

Torture

Contributed by MWC News
Thursday, 03 November 2005

A Human Rights Perspective

A timely and provocative new anthology, *TORTURE* is the first book to critically assess torture from a global human rights viewpoint. International law has categorically outlawed the practice, yet the global debate around torture—the legality of its use, the extent of its use, its effectiveness—has intensified in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Revelations of torture and degradation at Abu Ghraib and other detention facilities have galvanized both proponents and opponents of torture, and underscored how imperative it is to tackle the question head-on.

A Human Rights Perspective

Edited by Kenneth Roth and Minky Worden
Amy Bernstein, Contributing Editor

A timely and provocative new anthology, *TORTURE* is the first book to critically assess torture from a global human rights viewpoint. International law has categorically outlawed the practice, yet the global debate around torture—the legality of its use, the extent of its use, its effectiveness—has intensified in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Revelations of torture and degradation at Abu Ghraib and other detention facilities have galvanized both proponents and opponents of torture, and underscored how imperative it is to tackle the question head-on.

Sixteen original essays from leading commentators take an unflinching look at one of the most urgent issues of our day. Contributors and topics include:

- Writer Michael Ignatieff counters Alan Dershowitz's controversial "ticking time-bomb" scenario as a justification for utilizing torture;
- Juan Mendez, the UN Genocide Rapporteur, writes for the first time about his own horrific experience of torture;
- Argentine Consul Ambassador Hector Timerman gives a harrowing account of the impact of torture on his own family; his father Jacobo Timerman was author of *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*;
- Israeli human rights leader Eitan Felner spotlights Israel's experience of legalizing torture;
- UN Torture Rapporteur Sir Nigel Rodley tells for the first time of his experiences negotiating with torturers worldwide;
- British barrister Cherie Booth writes about sexual violence, torture and justice;
- Lawyer Jamie Fellner investigates torture in US prisons;
- Minky Worden highlights how ubiquitous torture is around the world today;
- Senator John McCain argues against throwing out the Geneva Conventions;
- Eitan Felner, head of the Center for Economic and Social Rights and former Executive Director of B'Tselem, draws lessons from Israel's experiment with legally justifying physical coercion in interrogation;
- French documentary filmmaker and author Marie-Monique Robin traces the export of torture tactics from Indochina and Algeria to Latin America;
- Senior Legal Advisor at Human Rights Watch James Ross analyzes the torture debate through history;
- Washington Advocacy director Tom Malinowski reveals how the US is engaging in banned U.S. state department practices;
- Human Rights Watch Special Counsel Reed Brody writes about the road to Abu Ghraib;
- Human Rights Watch General Counsel Dinah Pokempner examines the psychological dynamic of torture and command responsibility;
- Dr Mary R. Fabri, director of the Marjorie Kovler Center for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture, describes the long term consequences of torture; and
- Human Rights Watch head Kenneth Roth sets out how the shifting US position has undermined the global prohibition on torture [Audio: Real Media, 5 minutes, 2.3 MB or Mp3, 5 Minutes, 2.3 MB]

In short, torture has become the leading moral and political question of our time. This book asks the hard questions and provides the answer that "a society that rejects torture affirms the essential dignity and humanity of each individual."

The variety of surprising voices and topics in this book will lead even the staunchest backers of torture to question their beliefs.