

WEB UPDATES – TACTICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

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Title

USA: US Government Creating A Climate Of Torture

Summary for torture homepage

In its briefing to the UN Committee Against Torture, Amnesty International details its concerns about torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees both in the USA and in US detention abroad.

The US government repeatedly condemns torture, but it must demonstrate its commitment to eradicate it.

Feature

Ali-Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri, a Qatari national, has been held without charge or trial in a military prison in the US since June 2003. He had no access to a lawyer for more than a year after he was detained. All this time he has been in extreme isolation, with no access to his family, including his wife and five children. This situation could continue indefinitely.

In August 2005, his lawyers filed a complaint about the torturous conditions that Ali-Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri had been subjected to. This included sleep and sensory deprivation, punitive shackling, exposure to cold, denial of a prayer rug and clock and disrespectful handling of the Qu'ran. The US government dismissed the claim on the ground that Ali-Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri is considered an "enemy combatant" in the "war on terror". Appeals in the case continue.

Ali-Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri is currently the only person detained as an "enemy combatant" on the US mainland. But the US government continues to hold thousands of detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo Bay, and other secret detention sites around the world in conditions which can amount to torture or ill-treatment.

On 5 and 8 May 2006, the UN Committee Against Torture is examining the USA's compliance with the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which prohibits the use of torture in all circumstances. In its briefing to the Committee, Amnesty International details its concerns about the case of Ali-Saleh Kahlah Al-Marri and the torture and other ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees both in the USA and in US detention abroad.

Several detainees held under US custody in Iraq and Afghanistan have died under torture. While the US government continues to attribute evidence of abuses in US custody to a few "aberrant" soldiers, there is clear evidence that most of the ill-treatment denounced stemmed directly from official procedures and policies.

The US government is creating a climate in which torture and other ill-treatment can flourish.

The US government repeatedly condemns torture, but it must demonstrate its commitment to

eradicate torture. It must withdraw its reservations it has entered to the UN Convention Against Torture and to clarify to the Committee in no uncertain terms that under its laws, no one, including the President, has the right or authority to order the torture or ill-treatment of detainees in any circumstances whatsoever.