

What You Can Do

Torture

Both tortured and torturer are victims of the evil from which no human being is immune. Friends, however, believe that the life and power of God are greater than evil, and in that life and power declare their opposition to all torture. The Society calls on all its members, as well as those of all religious and other organizations, to create a force of public opinion which will oblige those responsible to dismantle everywhere the administrative apparatus which permits or encourages torture, and to observe effectively those international agreements under which its use is strictly forbidden.

Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1976

From Quaker Faith & Practice, Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Britain, 1995

The United Nations has designated June 26 as the International Day in Support of Survivors and Victims of Torture. This year a coalition of human rights, civil liberties and faith organizations (http://www.tortureawareness.org/organization_sponsors.html) have declared June “Torture Awareness Month” in an effort to respond to the growing evidence that the United States government is engaging systematically in the use of torture and inhuman treatment as part of the “war on terror.” We suggest that you use these occasions as opportunities to engage in the actions listed below.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

1. READ ALTERNATIVE PRESS. Check out <http://www.afsc.org/pacificmtn/alternative-info.htm> and the articles on <http://www.actagainsttorture.org/>.
2. JOIN QUIT LISTSERVE. Go to listserv@mtsac.edu. No subject is needed in your message, but in the body of the message put SUBSCRIBE QUIT-L your first and last name (it doesn't have to be lowercase). If you are successful, you will be asked to confirm by typing "ok" (without the quotes) and hitting your reply button.
3. TALK TO PEOPLE. When you hear or read something about torture or detentions, talk to people about it. Discuss it with friends and co-workers. Martin Luther King Jr. said: “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”
4. FORM A STUDY GROUP OR BOOK CLUB around the 99 page reflection *The Pear Tree: Is Torture Ever Justified?* by Eric Stener Carlson, human rights worker who delves deeply into his own reactions to torture, challenging us at the same time. Available at the conference bookstore and at <http://www.claritypress.com>.

ORGANIZE AND ACT

1. SPEAK OUT. Participate in rallies and demonstrations in your area. Keep informed about events through your local Indymedia site. Get an “Act Against Torture” bumper sticker and put it on your bike, car or backpack. Email: <mailto:actagainsttorture@riseup.net>.

2. **HOLD MEDIA ACCOUNTABLE.** Keep an eye on the alternative and foreign press, watching for stories the U.S. mainstream media doesn't cover accurately. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and mention ActAgainstTorture.org. Organize friends and neighbors to write and call editors and station managers to demand coverage of what's really going on.
3. **POST.** Print internet posters (<http://www.actagainsttorture.org>) or make your own and post them at work, in your window, or on the street.
4. **SPREAD THE WORD.** When you read an article that's not in the mainstream media, make copies and pass them on to friends, co-workers, or neighbors. Write ActAgainstTorture.org on the front page so people know where to get more information.
5. **DISSEMINATE.** Print out information cards (<http://www.actagainsttorture.org>) and leave them in cafes, schools, your work place, or in the pockets of clothes in the store.
6. **ENCOURAGE TEACHERS** in your school to use these curricula below or the theatrical/reading pieces in Action Suggestion 14 below
<http://www.teachablemoment.org/high/torturedbq.html>;
<http://www.forusa.org/programs/iraq/tortureresources.html>.
7. **DONATE.** Donate \$10 or more to an organization working to end torture and indefinite detentions. Support groups that work with victims of torture (see directory below of organizations throughout the U.S.) (<http://www.cja.org/relatedLinks/relatedLinks.shtml>)
8. **ORGANIZE.** Support friends in taking these actions. Become an organizer.
9. **GET TOGETHER.** Hold a house meeting with your friends and neighbors to plan an action against torture.
10. **HANG A BANNER.** Hang a banner over freeways, alter billboards: don't let anyone in your town forget what is happening. Check out the Freeway Blogger (<http://www.freewayblogger.com/>) for banner-hanging ideas and instructions.
11. **HOLD AN EVENT.** Convince your faith group, union, or school to host a speaker or lead a discussion about torture and detention.
12. **ORGANIZE A VIGIL.** A group of people standing on a busy street corner at rush hour, with signs, banners, candles, chants, or whatever your friends and neighbors come up with, lets folks know that there's a growing local movement against torture and indefinite detention.
13. **HOLD A TEACH-IN** or series of teach-ins.
14. **PERFORM STREET THEATER** or **ORGANIZE A PUBLIC READING.** Get together with creative friends and do something dramatic in a public place to encourage people to actively confront and oppose torture and indefinite detention. The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) is encouraging public readings of the play *Guantánamo: 'Honor Bound to Defend Freedom'* to "focus attention detentions at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Hold a reading of CCR's play by downloading it for public reading from their website, <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/gac/grp/readings/>.
15. **EXPOSE COMPLICITY.** Amnesty International UK's "Below the Radar" notes that Hudson, NY-based private aviation company was part of hundreds of rendition flights that have occurred. Join their campaign to expose and hold accountable contractors complicit in torture or extraordinary rendition for torture.
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id=ENGAMR510542006>

16. SUPPORT BANNING CRUEL PUNISHMENTS. Some Islamic penal codes promote whipping, limb amputations, and death by stoning/beheading. Support groups such as North America Progressive Muslims (<http://www.pmuna.org>) and The Islamic Dream (<http://www.islamicdream.org>).
17. ORGANIZE A DELEGATION. See Witness Against Torture (<http://www.witnesstorture.org/>) for information about organizing a delegation to Guantanamo. Demand to speak directly to the prisoners and their guards.
18. TAKE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. Take time to act, but also take time out as needed as this is a concern that is most troubling.

TAKE POLITICAL ACTION

1. ADOPT MINUTES. Get groups and organizations to which you belong to adopt minutes calling for the abolition of torture and specifically for U.S.-sanctioned torture. Post them to the FCNL website (http://www.fcnl.org/issues/issue.php?issue_id=70), and publish them as opinion pieces in your local paper.
2. HOLD YOUR REPRESENTATIVES ACCOUNTABLE. Write letters to the President and to your congressional representatives. Good letter writing information can be found at the websites of Witness Against Torture (<http://www.witnesstorture.org/>), Amnesty International (<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/stoptorture-index-eng>), The Center for Constitutional Rights (<http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/gac/>), Quaker Initiative to End Torture (<http://www.quit-torture-now.org/>) or at the FCNL website (<http://www.fcnl.org>).
3. SUPPORT CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION. This year Senator Leahy-VT (S. 654 “Convention Against Torture Implementation Act” and Rep. Ed Markey-MA (H.R. 952 “Torture Outsourcing Prevention Act”) may try to attach their bills as amendments to a spending bill. Follow the legislation (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>) and call on your Senators and Representatives to support this action.
4. SUPPORT THE UNITED NATIONS “Draft International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances” and get Quaker organizations to support (http://www.fidh.org/article.php3?id_article=3183).
5. SUPPORT THE LEGAL STRATEGY of claims against torturers led by San Francisco-based The Center for Justice and Accountability (<http://www.cja.org/>).
6. BIRD-DOG candidates in 2006 elections in orange jumpsuits to get them to comment on their stand on torture or for use in street theater. Suits available from http://www.nationaltextile.us/correctional_clothing.

SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

1. Support QUIT Quaker Initiative to End Torture (www.quit-torture-now.org).
2. Support Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International (<http://www.tassc.org/>).
3. Join and have your faith group join in the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (<http://www.nrcat.org>) which currently has Jewish, Christian, and Human Rights First materials for study and action.

4. Check out and post to the Friends Committee on National Legislation's Calendar of Anti-Torture Events Nationwide (<http://www.fcnl.org>).
5. Support other groups work: Christian Peacemaker Teams Public Witness (http://www.cpt.org/publicwitness/public_witness.php); Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=torture>); Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's STOP Campaign (<http://www.uusc.org/programs/STOP/index.html>).



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