY TORTURE SURVIVOR.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION

Depriving a detainee of normal sleep for prolonged periods is often done by using stress positions, sensory overload (bright lights or strobe lights, loud noises or music) or other techniques. The effects of sleep deprivation include taking longer to respond to stimuli, attention deficits, decreases in short-term memory, speech impairments, uncontrolled repetition of words or actions, and inflexible thinking. These symptoms may appear after one night of total sleep deprivation or after only a few nights of sleep restriction (5 hours of sleep per night). Sleep deprivation also can result in hypertension and other cardiovascular disease.

"Many patients have told me that the fastest way to make someone crazy is to deprive him of sleep; it is far more effective than physical assault," said Andrea Northwood, Ph.D., director of client services at CVT. "Without sleep, all of the normal perceptual, emotional and cognitive processes that make up our experience of 'mind' slip from our grasp within a matter of days."



ART BY TORTURE SURVIVOR. HEARING THE TORTURE OF OTHERS (AS DEPICTED IN THE PAINTING) IS A FORM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE.

PHOTO FROM ABU GHRAIB. AWKWARD POSITIONS FOR PROLONGED PERIODS DEPRIVE PRISONERS OF NORMAL SLEEP.





ART BY TORTURE SURVIVOR

SENSORY OVERLOAD

Bombarding the senses with powerful lights (including bright lights, strobe or flashing lights) and loud noises (music such as heavy metal or rap, screams and constant noise) are used to inflict extreme physical and mental pain. This causes physiological distress, often resulting in withdrawal from reality. Loud music or noise can cause hearing loss or chronic ringing in the ears. Strobe lights can induce stress responses, effecting heart rate and blood pressure. Sensory overload is also used to deprive a prisoner of sleep.

"A Muslim patient of mine who was bombarded with loud noises day and night told me that this method drove him to the brink of suicide but that his faith saved him: he kept telling himself, 'Let them take my mind, but I won't take my life,'" said Dr. Northwood.



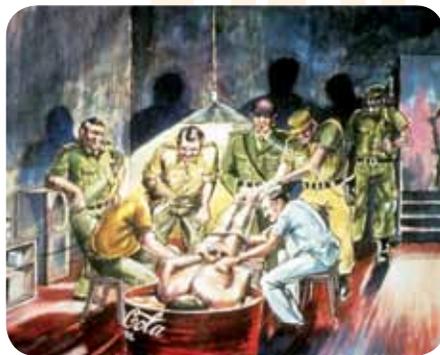
PHOTO OF PRISONER FORCED TO STAND ON BOX WITH WIRES ATTACHED TO HIS FINGERS.

MOCK EXECUTION (INCLUDING WATERBOARDING)

Survivors say mock executions left them feeling they were already dead. Many relive these near-death experiences in their nightmares or flashbacks. When detainees are waterboarded, a form of slow, controlled drowning, they are strapped down and immobilized and water is poured over their face to create the sensation of asphyxiation or drowning. At CVT, survivors tell us they pleaded with their torturers to kill them, preferring real death over the constant threat and intolerable pain caused by mock executions.

"One patient of mine, who was repeatedly submerged in a vat of water while being interrogated, years later still felt as if he was gasping for air whenever he showered or went out in the rain," said Allen Keller, M.D., Director of the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture

"One survivor who was subjected to waterboarding [not by the U.S.] relives the memory of this torture whenever he is cold. He experiences the physical sensations of suffocation and uncontrollable fear, and has been hospitalized for being suicidal. As is the case with most torture survivors, his torture included other methods in addition to the simulated drowning," said Dr. Northwood.



ART BY TORTURE SURVIVOR DEPICTING A FORM TORTURE CALLED SUBMARINO IN LATIN AMERICA TO SIMULATE DROWNING. "SUBMARINO" AND WATERBOARDING ARE FORMS OF MOCK EXECUTION AND ARE COMMONLY USED BECAUSE THEY DO NOT LEAVE PHYSICAL SCARS.

SENSORY DEPRIVATION, INCLUDING ISOLATION

Sensory deprivation includes removing stimuli from one or more of the senses for long periods of time. Isolation denies a detainee contact with other human beings, including other prisoners and prison guards. All forms of sensory deprivation can have profound and long-lasting psychological consequences, including severe anxiety and hallucinations. Effects of isolation (or solitary confinement) include depression, anxiety, difficulty with concentration and memory, hypersensitivity to external stimuli, hallucinations, perception distortions, paranoia and problems with impulse control.



ART BY TORTURE SURVIVOR.



PHOTO FROM GUANTANAMO PRISON. GOGGLES AND EAR MUFFS RESTRICT SIGHT AND SOUND.

FOR FURTHER READING

Educating Information: Interrogation: Science and Art, National Defense University

This report commissioned by the Intelligence Science Board concludes that painful and coercive interrogation techniques hinder the ability to get solid, factual information.

<http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/educing.pdf>

Leave No Marks: Enhanced Interrogation Techniques and the Risk of Criminality

This excellent report by Physicians for Human Rights and Human Rights First details the medical literature demonstrating the serious physical and mental harm caused by abusive interrogation under the guise of "enhanced interrogation techniques," as well as the risk of criminal liability under U.S. law.

<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/reports/leave-no-marks-report-2007.html>

International Committee of the Red Cross Report on the Treatment of Fourteen "High Value Detainees" in CIA Custody

A detailed examination of the treatment of 14 detainees at Guantanamo Bay prison.

<http://assets.nybooks.com/media/doc/2010/04/22/icrc-report.pdf>

Statement to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Hearing on U.S. Interrogation Policy and Executive Order 13440, September 25, 2007 by Allen S. Keller, M.D., Director, Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture

Dr. Keller's testimony is based on his 15 years of experience caring for men, women and children from all over the world who experienced torture and mistreatment, and his study of the health consequences.

<http://intelligence.senate.gov/070925/akeller.pdf>



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