

ACTIONS THAT A MEETING MIGHT TAKE AS A GROUP

By John Humphries for New England Yearly Meeting

WITHIN THE MEETING/THE QUAKER COMMUNITY

1. Gather in worship to discern how the Spirit is leading you to respond to the issue of torture.
2. Approve a minute opposing torture, requesting that NE QUIT provide some Friends to join you as you season this if that might be helpful.
3. Take the minute to the local Quarter for approval (and then publish it in your papers and send it to your representatives).
4. Post your minute on the FCNL website:

http://fcnl.org/issues/issue.php?issue_id=70

5. Form a study group or book club around the 99 page reflection The Pear Tree: Is Torture Ever Justified? By Eric Stener Carlson. \$14.95 at: www.claritypress.com
6. View the School of the Americas Watch's DVD/video about SOA in Latin America: "Hidden In Plain Sight". \$31. including shipping at: www.buzzflash.com
7. View the Frontline show The Torture Question online at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/torture/>

Guide downloadable. Online chat available.

8. Provide financial support to QUIT - Quaker Initiative to End Torture (www.quit-torture-now.org)

BEYOND THE MEETING/THE QUAKER COMMUNITY

1. Get a free "Torture is Wrong" banner by emailing: bonnie@opposetorture.org and put it on your meetinghouse/home.
2. Join National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) by endorsing their statement at: www.nrcat.org (Go to "Get Involved") "Participating Members" make a financial contribution and appoint a representative to the Coordinating Committee; "Endorsing Members" do not.
3. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper/s (remember papers that are read by people of different socio-economic groups!) sharing your meeting's minuted beliefs. Send a copy of the minute to specific reporters (e.g. the religion writer), suggesting they write something about your meeting's stand in the context of the growing faith-based outcry.
4. Organize a meeting with the editor or editorial board of your local newspaper to encourage them to improve their coverage of the issue of torture. Invite/organize the participation of members of other meetings in your area.

5. Send a copy of the minute, along with a cover letter, to your members of congress, encouraging them to secure a full congressional investigation of the chain-of-command responsibility in the torture of detainees in US custody.
6. Download and copy the “Petition to End Torture” from Fellowship of Reconciliation’s website (www.forusa.org/programs/iraq/default.html). Present copies of signed petitions to members of Congress. (Petition also available from John Humphries at jhumphries@igc.org.)
7. Seek a meeting with member(s) of Congress or their staff, so members of the Meeting can discuss the issue and present the Meeting’s concerns. Invite/organize the participation of members from other meetings in your state/area.
8. Encourage your interfaith ministers’ group to take on this work (for example to write a letter to the editor expressing dismay about torture).
9. Reach out to other faith congregations in your community to host/organize a religious dialogue about the issue of torture. NEYM participants in the QUIT conference could be tapped as possible presenters/facilitators. The agenda could include viewing one of the videos mentioned above.
10. Collaborate with a local college or seminary to organize a teach-in on torture. Contact John Humphries (jhumphries@igc.org) for information re: a teach-in held at Hartford Seminary in April 2006.
11. Host/organize a town hall meeting re: the issue of torture and invite members of Congress and/or candidates to attend.
12. Organize a group of volunteers (from within the Meeting, from among other congregations, and/or from the broader community) who agree to show up at as many fall congressional campaign events as possible to raise the issue of torture in Q&A sessions and force congressional candidates to address the issue publicly. The most likely scenario for halting the US practice of torture is securing congressional investigations of senior government officials for war crimes, including torture.
13. Recognizing that torture is only one of the war crimes with which soldiers participating in the US occupation of Iraq are at risk of being charged, consider declaring your meetinghouse a sanctuary for soldiers refusing to deploy to Iraq (or Guantánamo or Afghanistan or Lebanon or ...). The First United Methodist Church of Tacoma recently took this step in response to Lt. Ehren Watada’s refusal to redeploy to Iraq on grounds that he would be following illegal orders and subject to war crimes prosecution (see www.thankyouult.org and www.couragetoresist.org/x/content/view/90/27/).
14. Organize a delegation to participate in the annual School of the Americas Watch action at Ft. Benning, GA (Nov 17-19, 2006). See www.soaw.org/new.
15. Dramatize the issue of torture through street theater or a public reading. Use orange jumpsuits (see ordering info below) and hoods to dramatize the issue at vigils and at congressional campaign events. The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) is encouraging public readings of the play *Guantánamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*. Download the play at www.ccr-ny.org/v2/gac/grp/readings/.

STUFF

FREE

- 1 White ribbons (www.tassc.org) Unlimited.
- 2 Banners (“Torture is Wrong”) via: bonnie@opposetorture.org

FOR SALE

- 1 Orange jump suits (\$15) for demonstrations at:
www.nationaltextile.us/correctional_clothing
- 2 Bright orange t-shirts with “Shut Down Guantánamo” on the front and “Stop Torture” on the back, available at www.stoptorturennow.org.

RESOURCES

A wide range of organizations (both religious and secular) are working to end the practice of torture. The NRCAT website (www.nrcat.org) provides links to a number of them. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) civil liberties webpage also provides a resource page on torture and a calendar of anti-torture events (see link at the bottom of the page: www.fcnl.org/civil_liberties/). The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) has established an Anti-Torture Peacebuilding Workgroup (contact Stephen McNeil at smcneil@afsc.org).