

Confirmation of Gina Haspel, Supervisor of Torture, as CIA Director Is Unconscionable

By [Physicians for Human Rights](#)

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Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) today is deeply disappointed and concerned at the U.S. Senate's confirmation of Gina Haspel as CIA director. Haspel, who helped manage the CIA torture program, and who oversaw the waterboarding of detainee Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, has yet to release any information about her precise involvement in the program and its cover-up, and did not adequately address questions on this throughout the confirmation process. Despite the CIA's egregious campaign of secrecy and Haspel's pointed refusal to repudiate torture during and after her hearing, she was confirmed, with among the fewest votes for CIA directors.

Donna McKay, executive director of PHR, called the Senate's approval a critical setback to accountability for the use of torture by the United States and to its commitment to human rights.

"It is unacceptable that the United States' intelligence agency will be led by someone who supervised torture, including waterboarding. As a senior official in that program, Gina Haspel helped the CIA conduct unlawful torture, systematically breaking the lives of detainees, and she helped destroy evidence in order to conceal these acts. Her promotion perpetuates secrecy and impunity for torture. It invites a return to the abuses of the CIA rendition, interrogation, and detention program, and sends a message to the world that the United States has retreated from its commitment to human rights, including the absolute ban on torture.

"What is known about Haspel's role in torture and destruction of evidence, based on the limited public record, should have been more than enough to end her confirmation. The victims of the program she helped oversee will suffer lifelong mental and physical effects. Torture is illegal, immoral, and profoundly harmful – three facts that Haspel has disregarded to date. With Haspel's confirmation, it is more critical than ever for Congress to exercise oversight over the intelligence agencies. In addition, all parts of civil society – including and especially health professionals – should continue to advocate for human rights. If we don't demand responsibility for torture and insist on truth-telling, accountability, and cooperation, we diminish the role that the United States can play in advocating for human rights globally," McKay added.

PHR, joined by other organizations, pushed vigorously for Haspel's nomination and confirmation to be blocked. For more than a decade, PHR and its network of partners have led efforts advocating against torture, documented the devastating long-term health consequences of torture, and called attention to the complicity of some health professionals in the post-9/11 U.S. torture program.

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