

April 19, 2018

Dear Senator:

We are a diverse group of organizations from the faith, human rights, civil liberties, and open government communities, among many others, writing to urge you to oppose Gina Haspel's nomination for CIA Director. It remains undisputed that Ms. Haspel was deeply involved in the CIA's now-defunct torture program. As such, a vote to confirm her is incompatible with a meaningful commitment to the prohibition on torture.

Unfortunately, the precise details of Ms. Haspel's participation in "enhanced interrogation" are still secret. Senators deserve comprehensive information about Ms. Haspel's background and should refuse to take a vote on her nomination without it. But until the CIA declassifies such an exhaustive record, and unless that record proves Ms. Haspel played no role in the torture program—which former CIA General Counsel John Rizzo [describes](#) her as having "run"—we believe she is unfit to serve as the public-facing director for one of the government's most powerful and secretive agencies. That she reportedly advocated for, and contributed to, destroying videotape evidence that captured the brutal reality of what "enhanced interrogation" really meant only further tarnishes her candidacy.

Some answer these grave concerns by claiming Ms. Haspel is a decorated intelligence professional, experienced, and well-respected at the CIA. That may all be true. But responsibility for torture is an extraordinary moral offense that ordinary kinds of qualifications simply cannot overcome.

Others have suggested that Congress should excuse Ms. Haspel's choices because she was only following orders. Whether or not you consider that a plausible *legal* defense it is no justification in the present context. The question before you is not whether Ms. Haspel should be indicted, or investigated, or otherwise punished. President Trump is asking you to promote her to lead the CIA. Following orders or not, Ms. Haspel chose to embrace a program that, as she knew better than most, was brutally dismantling other human beings both physically and psychologically. According to [internal CIA e-mails](#), the agency's own personnel—stationed at the "black site" prison Ms. Haspel is [credibly reported](#) to have run in late 2002—were "profoundly affected" by the torture in which they were involved. Some were disturbed "to the point of tears and choking up." One official [warned](#) that several personnel were "likely to elect transfer" if the torture continued. Even if Ms. Haspel arrived on-site after these particular torture sessions ended (but before the next round, with a new detainee, began), it is nearly impossible to imagine that she did not know the gravity of what was happening. She chose to help drive the program forward nonetheless.

If Ms. Haspel's nomination advances to a hearing, she may well promise not to resurrect the CIA torture program, even if ordered to do so, because she believes that current law clearly prohibits it. Senators who rely on that kind of assurance to justify supporting Ms. Haspel do so at substantial risk. First, no matter what Ms. Haspel says during a hearing, any vote related to her nomination (whether in committee or on the Senate floor) will be seen as a referendum on torture—by the public, by U.S. allies and enemies, and perhaps most alarmingly by the President, who has openly advocated for torture. Second, Ms. Haspel has already been tested when it matters most, and she failed. Torture has always been unlawful, notwithstanding the Justice Department's notorious,

results-oriented legal reasoning in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. If the Trump White House is going to tell the next CIA director to bring back “enhanced interrogation”—or to pursue other reckless and damaging activities in areas like surveillance, or the use of force—such orders are most likely to issue in the wake of another national crisis, and again be accompanied by purported legal justification. In those circumstances, why would members expect Ms. Haspel to choose differently?

This is a defining moment: Senators who are truly committed to turning the page on one of the darkest chapters in American history should refuse to reward one of that chapter’s authors. We urge you to oppose Gina Haspel’s nomination for CIA Director.

Sincerely,

American Family Voices
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
Arab American Institute
Campaign for Liberty
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Victims of Torture
Center of Concern
Chicago Area Peace Action
Coalition for an Ethical Psychology
CODEPINK
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress Action
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Engage Action
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Historians for Peace and Democracy
Human Rights Clinic (Columbia Law School)
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
Indivisible
Institute for People's Engagement
Just Foreign Policy
Justice for Muslims Collective
Latin America Working Group

Libertarian Party of North Carolina
Massachusetts Peace Action
Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR)
National Network for Arab American Communities
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
No More Guantánamos
Nonviolence International
North Carolina Stop Torture Now
Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors
Open Society Policy Center
Open the Government
Peace Action
PEN America
Physicians for Human Rights
Polygon Education Fund
Psychologists for Social Responsibility
Public Citizen
RootsAction.org
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Quaker Initiative to End Torture
Threshold Foundation
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support
International
UURISE - Unitarian Universalist Refugee &
Immigrant Services & Education
Veterans For Peace Chapter 23 (Rochester, NY)
Western States Legal Foundation
Win Without War
X-Lab