Torture is Illegal. A majority of the world’s countries have ratified the Convention against Torture since it was adopted by the United Nations in 1984. In the US, the 8th Amendment to the Constitution also prohibits “cruel and unusual punishments.”

But according to Amnesty International, torture is used in at least three-quarters of the world, in 141 out of 195 countries. The US, the UK, and Canada, all signatories to the UN Convention, are known to be complicit in using torture.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the CIA used torture on at least 100 detainees, some of whom died from the torture. Suspected terrorists were detained at “black sites” around the world, including Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

The CIA used the term “enhanced interrogation methods.” The German Nazi Gestapo used “Verschärfte Vernehmung,” which essentially means the same thing - euphemisms for torture.

What is torture? Torture is the act of deliberately inflicting severe physical or psychological suffering on someone for punishment, revenge, extortion, coercion, interrogation to extract information or a confession, irrespective of whether it is false or simply the sadistic gratification of those who are carrying out the torture.

Techniques of torture. Techniques include beatings; electrocution; rape and other forms of sexual violence; food, sleep, and light deprivation; threats to family members; mock executions; waterboarding and asphyxiation; stress positions; and shackling. Techniques are limited only by the gruesome imaginations of the torturers.

In a global survey, Amnesty found that half of the respondents from around the world feared torture if they were to be taken into custody. Fully a third of people in the US had this fear.

Who is tortured? People are targeted because of their political activity, even if it’s very low-level; based on their race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality; or for their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Is torture justified? The Convention against Torture specifies that torture cannot be justified, not even in exceptional circumstances such as a state of war or in the name of national security. However, 48% of Americans believe it can be justified.

Does torture work? In 2014 the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence analyzed millions of internal CIA documents related to the torture of terrorism suspects. This report concluded that “use of enhanced interrogation techniques was not an effective means of acquiring intelligence.”

Academic, medical, and professional organizations agree: torture does not work.

Torture continues. According to Minnesota’s Center for Victims of Torture, torture remains widespread for these reasons:

• Some prominent politicians remain convinced of its effectiveness.
• Torture is used against activists to silence them and to terrorize their supporters.
• Governments continue to carry out torture despite its illegality and are able to contort the law to avoid responsibility.
• Perpetrators have impunity.

We must elect people who believe that torture is reprehensible, who will uphold the laws and conventions against torture nationally and internationally, and who will hold perpetrators to account for these crimes.

**U.S. Historical Culpability with Torture**

**Indian Wars.** The centuries of Indian Wars, 1622-1924, included massacres at Sand Creek, Washita, and Wounded Knee and acts of brutality and torture: beatings, scalplings, mutilations, sexual assaults, kidnappings, and shootings.

**Slavery.** We enslaved, brutalized, and lynched Black Americans in a government-led system of institutionalized torture.

**Civil War.** The four years of the Civil War produced torture on both sides, within and outside many notorious prison camps. Andersonville, a Confederate prisoner-of-war camp in Georgia, was notorious for the torture of prisoners and nearly 13,000 soldiers died there.

**Death Penalty.** We are alone in the industrialized world in using the death penalty, which is almost universally condemned as torture. Since 1976, when the U.S. Supreme Court re-instated the practice, we have executed 1,516 people. Fully 27 states and the federal government allow the death penalty. The highest number of executions, 569, have occurred in Texas. During Trump’s presidency, the federal government executed more people – 13 persons - than in all states combined.

**Guantánamo Prison.** After the 9/11 attacks, the United States, with authorization from President George W. Bush and support from the CIA and other agencies, established Guantánamo Prison at Guantánamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba in 2002. It is the longest-standing war prison in U.S. history where prisoners are detained without due process and interrogated without restraint. At present, of the 780 people originally detained, 40 people remain in detention, most of them without charge or trial; nine prisoners have died in custody. The torture techniques that have been used include waterboarding, beating, binding and hooding, subjection to deafening noise, rectal feeding and hydration, deprivation of sleep, food, drink, and medical care, sexual humiliation, subjection to extreme heat and cold, and confinement in coffin-like boxes.

President Obama pledged to close Guantánamo but met Congressional opposition. In January 2018, Trump signed an executive order to keep it open indefinitely. In February 2021, the Biden administration pledged to shut it down.

**Torture of Women.** According to the UN High Commission on Human Rights, rape and other forms of sexual violence can amount to torture. On average, in the US, there are 433,648 victims (age 12 or older) of rape and sexual assault each year, and sex-trafficking of women and girls remains an intractable and growing problem.

**Overseas.** The Pentagon has acknowledged that U.S. military personnel have conducted interrogations in prisons in Yemen, part of our proxy war in that country. Escaped prisoners report whippings, use of electric shocks, and other extreme measures.

**Outside the Law.** The US has not ratified the Optional Protocol for the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), although virtually all other industrialized countries have done so. OPCAT gives international guidelines for documenting torture and its consequences. Under OPCAT, international bodies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross visit places where people are deprived of their liberty, to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Each nation that ratifies the OPCAT is responsible for maintaining an independent mechanism for torture prevention at the domestic level.

**The Future?** We have a culture that worships violence, and where this happens, it becomes almost impossible to eliminate torture.
Medical personnel are often involved in torture. Doctors, psychologists, nurses, and physicians’ assistants determine the threshold for abuse, calibrate pain, and dictate how far various torture techniques can be pushed without killing the victims.

In 2014, in response to the post-9/11 events at Guantánamo, several U.S. states initiated legislation to remove licensure from all medical professionals licensed in their particular states who are complicit with torture anywhere in the world.

We at World Without Genocide had support from Minnesota’s medical organizations for a similar bill. We believed that people in the state would not want their health care clinicians to have any role in these heinous activities. However, the bill did not advance in the legislature. A committee chair who was impeding the bill told me, “I’m all in favor of torture. How else will we find out when the bad guys are going to drop another bomb on us?”

**What can we do?** Complicity of medical personnel is an egregious distortion of the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm. We would like Minnesota and other states to remove medical licensure from those who have any role in torture.

Contact us at admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org or 952-693-5206 to lend your voice to this effort.

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**Books.**

We recommend two outstanding books by Dr. Steven Miles on medical complicity with torture. In *Oath Betrayed: America’s Torture Doctors* (2009), Dr. Miles writes about doctors, psychologists, and medics who cleared prisoners for interrogation, advised and monitored abuse, and falsified documents.

In *The Torture Doctors: Human Rights Crimes and the Road to Justice* (2020), Dr. Miles examines physician complicity with torture from the post-World War II period to the present. He addresses efforts to hold doctors accountable through human rights advocates and non-mainstream medical NGOs.

The seminal study *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (1986), by Robert Jay Lifton, is the now-classic analysis of the role of German doctors in carrying out a genocide. Lifton details the medical procedures occurring before and during the Holocaust and he provides quotes from interviews he conducted with SS doctors and victims.

**Current films.**

The U.S. effort to strengthen the ban on torture is the topic of the excellent 2019 docu-drama *The Report*, available on Netflix. It is the harrowing story of U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, then Chair of the U.S. House Intelligence Committee (Annette Bening), and staffer Daniel J. Jones (Adam Driver), to uncover the truth of the CIA ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ following 9/11. Despite roadblocks from the White House, the CIA, and other agencies, a bill was passed in 2015, authored by Senators Feinstein and the late John McCain, to strengthen the U.S. ban on torture. The film illustrates the potential for righting wrongs despite obstacles from powerful opponents.

*The Mauritanian* is a 2021 docu-drama based on the true story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a Mauritanian man who was held for fourteen years (from 2002 to 2016) without charge in Guantánamo prison. It is adapted from Slahi’s 2015 memoir Guantánamo Diary and stars Tahar Rahim as Slahi, and also features Jodie Foster, Shailene Woodley, Benedict Cumberbatch, and Zachary Levi. The film is available on Prime Video.

**Website resources.**

- [HRW](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/world_report_download/hrw_world_report_2020_0.pdf) Human Rights Watch prepares an annual summary of human rights issues in every country in the world. The report includes information on torture for those countries where it is currently documented.
- [Amnesty](https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/torture/) reports on torture in many countries, including Australia, Syria, and the situation at Guantánamo prison. The website includes Amnesty’s anti-torture action agenda.
- [CVT](https://www.cvt.org/) The Center for Victims of Torture, headquartered in Minneapolis, operates globally, providing resources for survivors, conducting research and training on healing, and advocating for a torture-free world.
Every year we hold an annual gala to recognize our supporters and to honor a person who has demonstrated extraordinary courage in standing up to hate – as a prosecutor, rescuer, or truth-teller.

We will honor Tanya Gersh on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at a celebration at the Edina Country Club in Edina, Minnesota. Ms. Gersh, a Jewish real estate agent in Montana, was harassed by Andrew Anglin, founder of The Daily Stormer, a far-right neo-Nazi website that advocates for the genocide of Jews – today, now, in the US. The messaging borrows directly from Julius Streicher’s Der Stürmer, the hate publication distributed in Nazi Germany from 1923-1945.

In 2016 Anglin incited his followers to harass Ms. Gersh. His army of online trolls sent nearly a thousand messages, including death threats.

Messages included the following -

- **Thanks for demonstrating why your race needs to be collectively ovened.**
- **You have no idea what you are doing, six million are only the beginning.**
- **Hickory dickory dock, the kike ran up the clock. The clock struck three and the Internet Nazis trolls gassed the rest of them.**

The Daily Stormer also listed names of other Jews in that area and called on readers to “take action” against them.

Ms. Gersh brought a civil suit against Anglin, alleging that he had intentionally inflicted emotional distress. A federal judge ruled that Anglin’s harassment campaign was not protected under free speech.

**WORDS MATTER**

Julius Streicher was hanged at Nuremburg in 1946 for inciting people to exterminate Jews. Anglin’s punishment? On August 8, 2019, Anglin was ordered to pay $14 million in damages to Gersh. He fled the country, and although he will likely never pay, the message was clear: words do, indeed, matter.

Tanya Gersh will receive our award at the gala. Invitations will be available in late September. The event is open to all. Contact us to receive an invitation: admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org or visit the website.

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**Incitement versus Truth: Genocides in the Past and Today**

Every summer we hold a three-day institute for high school and college students to learn about the Holocaust and other mass atrocities; local connections to global issues; and how to advocate for policies and legislation that promote justice.

This summer’s program, to be held remotely **August 10-12**, will examine incitement to create hate and violence against vulnerable minorities in the US and elsewhere. We will consider incitement during several genocides; how to find and promote truth; and strategies for protection, intervention, and peace.

Activities include testimonies from Holocaust and genocide survivors; a simulation of UN Security Council negotiations to resolve a current conflict; and advocacy for climate justice, rights based on identity; religious freedom; and ending impunity for perpetrators of atrocities.

Students are invited from all locations. Scholarships are available. Details and the application can be found at worldwithoutgenocide.org/programs/sis/summer-institute-2021.

The program has received the Ethical Leadership Award from the State of Minnesota.

The program runs from 10:00–noon, 1:30-4:00 Tuesday through Thursday, with additional evening programs, open to the public, on Tuesday, August 10 and Thursday, August 12.
THE FBI AND HUMAN RIGHTS

by Dragana Glumac, Intelligence Analyst, Federal Bureau of Investigation, dglumac@fbi.gov

The FBI has had authority to investigate human rights violations since 1988, when Congress made genocide a crime under U.S. law. Presidential Executive Order 13107, issued in 1998, is the principal authority that directs our nation’s commitment to international human rights treaties and responsibilities in the enforcement of human rights violations. The order stipulates that all government agencies must coordinate to enforce human rights laws within their own areas of responsibility.

TORTURE - 18 U.S.C. §§2340-2340A

On November 20, 1994, the federal torture statute, 18 U.S.C. §§2340-2340A, was enacted. This statute applies to acts committed outside the U.S. by a person acting under the color of law, if the person specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering upon another person within the perpetrator’s custody or physical control. The statute presently criminalizes the commission, attempt, and conspiracy to commit torture. There is an exception for pain and suffering incidental to lawful sanctions.

The U.S. currently possesses jurisdiction over torture if the offender is a U.S. national, or the offender is present in the U.S., regardless of nationality of the offender or victim.

The statute of limitations for torture is eight years from the date of the crime’s commission. There is no statute of limitations if torture results in death.

This statute applies only to conduct occurring on or after November 20, 1994, the date of the statute’s initial enactment. Conspiracy to commit torture was enacted on October 26, 2001.

The Case of Roy M. Belfast Jr., aka Chuckie Taylor

In December 2006, the first-ever torture charges were brought against Roy Belfast Jr., aka Chuckie Taylor, the son of the former Liberian President Charles Taylor, born in the United States. After a six-week trial, in October 2008, Taylor was convicted of five counts of torture, one count of conspiracy to torture, one count of using a firearm during the commission of a violent crime, and one count of conspiracy to use a firearm during the commission of a violent crime.

According to trial testimony, Taylor commanded a paramilitary organization known as the Anti-Terrorist Unit, which was directed to provide protection for the Liberian president and additional dignitaries of the Liberian government. Between 1999 and 2003, in his role as commander of that unit, Taylor and his associates committed numerous and varied forms of torture, including burning victims with molten plastic, lit cigarettes, scalding water, candle wax and an iron; severely beating victims with firearms; cutting and stabbing victims; and shocking victims with an electric device.

In January 2009, Taylor was sentenced to 97 years in prison.

The FBI investigated this case jointly with its partners and is a perfect example of our nation’s commitment and coordinated efforts to hold perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable for their actions.

UPCOMING WEBINARS

We offer online programs for the public with continuing education credits for Minnesota lawyers, educators, nurses, and social workers. Details may change; please check the website.

Genocide, Cobalt, and Human Rights

Wednesday, July 14, 7:00-9:00 pm CT

This program examines the increased frequency of genocides in response to the climate emergency and the ‘unintended consequences’ of human rights abuses in the global south as green energy replaces fossil fuels. Speakers are Prof. Alex Alvarez, genocide scholar, Terrence Collingsworth, lead attorney in a lawsuit against Apple, Google, Microsoft, Tesla, and Dell; and Kathryn Hoffman, CEO at the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. Registration is required by July 13 at http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/cobalt

Incitement Versus Truth

Tuesday, August 10, 7:00-9:00 pm CT

Speakers Congressman Jamie Raskin, who led proceedings in the House of Representatives on incitement to violence on January 6; Mark Potok, former senior fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center; and Imran Ahmed, CEO of the Center for Countering Digital Hate, will address the limits and dangers of free speech. Registration is required by August 9 at http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/incitement

Truth and Lies in the Holocaust: Terezin Concentration Camp

Thursday, August 12, 7:00 – 9:00 pm CT

The Nazi concentration camp Terezin, near Prague, Czechoslovakia, was set up to show the world that the Nazis were not persecuting incarcerated Jews. This was a lie; nearly all Terezin prisoners perished. Dr. Ellen Kennedy, Executive Director, World Without Genocide, will speak about the deception. Prof. Michael Bazyler, Fowler School of Law, Chapman University, will discuss the Terezin Declaration providing restitution for Holocaust victims. Registration is required by August 11 at http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/Holocaust

Ending Impunity for Torturers

Wednesday, September 22, 7:00 – 9:00 pm CT

Dr. Steven Miles, Professor Emeritus of Medicine and Bioethics, University of Minnesota Medical School, will speak about physician complicity with torture on an international scale and efforts at accountability. Randi Markusen, Associate Director of World Without Genocide, will address the complicity of German doctors and the military prosecutions of 23 German physicians and administrators at the ‘Nazi Doctors’ trial. Registration is required by September 21 at http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/torture
World Without Genocide

We are pleased to provide many resources for education and advocacy. These materials, available on our website without copyright restrictions and free of charge, are appropriate for use in classrooms, civic and faith organizations, and by individuals to learn more and to engage in supporting human rights policies and legislation.

**Toolkits for Action**
This section of the website highlights action and legislation to end the violence against the Uyghurs in China, the Rohingya in Myanmar, in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, Darfur, Congo, and elsewhere. Visit [http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/toolkits](http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/toolkits)

**The Justice Project**
The Justice Project describes mechanisms of international law including the UN International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, UN ad hoc tribunals, universal jurisdiction, International Humanitarian Law, and UN human rights conventions. Visit [http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/justicewww.worldwithoutgenocide.org/justicewww.worldwithoutgenocide.org/justice-project](http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/justice-project)

**Genocides and Conflicts in the 20th and 21st Centuries**

**The World Without Genocide Op-Ed Collection**
This is a compilation of our many commentaries that raise awareness about the genocides in the past, from the Holocaust to Rwanda, and those occurring today. View and download at [http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/in-the-news-right/the-world-without-genocide-op-ed-collection](http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/in-the-news-right/the-world-without-genocide-op-ed-collection)

**RESOURCES**

From Genocide to Justice: A Mock Trial
This mock trial of President Andrew Jackson for the genocide of the American Indians is available for classroom and other use. View and download at [http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/from-genocide-to-justice-a-mock-trial](http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/from-genocide-to-justice-a-mock-trial)

Voices of the Past and Present: Victims and Survivors of Genocide and Conflict Speak
This collection of short narratives is based on the experiences of witnesses, survivors, and rescuers as told in diaries, books, and essays. The stories can be included as part of an educational program or as a presentation. View and download at [http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts](http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts)

Readers’ Theater Plays
We have 7 plays that feature ‘upstanders,’ people who acted heroically to rescue others, tell the truth, or bring perpetrators to justice despite difficult and dangerous circumstances. Versions are available, at no cost and without copyright restrictions, about reporters; Germans who saved Jews during the Holocaust; the Armenian genocide; the Warsaw ghetto uprising; upstanders to human trafficking; advocates for climate justice; and a version highlighting people from the Armenian genocide to the Congo. The plays are designed to be done on a bare stage and have accompanying background slides in PowerPoint; they are easily transferable to Zoom. For details, contact admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org

**World Bulletin**
Our twice-monthly digital newsletter contains essays on critical current issues, upcoming events, and updates on federal legislation relevant to our mission. To receive it, email admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org or call 952-693-5206.

Learn more about WORLD WITHOUT GENOCIDE

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