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USA: President Bush must act now to stop torture and ill-treatment

Detainees in US custody have been subjected torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. To stop these practices of the "war on terror", call on President Bush to act now.

"The stories they told were remarkably similar – terrible beatings, hung from wrists and beaten, removal of clothes, hooding, exposure naked to extreme cold,They all confirmed that all this treatment was by Americans Several mentioned the use of electric shocks ... some had this done; many saw it done".

Notes of a US lawyer after meeting Kuwaiti detainees in Guantánamo Bay in January 2005

The abuses photographed in Abu Ghraib were universally condemned, but these have not been the last incidents of torture and ill-treatment by US officials. Reports of abuses continue to emerge from Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, Iraq and elsewhere.

The US government has conducted reviews and investigations but they have not had the independence or reach necessary. A full, transparent and independent investigation of crimes must take place to ensure accountability for the human rights violations that are alleged to have occurred in US custody, including arbitrary detentions, "disappearances", torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Prosecutions must follow such an investigation, to prevent further torture and ill-treatment.

Detainees have been subjected to conditions of prolonged isolation, sleep and sensory deprivation, sexual and other humiliation, mock executions and other threats. To stop these practices, in the name of the "war on terror", call on President Bush to act now.

Call to action

Write to President Bush urging him to support the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the detention and interrogation policies and practices in the "war on terror" and the appointment of a special counsel to prosecute any officials involved in torture and ill-treatment.

Sample letter

Dear Mr. President:

I am deeply concerned by the reports of torture and ill-treatment by US officials or with their involvement that continue to emerge from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantánamo. Amnesty International has interviewed former detainees released from US-run facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantánamo who reported being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during interrogation and detention. Other evidence from detainee and non-detainee sources suggests that these are far from isolated incidents.

During the past year, the US government has conducted a number of reviews and investigations into the subject of detainee treatment and interrogation. However, none has had the independence or reach necessary to ensure a full accounting for the human rights violations that are alleged to have occurred in US custody, including arbitrary detentions, "disappearances", torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Mr. President, I urge you to support the establishment by the US Congress of an independent commission of inquiry with subpoena powers to investigate all aspects of the USA's "war on terror" detention and interrogation policies and practices with a view to ensuring full accountability for any violations of international law including acts of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment that have occurred. I also urge you to request the Attorney General to appoint a special counsel to conduct a criminal investigation into any involvement of administration officials in such violations.

I urge you to ensure that all US-run places of detention, without exception, are opened to regular, independent, unannounced and unrestricted visits of inspection by expert UN human rights mechanisms. I urge you to adopt their recommendations for safeguards to prevent further torture and ill-treatment, and to ensure full implementation by the USA of the safeguards set out in Amnesty International's 12-Point Programme for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment by Agents of the State.

Those who perpetrate crimes of torture and other ill-treatment and those up the chain of military and civilian command responsible for ordering, facilitating or acquiescing to such crimes should be prosecuted.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

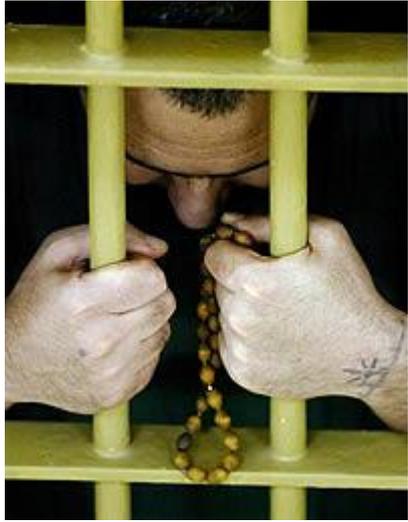
Target contact details

George W. Bush
The President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500
United States of America

E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov

Salutation: The Honourable

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Iraqi prisoner clutches bars of cell at
Abu Ghraib Prison, Iraq
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