



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 18, 2018

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**More than 50 Virginia Elected Officials and Leaders from Progressive, Faith Communities Urge Sens. Warner and Kaine to Oppose Gina Haspel Nomination as CIA Director**

*Letter, Which Highlights Haspel's Prominent Role in Torture Program, Comes as Reports Indicate Increased Opposition from Key Senate Voices*

**WASHINGTON** — More than 50 Virginia elected officials and leaders from the progressive and faith communities today have [signed onto a letter](#) urging Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner to oppose the nomination of Gina Haspel as CIA Director. The letter, which comes just weeks before Haspel is expected to testify before the Senate at her confirmation hearing, highlights Haspel's "prominent role in President George W. Bush's covert torture program" and the subsequent "destruction of videotapes" documenting torture she oversaw. Among the signers of the letter include Delegate Patrick Hope, Delegate Mark Keam, Delegate Elizabeth Guzman, and Chair of the Arlington County Board Katie Cristol.

The letter was organized by the Center for Victims of Torture and marks only the second time in the organization's more than 30-year history that it has opposed a presidential nominee.

"Endorsing Ms. Haspel would reward torture, and send a disastrous message the world over - that there is no accountability whatsoever for those who commit these grave human rights violations," the letter states. "Put simply, this vote will be seen as a referendum on torture."

The letter comes as news reports this week continue indicating increased scrutiny and opposition to Haspel's nomination – including among key Senate Republicans. Appearing on *CNN* on Tuesday, **Sen. Rand Paul** reiterated his opposition to Haspel, while **Sen. Angus King** said to *CNN*'s Manu Raju: "Her nomination to me comes down to the destruction of the video tapes... [she was an] advocate for the destruction of evidence ... she wasn't a clerk. She was the chief of staff." *The Wall Street Journal*'s **Byron Tau** also reported, "Several other Republicans have told *The Wall Street Journal* they have concerns about Ms. Haspel and haven't decided whether to support her nomination."

Senator Mark Warner, who is Vice Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and Senator Tim Kaine, who is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, are pivotal voices within the Senate on Haspel's nomination and will play a crucial role in determining the fate of Haspel's confirmation.

“Gina Haspel’s involvement in the day-to-day horrors of the CIA torture program is undisputed, although the precise level of her involvement remains clouded in classified materials and hidden from the public,” said **Yasmine Taeb, CVT Senior Policy Counsel**. “Her participation in torture should be enough to inspire the Senate to block her promotion to CIA Director: that she also lobbied for and was intimately involved in the destruction of evidence of a culture of torture renders her utterly unqualified to ascend to one of the highest leadership positions within the intelligence community.”

The letter, and the full list of signers, can be [accessed here](#), and is also included below.

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April 18, 2018

Senator Mark Warner  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Tim Kaine  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Warner and Kaine:

We, the undersigned Virginia elected officials and leaders from the progressive and faith communities are deeply opposed to the confirmation of Gina Haspel as the next director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Ms. Haspel is credibly reported to have played a prominent role in President George W. Bush’s covert torture program. In addition to Ms. Haspel’s intimate involvement with the torture program, she is credibly reported to have been deeply complicit in the destruction of videotapes recording the horrors the program produced.

Ms. Haspel’s defenders excuse her participation in torture by arguing that she was simply “following orders.” Not only is that excuse insufficient on its face, but it is also deeply disquieting given the administration Ms. Haspel is being nominated to join—led by a President who has openly endorsed torture. One can scarcely imagine the range of dangerous orders the next CIA director could be given, especially in the aftermath of a crisis. Why wouldn’t we expect her dutifully to follow those orders as well?

Ms. Haspel is being considered for a promotion, to lead and represent publicly one of the most powerful (and secretive) agencies in our government. At minimum, her participation in this disgraceful program, which was one of the darkest chapters in our country’s history, should disqualify her from that privilege. Endorsing Ms. Haspel would reward torture, and send a disastrous message the world over—including to survivors of torture—that there is no accountability whatsoever for those who commit these grave human rights violations.

Put simply, this vote will be seen as a referendum on torture. We strongly urge you to vote No on the confirmation of Gina Haspel.

Sincerely,

Yasmine Taeb, Virginia DNC Committeewoman; Senior Policy Counsel, The Center for Victims of Torture

Delegate Mark Levine, 45th House District

Delegate Patrick Hope, 47th House District

Delegate Sam Rasoul, 11th House District

Delegate Marcus Simon, 53rd House District

Delegate Mark Keam, 35th House District

Delegate John Bell, 87th House District

Delegate Elizabeth Guzman, 31st House District

Delegate Hala Ayala, 51st House District

Delegate Kathy Tran, 42nd House District

Delegate Lee Carter, 50th House District

Delegate Rip Sullivan, 48th House District

Katie Cristol, Chair, Arlington County Board

Koran T. Saines, Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Member (Sterling)

Gene Rossi, Fmr. Democratic candidate, Virginia Lt. Governor; Fmr. Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia

Gaylene Kanoyton, 1st Vice Chair, Democratic Party of Virginia

Zachary Pruckowski, Chair, 10th Democratic Congressional District

Jill Caiazza, Chair, Arlington County Democratic Committee

Kenny Allen Boddye, Chairman, Occoquan District Democratic Committee

Gordon Simonett, Chairman, Fairfax County Democrats (Hunter Mill District)

Kip Malinosky, Fmr. Chair, Arlington County Democratic Committee

Peg Willingham, Chair, Falls Church City Democratic Committee

Al Durante, Fmr. Democratic nominee for 54th House District; Fmr. Chair, Spotsylvania Democratic Committee

Maggie Davis, Deputy Chair, Arlington County Democratic Committee; Fmr. President, Arlington Young Democrats

Randy Ihara, Fmr. Vice Chair, Loudoun County Democratic Committee; Co-Chair, Loudoun Progressives

Dewita Soeharjono, Chair, Democratic Party of Virginia Asian American Caucus

Tim Buchholz, Fmr. Chair, Loudoun County Democratic Committee

Nihad Awad, National Executive Director, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Rabbi Michael Knopf, Member of the international Rabbinical Assembly and the Richmond Rabbinical Association

Rev. Linda Higgins, St. John's United Church of Christ, Richmond

Rev. Beth Miller, Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington

Imam Johari Abdul-Malik, Fmr. Director of Outreach at Dar Al Hijrah Islamic Center in Falls Church; Board Member, Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington

Rev. Sherman Z. Logan, Executive Minister, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond

Omar Baddar, Deputy Director, Arab American Institute

Jamal Abdi, Vice President for Policy, National Iranian American Council

Jason L. Miller, Director of Campaigns and Development, Franciscan Action Network

Hoda Hawa, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Muslim Public Affairs Council

Rev. Mandy England Cole, Pastor, Ginter Park Baptist Church, Richmond

Jennifer Lewis, Democratic candidate, 6th Congressional District

Edwin Santana, Democratic candidate, 1st Congressional District

Kellen Squire, Fmr. Democratic nominee for 58th House District

Brent Finnegan, Fmr. Democratic nominee for 26th House District

Donte Tanner, Fmr. Democratic nominee for 40th House District

Stephen Spitz, Virginia Coordinator, Progressive Democrats of America

Julie Emery, Executive Director, Virginia Civic Engagement Table

Jason Rylander, Member of the 8th Congressional Democratic Committee; Communications Director, Arlington County Democratic Committee

Nancy Frowert, Democratic Party of Virginia 7th Congressional District Central Committee Member; Outreach Chair, 7th Congressional District Democratic Committee

Monica Thomas, Democratic Party of Virginia 6th Congressional District Central Committee Member

Josh Stanfield, Executive Director, Activate Virginia

Boyd Walker, Alexandria Democratic Committee Resolutions Chair

Jonathan Sokolow, attorney and community activist, Reston

Marc Beallor, Arlington County Democratic Committee Secretary

Praveen Meyyan, Vice President, Democratic Party of Virginia Asian American Caucus

Graham Weinschenk, Secretary, Virginia Young Democrats

*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.*

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