

# I've Seen 1,200 Torture Photos

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [Law and Justice](#)

This moment, in which the Attorney General of the United States claims to be considering the possibility of allowing our laws against torture to be enforced seems a good one in which to reveal that I have seen over 1,200 torture photos and a dozen videos that are in the possession of the United States military. These are photographs depicting torture, the victims of torture, and other inhuman and degrading treatment. Several videos show a prisoner intentionally slamming his head face-first very hard into a metal door. Guards filmed this from several angles rather than stopping it.

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) of Australia revealed several of these photographs, video of the head slamming, and video of prisoners forced to masturbate, as part of a news report broadcast in 2006. But the full collection has not been made available to the public or to a special prosecutor, although it was shown to members of Congress in 2004. When these photos are eventually made public, I encourage you to take a good look at them. After you get over feeling ill, it might be appropriate to consider Congress' past 5 years of inaction. You'll be able to feel sick all over again.

In January 2004, the military seized photos and videos that were on computers and cell phones at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Those related to the abuse of prisoners amounted, as far as I know, to those in the collection I've looked at. So, this collection does not include images of torture or mistreatment that may have taken place at Abu Ghraib after that date or at other locations at any time. I have reason to believe that such photos also exist in large quantity and depict types of abuses we have not yet seen.

Most people have seen fewer than 100 photographs from Abu Ghraib. I have posted online many of those that have been made public. These are not a bad representative sample of the whole, but they are far from complete. There are, among the more than 1,200 photos, images of prisoners and of military personnel that have not been published. There are gruesome scenes here that we have not publicly seen a single image of. And the images that we have seen are, in most cases, a single image or two from a long series of photos of an incident. In many cases, the collection includes multiple series of images from one event shot with multiple cameras. The public images have in many cases been cropped and/or censored to hide faces or genitals. In the uncropped versions there are, in some cases, additional people in the frame.

Were these Abu Ghraib photos all made public, but those from other times and places kept hidden, and were we unaware of the executive orders, Justice Department memos, presidential signing statements, congressional reports, Red Cross reports, presidential and vice presidential televised confessions, and so forth, the military could still claim this was the isolated work of a few "bad apples". But we would have a better understanding of what that work was. And making these images available to the public, or merely to a special

prosecutor, would suggest an interest in seeking accountability for those responsible but not present in the photographs. On the other hand, hiding the evidence while prosecuting the soldiers who posed in some of the photos looks increasingly like scapegoating for the benefit of the Military Intelligence, CIA, and contractors who instructed the soldiers, as well as the commanders all the way up to the Secretary of Defense who encouraged torture, the lawyers who sought to provide immunity, and the president and vice president who gave the authorizations. Remember, for Attorney General Eric Holder to decide that our laws against torture can be enforced, he does not need to wait until each new piece of evidence is revealed and then respond appropriately. He already has all of this evidence and much more that we know about but have not seen.

The over 1,200 images that I've seen add to some stories we've seen sketched out before. We've seen the body of murdered prisoner Manadel al-Jamadi packed in ice. We've seen Spc. Charles Graner posing with it, and Spc. Sabrina Harman doing the same. But the fuller collection shows the process of cleaning the body up. A giant gash in the top of the man's head is stitched up, his eye patched, etc. Photos, some of which have been made public, show floors covered with the blood of this victim.

We've also seen a few images (one, two, three) of a man attacked and bitten by dogs. But the larger series of photos shows us much more of the wounds on his legs and arms, as well as his identification number: 153863.

Another prisoner with an ID (153399) is shown missing a good portion of his head. This is one of a number of dead bodies shown in the photographs. SBS (the Australian news outlet) found an Army report on his death and concluded that these dead prisoners had likely been shot by guards during a riot or murdered by guards in other circumstances. Others have claimed mortar attacks from outside the prison are to blame.

Charles Graner and Sabrina Harman appear quite a bit in these photos, posing and smiling, but also tending to wounds. Private Lynndie England appears in a relative few, the ones we've seen with a thumbs up and pointing at masturbating prisoners. Other photos show additional military personnel. In one shot, Graner and two other male soldiers are putting a bag on a prisoner's head. In one shot a possible private contractor wears an ID badge.

There are lots of photos among the over 1,200 showing naked prisoners, sometimes chained to bunk beds or with their legs stuck through bars. There's a naked prisoner face-down on the ground with blood beside him, and with an MP on his back and two more watching.

We have previously seen and heard about a prisoner who had lost his sanity and covered himself with feces, earning the moniker "shit boy." In the larger collection, we see him naked in the shower from the front, wearing white latex gloves. We see him pinned between stretchers but also standing, sandwiched between foam mattresses chained on him like a robe, with bags tied over his hands, and in other positions. And he is reportedly the same man shown slamming his head against a door.

We see a naked, hooded prisoner standing on two MRE boxes and bent over. We see photos shot from a balcony of two prisoners sitting or squatting with their hands behind their heads, one of them on the floor and the other on an MRE box. We see a prisoner with his ID number written across his naked chest in red marker, and red marker smiley faces drawn on his nipples. (His number, obscured by his hood, is 200\_\_ 4, where the first missing number is 1

or 7 and the second is 9 or 4.)

Of course, we also see the simulated electrocution photos of a hooded prisoner standing on an MRE box with wires attached to him. And we see a prisoner apparently forced to stick a banana in his anus. We see this young woman lifting her shirt up, but without the cropping, fuzzing, and blacked-out eyes. We see her together with another young woman. We see a bunch of photos of these young women posing, fully clothed. We see the first one clothed and posing with Spc. Sabrina Harman, both smiling. According to SBS the story is that the two prisoners were picked up on the charge of prostitution.

There are three photos of a little boy, naked, in a robe, and fully dressed. While it is very disturbing to see this little child's photos in the middle of this revolting collection, I have no idea what they are doing there or whether he was mistreated, or whether anyone was threatened with his mistreatment. But I do know that the leading lawyer who facilitated our national torture campaign and famously said that a U.S. president has the right to crush a child's testicles is a professor at a prestigious university, while his boss is sitting as a life-time judge in the Ninth Circuit because Congress refuses to impeach him. The current excuse for delay is that the Justice Department plans to release its internal report (from the Office of Professional Responsibility) very soon, just as it has been promising for many months. If Holder finally releases the report and simultaneously announces the appointment of a special prosecutor, two things must happen.

1. We must not allow Congress to delay impeachment of Bybee any longer with the new excuse that a criminal investigation is underway.
2. We must pressure the special prosecutor to act without delay and without considering anyone to be above the laws written by Congress.

**David Swanson** is the author of the upcoming book *"Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union"* by Seven Stories Press. You can pre-order it and find out when tour will be in your town: <http://davidswanson.org/book>. Arrange to review it on your blog and Seven Stories will get you a free copy. Contact crystal at [sevenstories dot com](http://sevenstories.com).

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