

Bush Running Kidnapping Ring

39 More "Disappeared" Found

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Let's face it: we've got a president in the White House who is running an international kidnapping ring. Six human rights groups (HRG) today (June 6) named for the first time 39 more kidnap (they call them 'disappeared') victims of the Bush administration. Not only have Mr. Bush's apparatchiks dumped the terrorist suspects in secret prisons but they abducted some of their wives and children, too.

The sons of alleged 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, aged seven and nine, were kidnapped and tossed into an adult detention center for months "while U.S. agents questioned the children about their father's whereabouts," HRG said in a news release. And when Tanzanian national Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani was seized in Gujarat, Pakistan, in July, 2004, his wife was kidnapped with him. Shades of Joe Stalin, notorious for abducting Soviet defectors in their foreign sanctuaries!

"The duty of governments to protect people from acts of terrorism is not in question. But seizing men, women and even children, and placing people in secret locations deprived of the most basic safeguards for any detainees most definitely is," said Claudio Cordone, a spokesperson for Amnesty International, one of the HRG involved in today's revelations. Adds Meg Satterthwaite, of the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at the NYU School of Law:

"Since the end of Latin America's dirty wars, the world has rejected the use of 'disappearances' as a fundamental violation of international law. Despite this universal condemnation, our research shows that the United States has tried to vanish both the people on this list and the rule of law... Enforced disappearances are illegal, regardless of who carries them out."

CIA spokesman Paul Gimigliano dismissed the HRG report. He told Reuters the CIA acts in "strict accord with American law" and that its counter-terror initiatives are "subject to careful review and oversight." Operating secret prisons turns the kidnapped victims into ghost prisoners kept "off the books." It prevents scrutiny by the public and the courts, "and leaves detainees vulnerable to abuses that include torture and other ill-treatment," the HRG said. It also blocks the Red Cross from exercising its right of visitation. In the past, the CIA has denied the International Red Cross visitation to its prison in Kabul, Afghanistan. That's hardly in accord with American law, as international treaties the U.S. has signed obligate Red Cross visits to prisoners. And, of course, none of the 39 disappeared have been brought to public trial, still a right under U.S. law. The organizations bringing the charges against the Bush administration are Amnesty International, Cageprisoners, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University School of

Law(CHRGJ), Human Rights Watch, and Reprieve.

Last September, President Bush conceded his administration held prisoners in secret. It is unlikely he compared this practice to the foreign kidnappings that characterized Stalin's Soviet regime, just as he undoubtedly failed to see the self-satire of his speech the other day calling upon Russia to act more like a democracy. But Vincent Warren, of the Center for Constitutional Rights, has a broader vision: "Our client Majid Khan was subjected to torture and abuse while in secret CIA detention for three years. His family didn't know if he was alive, let alone where he was. 'Ghost' detention is incompatible with basic respect for human rights and the rule of law." If you think it's ugly stuff for the White House to jail children, keep in mind the U.S. detains 800 Pakistani boys between 13 and 15, some of whom the Red Cross charges have been tortured. By the estimate of Human Rights First(HRF), as of April, 2005, at least 108 innocent (well, they were never tried, were they?) foreign detainees "perished" in U.S. custody.

Kidnapping by the CIA, which the Bush-Cheney regime is converting into a Soviet-style KGB, got its start under President Bill Clinton, who signed off on the first "extraordinary rendition" in 1996. The invasion of the body snatchers, though, made the jump into light speed under Mr. Bush.

Right now, Italy has warrants out for the arrest of 22 CIA agents who four years ago abducted Milan resident cleric Hassan Osama Nasr, and flew him to Egypt to be tortured. HRG says the disappeared victims it identified were snatched in Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan. Although Mr. Bush fibs "we don't torture," there have been verified reports to the contrary, particularly relating to the kidnap victims. Title 18 of the U.S. Code makes it a crime for an American to commit torture outside the U.S. The offense is punishable by fines and prison terms of up to 20 years, and if deaths result, the killers may be jailed for life or executed.

At least 20 high Bush administration officials authorized, and hundreds of U.S. military or other government employees participated in, crimes of torture against prisoners taken in the Middle East or scooped off the streets of Europe. This list begins with President Bush, for his arbitrary suspension February 8, 2002, of the Geneva Conventions that protect prisoners and includes Vice President Cheney, top White House officials, Pentagon flag officers, CIA agents, and interrogators.

One very curious sentence leaps out of the new HRG report. It's this: "Interviews with prisoners who have been released from secret CIA prisons indicate that low-level detainees have frequently been arrested far from any battlefield, and held in isolation for years without legal recourse or contact with their families or outside agencies." Put that together with the fact almost none of the captives at Guantanamo or in any of the other prisons have been brought to trial and it raises several questions: What if thousands of innocent men have been arrested to give the appearance of a vast "terrorist" conspiracy against America where none exists? What if, apart from Al-Qaida, the terrorists are just nationalists defending their turf when invaded? Otherwise, why hold these men in secret prisons? Is it to keep the public from hearing what they may say in open court?

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