

Ferguson: Policing Policies in Black America Violate International Treaties Against Torture

When the System Provides No Remedies to Torture, You Must Overthrow It

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Global Research, December 04, 2014

[Black Agenda Report](#) 3 December 2014

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

“Remedies are precisely what the United States refuses to offer to Black people.”

Over the past four months, the world has come to know the name of Ferguson and rendered its own verdict on the U.S. criminal justice system. In addition to protests in [nearly two hundred American cities](#) since the non-indictment of the cop that killed Michael Brown, demonstrations were staged in solidarity with U.S. Blacks in at least eight cities in Canada as well as Japan, England, Scotland and Norway. Last week, a United Nations committee registered its objections to U.S. treatment of Blacks. The UN Committee Against Torture’s latest report largely focused on the Obama administration’s failure to punish the torture of detainees in places like Guantanamo Bay and CIA interrogation sites around the world, but it also [warned Washington](#) that its policing policies in Black America are not in compliance with international treaties against torture.

The committee’s findings are a great embarrassment to the planet’s sole superpower, which justifies its military adventures around the world by virtue of its claims to moral exceptionalism. Based on two days of testimony by U.S. human rights activists, [last month, in Geneva, Switzerland](#), the committee concluded that solitary confinement, as practiced in the United States, constitutes torture, that some conditions in U.S. prisons also fit the definition of torture, and that when police target African Americans on the street for abuse, beatings, tasing and death by gunfire, they are [guilty of torture](#).

Moreover, if the United States does not provide remedies and compensation for the victims of torture at the hands of its cops and prison guards, then the nation is in violation of its international treaty obligations – which is legally the same thing as violating U.S. law. Not only does the U.S. fail to provide either remedies or compensation for those it tortures, U.S. law does not even define what torture is, or set any standard to measure it. Which shows conclusively that no American government has ever seriously considered doing away with torture – certainly, not torture of Black people.

“Root and Branch”

The UN Committee was clearly quite impressed with the delegation of [young activists](#) from Chicago who testified under the banner, [We Charge Genocide](#). The Committee included much of the group’s requests in its report, including investigation of police torture by outside institutions, prosecution of police who torture, and reparations for those who survive police torture in Chicago.

The UN Committee is most concerned that countries establish remedies to torture, in all its deadly forms. But remedies are precisely what the United States refuses to offer to Black people. No punishment for the cops, no compensation for their millions of victims, and no fundamental change in a system born in slavery and genocide. Under those circumstances, there is only one remedy: the overthrow of the system, itself, and the destruction – root and branch – of the Mass Black Incarceration State, which must be the goal of this new movement-in-the-making that still has no name, other than “Ferguson.”

For Black Agenda Radio, I’m Glen Ford. On the web, go to BlackAgendaReport.com, and sign up for email notifications of our new issues, each Wednesday.

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