



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 9, 2018

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Opposition to Gina Haspel Continues to Strengthen

Led by the Congressional Progressive Caucus, More Than 50 House Members Joined a Letter to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Calling for the Rejection of Gina Haspel as CIA Director

WASHINGTON — More than 50 members of the House joined the Congressional Progressive Caucus in sending a letter to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, urging them to oppose the confirmation of Gina Haspel as CIA director.

Led by Representatives Barbara Lee (CA), Raúl Grijalva (AZ) and Mark Pocan (WI), the letter states, “The lack of accountability to Congress, the American people and international law that Ms. Haspel has demonstrated should disqualify her from further public service, let alone from leading the agency that carried out these abuses.”

“Ms. Haspel’s complicity in torture is disqualifying,” said Yasmine Taeb, CVT’s senior policy counsel. “Her nomination and potential confirmation would send a disastrous message that there is absolutely no accountability for those who commit grave human rights abuses—in fact, it sends a message that torture will be rewarded.”

The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) and numerous human rights and faith organizations supported this effort.

Read the full letter below and online [here](#), which also includes the list of signatories.

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May 8, 2018

Dear Chairman Burr and Ranking Member Warner:

We write to express our deep concerns about the nomination and possible confirmation of Gina Haspel as the new Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director. Gina Haspel’s role as a prominent figure in President George W. Bush’s torture program should automatically disqualify her from leading the agency that perpetrated those illegal and immoral abuses.

Gina Haspel is credibly reported to have played a significant role in executing President George W. Bush's covert torture program—which subjected suspected terrorists to brutal “interrogation” methods, including waterboarding—and to have actively participated in concealing those grave abuses.

It has not been disputed that, in 2002, Ms. Haspel was assigned to run a “black site” (secret prison) in Thailand, where at least one man was tortured on her watch, including the use of waterboarding. However, her full role in the illegal program—including whether and when she had supervisory authority over torture in other capacities, and if she was involved in kidnapping and forced disappearances (a practice euphemistically known as “extraordinary rendition”)—remains unclear. The CIA's continued secrecy around the comprehensive details of Ms. Haspel's involvement with the torture program is both undemocratic and shameful; the American people deserve that information and their elected Senators must have it to meaningfully fulfill their constitutional duty.

In addition to her reported role in the torture program, the CIA has now confirmed that Ms. Haspel actively participated in the destruction of videotapes recording the horrors the program produced—including drafting the cable that not only authorized destruction, but also ([according to](#) Ms. Haspel's boss at the time) instructed CIA personnel to “use an industrial-strength shredder” so as to leave “nothing to chance.” That she was not the one who gave the final order does not absolve her of complicity in destroying evidence—an extremely serious matter—particularly given former acting CIA general counsel John Rizzo's [account](#) that Ms. Haspel was a staunch and persistent lobbyist for destruction. By helping to hide one of America's darkest hours, Ms. Haspel shares responsibility for preventing the American public from knowing the full truth about illegal CIA activities. Moreover, this act robbed congressional overseers and federal prosecutors of an un-sanitized, visceral representation of what “enhanced interrogation” truly meant. Indeed, according to internal [CIA e-mails](#) at the time, then-head of the agency's clandestine service, Jose Rodriguez, is said to have told colleagues that “the heat from destroying [the tapes] is nothing compared to what it would be if the tapes ever got into the public domain – [Rodriguez] said that out of context they would make us look terrible; it would be ‘devastating’ to us.”

The lack of accountability to Congress, the American people and international law that Ms. Haspel has demonstrated should disqualify her from further public service, let alone from leading the agency that carried out these abuses.

We strongly urge the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence to vote no on the nomination of Gina Haspel. Instead, we urge the committee to only advance nominees to direct the CIA who have, at minimum, seasoned track records of respecting and championing human rights and adhering to U.S. and international law.

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