



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

ACTION ALERT

URGE YOUR SENATORS TO EXPAND THE BAN ON TORTURE

February 7, 2008

Why this issue is important? Torture is abhorrent in the eyes of the Church as it undermines and debases the dignity of both victims and perpetrators. Pope Benedict XVI said, "I reiterate that the prohibition against torture 'cannot be contravened under any circumstance.'"

The Senate is expected to vote on H.R. 2082, the FY 2008 Intelligence Authorization Act, in the next two weeks. Contained in that bill is important anti-torture legislation (Section 327) which would expand the prohibition against torture of detainees to all U.S. intelligence agencies and their agents. We urge Senators to adopt this legislation as it is consistent with the Church's belief in human dignity and because it would allow the U.S. to regain the moral high ground and restore our credibility in the international community.

Background: USCCB was successful in its earlier efforts to encourage Congress to adopt provisions in the FY2006 Defense Appropriations Act to prohibit cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners under custody of the U.S. military by applying the prohibition on torture outlined in U.S. Army Field Manual. There is concern that the earlier legislation does not apply consistently to all U.S. intelligence agencies and their agents.

Section 327 of H.R. 2082 would close that loophole. However this section was not part of either the original House or Senate versions of the Intelligence Authorization Act but rather was included in the conference report after consultations between House and Senate conferees preparing the final bill. The House passed the conference report in December on a 222-199 vote. Some Senators want to block inclusion of Section 327 in HR 2082 and may raise a point of order because it was not in either of the original versions of the bill. 60 votes are needed to override the point of order or prevent a filibuster, and eventually to pass the bill with Section 327 intact.

ACTION REQUESTED: If your Senator is listed below, please contact him or her and urge support for the anti-torture provisions (Section 327) in H.R. 2082, the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY 2008. Check <http://capwiz.com/c-span> for your Senator's telephone number and email address.

Lamar Alexander (R-TN)
Evan Bayh (D-IN)
Sam Brownback (R-KS)
Robert Casey (D-PA)
Norm Coleman (R-MN)
Susan Collins (R-ME)
Mary Landrieu (D-LA)
Joseph Lieberman (D-CT)
Richard Lugar (R-IN)

Mel Martinez (R-FL)
John McCain (R-AZ)
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Ben Nelson (D-NE)
Ken Salazar (D-CO)
Arlen Specter (R-PA)
John Sununu (R-NH)
George Voinovich (R-OH)
John Warner (R-VA)

For more information contact: Virginia Farris, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3182, vfarris@usccb.org. See Bishop Thomas Wenski's January 30, 2008 letter on torture which is attached and can be found with other material at www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/libertyind.shtml.