

A Statement of Conscience Against Torture

by the Church Council and the Congregation of
Church of the Three Crosses (Chicago)

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted. 8th Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified December 15, 1791

No physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion, may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind... Grave breaches to which [other articles relate] shall be those involving any of the following acts, if committed against persons or property protected by the Convention: willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health... or willfully depriving a prisoner of war of the rights of fair and regular trial prescribed in this Convention.

Excerpts from Articles 17 and 130 from the Geneva Conventions of 1949; ratified by the United States, February 8, 1955

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

From Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, December 16, 1966; ratified by the United States, June 8, 1992

Jesus said: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:36-40

We believe that torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment are despicable, immoral, illegal and always wrong. The highest authorities in the United States should publicly denounce these acts in the strongest possible terms. These acts violate the basic dignity of the human person that all religions, in their highest ideals, hold dear. Torture degrades everyone involved: policy-makers, perpetrators and victims. It contradicts our nation's most cherished ideals. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. The use of torture is an affront to human dignity that can never be justified and must be opposed everywhere in the world.

We believe that prisoners of war and persons classified as detainees should never be held in secret prisons in the United States or abroad, beyond the reach of the law, where their treatment cannot be monitored by the International Red Cross. All prisoners of war and detainees in U.S. custody should have access to attorneys and the chance to hear the charges against them and to challenge their detentions in a court of law.

We believe that our nation's security is strongest when our government adheres to human rights and the rule of law, including the absolute prohibition on torture.

We believe that our nation must uphold the standards and ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, as well as all the international accords to which our country is a signatory, including the Geneva Conventions and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Adopted by the Church Council of Church of the Three Crosses on October 25, 2007, and made available to the congregation for signatures. This document will be sent to government leaders and elected representatives.