

NO. 0721
(SENSE-OF-THE-ASSEMBLY)
ELIMINATION OF TORTURE

WHEREAS, all individuals are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and therefore worthy of honor and respect by other human beings (1 John 4:20); and

WHEREAS, Jesus calls us to love our enemies (Luke 6:27) and to do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matthew 7:12); and

WHEREAS, Jesus was himself a victim of torture prior to his death on the cross (John 19:1-3); and

WHEREAS, torture, regardless of circumstances, dehumanizes both torturer and tortured alike; and

WHEREAS, modern Western democracies are based in large part on ethical principles derived from the Christian faith; and

WHEREAS, one of the foundational principles of a modern democratic society is the protection of the individual from the arbitrary power of the state; and

WHEREAS, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) is a coalition of people of faith, communities of faith, and faith-based organizations—local, regional, and national—working to ensure that the United States does not engage in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of anyone, without exceptions; and

WHEREAS, over 15,000 individuals and over 100 organizations—including many of our ecumenical partners among the mainline denominations—have signed a statement by NRCAT opposing torture (see www.nrcat.org);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Fort Worth on July 21 – 25, 2007, declares that *any and all use of torture is totally unacceptable*—that it is contrary to the Word of God and in opposition to the foundational principles of a democratic society; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Assembly joins our ecumenical partners and other communities of faith and faith-based organizations in endorsing the following statement by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT):

Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions hold dear. It 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.

Nothing less is at stake in the torture abuse crisis than the soul of our nation. What does it signify if torture is condemned in word but allowed in deed? Let America abolish torture now -- without exceptions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that when engaging in thoughtful and prayerful evaluation of such issues as domestic policy, foreign policy, military procedures, and interrogation techniques, Disciples members, activists and leaders are encouraged to do so in light of this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution and the statement of the NRCAT will be promoted by the Office of the General Minister and President and by Disciples Communication Ministries, that it will be distributed to Disciples regions, congregations and institutions of higher learning with a request for serious consideration of this issue and an invitation to endorse the NRCAT statement; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that Disciples are encouraged to join organizations, coalitions and campaigns working for the total elimination of torture in any and all circumstances.

Shepherd Park Christian Church, Washington, DC

The General Board recommends that the General Assembly
ADOPT Business Item 0721. (Debate time 12 minutes).

APPENDIX: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Who is NRCAT?

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) joins people of faith committed to ensuring that the United States does not engage in torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of anyone, without exceptions. NRCAT is a campaign of national, regional, and local religious and secular organizations. We are national denominations and faith groups, local interfaith groups and congregations, and more.

What do Members of NRCAT Believe?

Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions hold dear. It 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.

What are the Goals of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture?

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture has established the following goals as of November 2006:

1. Obtain passage by the United States Congress of legislation that prohibits -- without exception -- all U.S.-sponsored torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees, and all policies that allow for or encourage such torture or treatment. This legislation, whether establishing new requirements or repealing existing provisions of law, must:

- Prohibit any exemption from or exception to U.S. adherence to the human rights standards of international law – without exception;
- Prohibit the practice of apprehending suspects and transporting them to countries that use torture as an interrogation technique;
- Prohibit the existence or use of secret prisons for U.S. detainees anywhere in the world;
- Mandate access by the International Committee of the Red Cross to all U.S. detainees around the world;
- Restore habeas corpus protection for all U.S. detainees, citizen and non-citizen alike;
- Prohibit the use of evidence derived from torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment (including hearsay evidence) in the determination of guilt or innocence of a charged offense;
- Initiate an independent investigation of the role of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees under U.S. custody and control after September 11, 2001.

2. Engage national denominations, faith groups and religious organizations in actively helping to obtain these legislative goals.

3. Engage regional religious organizations, congregations, and individual people of faith in actively helping to obtain these legislative goals.

4. Engage the religious community in projects and communications efforts to educate the public about torture and detainee treatment and to urge the public to oppose torture and to support these legislative goals.

5. Secure sufficient funding to become a stable organization with effective staffing, administrative structure, and communications capabilities.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Participating Members

- Adventist Peace Fellowship
- American Baptist Churches, USA
- Baltimore Monthly Meeting of Friends,
- Stony Run
- Brooklyn Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
- California Council of Churches

- Church and Society Network, Rocky Mountain Conference, UMC
- Council of Churches of Santa Clara County (CA)
- Disciples Justice Action Network
- Eighth Day Faith Community (Washington, DC)
- The Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Fellowship of Reconciliation
- First Congregational Church, Berkeley, CA
- First Reformed Church of Bethlehem
- Franciscan Friars - Holy Name Province
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- Friends of Jesus Church (Washington, DC)
- General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church
- Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church (San Jose, CA)
- Islamic Society of North America
- Jewish Council for Public Affairs
- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
- Nassau Presbyterian Church (Princeton, NJ)
- National Council of Churches
- Network of Spiritual Progressives
- No2Torture
- Pax Christi USA
- The Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
- Quaker House of Fayetteville, NC
- Rabbis for Human Rights
- Rahway and Plainfield Monthly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends (Plainfield, NJ)
- Reclaiming the Prophetic Voice
- Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ (Arlington, VA)
- St. Mary's Catholic Church (Seattle, WA)
- Sandy Spring Friends Meeting (Sandy Spring, MD)
- The Shalom Center
- Shalom United Church of Christ (New Haven, CT)
- Union for Reform Judaism
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- United Church of Christ
- The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society
- Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture
- World Sikh Council - American Region

Endorsing Members

- 8th Day Center for Justice
- Acton Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (MA)
- Association of Christian Churches of South Dakota
- Benedictine Monks of Weston Priory
- Broadway United Church of Christ (New York, NY)
- Church Women United of St. Lucie County (Florida)
- Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ
- Daughters of the Holy Spirit
- Disciples Advocacy and Witness Network of the Christian Church Capital Area
- Evangelicals for Social Action
- First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto
- First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis
- Franciscan Sisters of Peace
- Hartford Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
- The Humanist Chaplaincy at Harvard University
- Jewish Peace Fellowship
- Leadership Conference of Women Religious
- Maine Conference, United Church of Christ
- Maine Council of Churches
- Marianist Social Justice Collaborative
- Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
- Maryknoll Lay Missioners
- Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic
- Metro New York Religious Campaign Against Torture
- Metropolitan Community Churches Global Justice Team
- Monterey Peninsula Friends Meeting
- Missionaries of Africa
- Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary
- Montclair Monthly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends
- Morningside Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (New York, NY)
- Multifaith Voices for Peace & Justice (Palo Alto, CA)
- Nauset Interfaith Association (Cape Cod, MA)
- Pax Christi Metro New York
- Pennsylvania Council of Churches
- Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy (Presbyterian Church (USA))
- Saint Benedict's Monastery (St. Joseph, MN), World Justice/New Jubilee Task

- Team and Chapter of Benedictines for Peace
- Saint John's Abbey (Collegeville, MN)
- Servants of Mary (Ladysmith, WI)
- Sisters of the Divine Savior, Justice and Peace Office
- Sisters of the Humility of Mary
- Sister of St. Joseph of Baden, PA
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet – Albany Province
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Los Angeles Province
- Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwest Pennsylvania
- Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace
- Sisters of Saint Mary of Namur, Eastern Province
- Social Justice Council of the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque
- Society of Jesus, New York Province
- Society of the Holy Child Jesus, American Province Leadership Team
- Spiritus Christi Catholic Church (Elmira, NY)
- Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends (Berkeley, CA)
- Trinity Episcopal Church (Santa Barbara, CA)
- The United Church of Christ of Northeast Harbor and Seal Harbor (Maine)
- Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
- University Presbyterian Church-Mission and Peacemaking Committee (Baton Rouge, LA)
- U.S. Catholic Mission Association
- U.S. Jesuit Conference
- US Province, School Sisters of St. Francis
- Washington Association of Churches
- Wisconsin Council of Churches
- Witness/Washington Office, Church of the Brethren

- PeaceAction Montgomery
- Rocky Mountain Survivors Center (Denver, CO)
- Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International

Adjunct Members

- Amnesty International USA
- Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
- Bill of Rights Defense Committee
- The Center for Justice & Accountability
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Humans Right First
- Coalition for Peace Action, Princeton, NJ

