



National Religious Campaign Against Torture

www.nrcat.org
campaign@nrcat.org

January 9, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama
President-elect
Presidential Transition Team
451 6th St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President-elect Obama:

We appreciate and value your focus on uniting people to face the many challenges that lie ahead as your inauguration approaches. One of those challenges is to restore our nation's moral standing in the world by rejecting the practice of torture.

On Human Rights Day, December 10, 2008, you affirmed "agreements Americans helped forge – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and treaties against torture and genocide" and declared that this commitment to inalienable human rights "unites us with people from every country and culture."

While we represent a wide diversity of America's faith traditions, we all believe in the inherent worth and dignity of all human life. Respect for the dignity of every person must serve as the foundation for security, justice and peace. Torture is incompatible with the tenets of our faiths and is contrary to international and U.S. law.

We have enclosed a Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order banning torture which has been endorsed by religious leaders, and foreign affairs specialists and former military officers. We respectfully ask you to review this Declaration of Principles and issue an executive order on Inauguration Day or as early as possible. We believe such a step will help the United States to regain the moral high ground and restore our credibility within the international community at this critical time.

We ask the Divine for blessings on you and your Administration as you address the difficult issues that confront our nation and world. May you be granted strength and wisdom for the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard
Chairman, Committee on International
Justice and Peace, United States
Conference of Catholic Bishops

Rabbi Steve Gutow
President
Jewish Council for Public Affairs

-2-

Rev. Dr. David Gushee
President
Evangelicals for Human Rights

Dr. Ingrid Mattson
President
Islamic Society of North America

Archbishop Vicken
Diocesan Legate
Armenian Church of America

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer
President, Council of Bishops
United Methodist Church

Bishop Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rabbi David Saperstein
Director, Religious Action Center
Union of Reform Judaism

Rev. Dr. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
General Secretary
Reformed Church in America

Rev. Dr. Stan Haste
Minister for Mission & Ecumenism
Alliance of Baptists

Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori
Presiding Bishop
Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
National Council of Churches

Rabbi Peter S. Knobel
President
Central Conference of American Rabbis

Mary Ellen McNish
Secretary-General
American Friends Service Committee

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary
American Baptist Churches in the USA

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís
of the United States

Stanley J. Noffsinger
General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church, USA

Sheetal D. Shah
Hindu American Foundation

Rabbi Eric Yoffie
President
Union for Reform Judaism

Rev. Dr. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

James Schrag
Executive Director
Mennonite Church USA

Rev. William G. Sinkford
President
Unitarian Universalist Association of
Congregations

Rabbi Toba Spitzer
President
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed
National Director, Interfaith and
Community Alliances
Islamic Society of North America

Rabbi Brian Walt
Executive Director
Rabbis for Human Rights – North America

Rev. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rabbi Leonard Gordon
Chair
Rabbinical Assembly Social Action
Committee

Nancy Ratzan
President
National Council of Jewish Women

Rabbi Shawn Zevit
Director of Outreach and Tikkun Olam
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation

Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos
Chancellor
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago

Archbishop Nicolae Condrea
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the
Americas

Rabbi Gerry Serotta
Chair
Rabbis for Human Rights – North America

Jim Winkler
General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church