

## When Torture becomes Policy

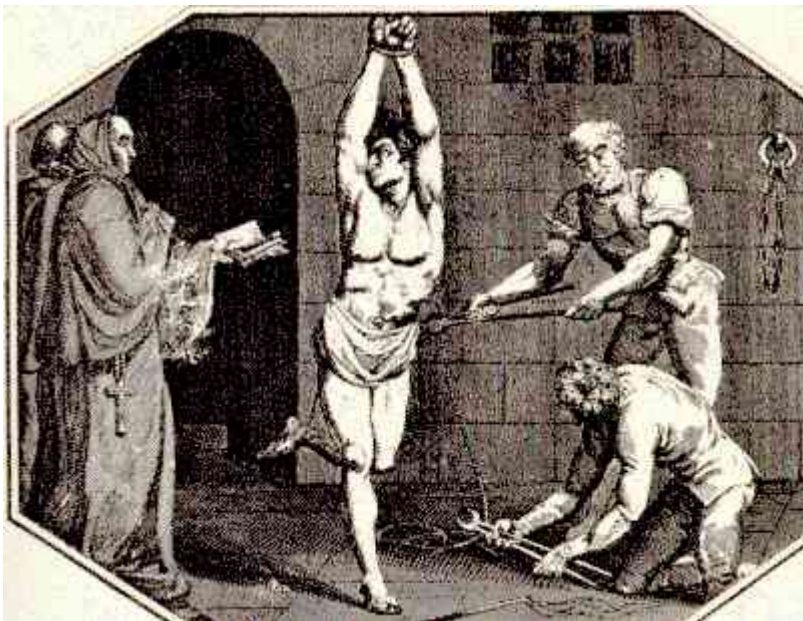
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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)



*“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government.”* Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

President Bush has made it clear that he will veto the \$435 billion Pentagon appropriations bill because it restricts his ability to abuse prisoners in the war on terror. The bill, which forbids the “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment” of prisoners in US custody, was passed by an overwhelming 90 to 9 majority in the Senate. It was first flagrant rejection of administration policy in nearly 5 years.

Bush’s veto puts the administration on the extreme end of the policy spectrum and links the president to the widely reported incidents of human rights abuses and torture at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and the other American prison facilities. It is now impossible to deny that Bush not only supports a policy of calculated mistreatment of prisoners, but was also directly involved in establishing the current regime. This implicates Bush in violations of treaty requirements under the Geneva Conventions and the 1996 Torture Treaty, as well as the 8th amendment’s provision against “cruel and inhuman” punishment.

Bush’s veto is a clear sign that the administration is a willing participant in war crimes and intends to defend that barbarous behavior before the American people and the world.

There's no longer any reason to dispute the reports from Human Rights Watch, the Red Cross, the ACLU, or the many eyewitness accounts from US servicemen or former inmates. The president's veto clearly establishes that Bush tacitly supports "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment" as official policy.

This is a positive development for those who believe that Bush will have to be physically removed from office via impeachment, military coup or revolution. It shows how disconnected the current White House is from the nearly 90% of Americans who do not believe that torture can be justified "for any reason". It also dispels the foolish notion that Bush communicates with God or is acting on his behalf.

The American people now have a stark choice between good and evil; between those who advocate the "systemic, blatant and sadistic" (Taguba Report) treatment of prisoners or those who don't. Anyone who continues to support the current administration or who fails to support the efforts to have them removed from office and held accountable for their crimes, is equally complicit in their immoral, unethical and criminal conduct.

This week, former UN chief weapons inspector, Scott Ritter compared George Bush and Tony Blair to Nazi war criminals saying that, "Both of these men could be pulled up as war criminals for engaging in actions that we condemned Germany in 1946 for doing." Bush's veto removes any doubt about the veracity of Ritter's comments.

Currently, there are over 25,000 prisoners in American facilities in Iraq who have been exposed to some level of physical brutality. None of these men have been charged with a crime, nor will they be. The Pentagon, acting as the surrogate for the imperial presidency, simply conducts its arrests and interrogations according to its own vicious standards. There are no rules and no constraints; just the vile application of physical coercion.

In Guantanamo, more than 200 inmates are in the 2nd month of a hunger strike. 22 of the prisoners have been hospitalized and are being force-fed by their jailors. The demands of the prisoners are both simple and reasonable; they want to have a fair hearing before an impartial judge so they can know why they are being held. It is most basic of all human rights and one that is guaranteed under international law.

Once again, the administration and the collaborative media have conspired to conceal the horror of what is taking place in Guantanamo behind a wall of government secrecy. If the president is as forthright as he pretends to be, than there should be no problem opening up Guantanamo to independent media so we can see the affects of the policies he so ardently defends.

Whether prisoners are being beaten, humiliated, starved to death or simply held without charges the facts remain the same. The policy originated at the highest levels of government and will only be strengthened by Bush's veto. The administration is claiming the absolute authority to operate beyond the law and with complete impunity.

Torture is the widow that allows us to see beyond the public relations smokescreen into the fetid cesspool of administration thinking. The Bush regime is divorced from any sense of decency or moral compunction. Nothing they say can be trusted. They have generated an ethos of cruelty and vindictiveness that now pervades the myriad offices of government and the defense establishment. The very principles upon which American life depends, and which are laid out in the founding documents, are threatened by their conduct.

Bush's veto tells us that the administration will not operate within the law or comply with the will of the American people. It shows us that the government now functions beyond its popular mandate and without a shred of moral legitimacy. Bush and his lieutenants are unworthy of high-office and must be removed before it is too late.

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