

CITIZENS MUST DEMAND THAT OUR GOVERNMENT MAKE AMENDS FOR THE USE OF TORTURE. DENIAL IS NO WAY FORWARD.

Over the past decade, we North Carolinians have experienced war, counter-terror and trauma in many forms. Our sons and daughters have fought on the frontlines in Afghanistan and Iraq, and often returned home bearing painful burdens.

Other North Carolinians have taken part in sensitive national security operations, including Special Forces deployments and “extraordinary rendition” flights. Many of us are outraged at the now-disavowed policies of secret detention and torture.

A European investigation uncovered chilling details of a secret program based on bilateral agreements between the United States and most European nations.

A local firm based at the Johnston County airport, Aero Contractors, operated aircraft on rendition circuits, in which prisoners were secretly shuttled among pickup points, foreign jails and secret CIA torture facilities. Joining in a systematic cover-up, Aero pilots disguised flight plans to help the CIA avoid detection. After leaving their base at the Johnston County Airport or the Kinston JetPort, Aero Contractors jets would stop in Washington, D.C., to pick up CIA snatch teams. Aero Contractors' crews witnessed the humiliation and abuse of detainees who were routinely stripped, beaten, hooded, diapered, shackled, handcuffed and chemically sedated via forced insertion of suppositories.

Some rendered detainees disappeared and may have died as a result of torture. Others remain confined at Guantánamo untried for any crime, but with no clear prospect for release. Among the hundreds of men who have been released, none has received an apology, restitution or any form of the support necessary to rejoin the community and resume the lives they led before their ordeal.

Although this history is appalling, the employees of Aero Contractors were not the authors of the “extraordinary rendition” program. They were the pilots, the mechanics and the crew, some of whom themselves may be affected by their involvement with torture.

It is the officials who planned, authorized and justified such unlawful conduct in our names – in contradiction to our proud history of protecting civil and human rights – who should be held accountable.

Employees of Aero Contractors were not the authors of the “extraordinary rendition” program. The officials who planned, authorized and justified such unlawful conduct in our names should be held accountable.

To do that, we need transparency at all levels.

There must be both justice and healing for all those scarred by extraordinary rendition.

We at North Carolina Stop Torture Now have played our part in adversarial relations with the employees of Aero Contractors. While extraordinary rendition has caused serious damage to those who were kidnapped

and tortured, as a state and a nation we are all harmed. The United States' walk on the “dark side” of torture and secret detention has robbed us all of our most precious birthrights: the rule of law and our basic value of respect for human life.

Across our differences, what unites us is our desire to be proud of our communities and our country. We all want safety and peace for our children. We all value human life and are ready to stand up for democracy.

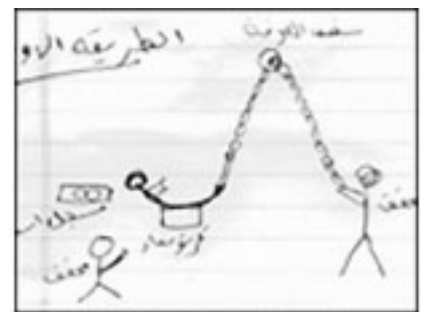
Together, we can acknowledge what went wrong and bring it to the light of day. We can seek out those who were harmed, learn what they need, offer apologies and begin to make amends.

TORTURE HAS MADE US LESS SAFE

Our nation's use of torture has harmed us all. It has robbed us of our moral standing, and it continues to fuel terrorism against us, both at home and abroad.

As North Carolinians, our role in torture won't just go away.

The survivors of extraordinary rendition are being denied a day in court, an important step to healing, and a basic level of access to justice that you and I would expect if this happened to us.



A survivor's drawing of torture

"... [T]here are alternatives to revenge ... When perpetrators feel remorse, they are recognizing something they failed to see when they violated the victim, which is that victims feel and bleed just like others with whom they, the perpetrators, identify. ... When [even the worst] criminal offenders ... show contrition and apologize, they are ... acting as human beings."

– Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, A Human Being Died That Night



Binyam Mohamed

ONE SURVIVOR'S STORY:

In July 2002, British resident Binyam Mohamed was flown by Aero Contractors for the CIA from Pakistan to Morocco, where he was interrogated and tortured for 18 months. Routinely beaten, sometimes to unconsciousness, he suffered multiple broken bones. His genitals were repeatedly slashed, and sometimes a hot stinging liquid was poured into the open wounds on his penis. He was frequently threatened with rape, electric shock and death, and forced to listen to loud music day and night.

In January 2004, Binyam was again rendered by Aero Contractors, this time to the “Dark Prison” in Kabul. Initially beaten bloody against a wall, he was held in almost complete darkness and kept awake for days at a time by loud, weird recordings. Binyam was transferred in September 2004 to Guantánamo, released without charges in 2009 and now is recovering at home in the United Kingdom. The U.S. has refused to acknowledge what it did to Binyam or to apologize, and federal courts have denied him redress.

More faces, names and stories of the men who suffered under U.S. torture are available at:
www.ncstoptorturennow.org

WHAT CAN WE DO?

North Carolina Stop Torture Now is a grassroots coalition of peace, human rights, and religious organizations working since 2005 to end torture and the practice of extraordinary rendition.

Our long-range goal is to encourage and support North Carolinians in leading our nation towards lifting the shroud of secrecy threatening to smother our democracy.

We want to seize this opportunity to prove that our community has learned from dark periods in our national history, such as the shameful enslavement of African-Americans and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

We seek justice for all survivors of torture and rendition, for the families of those disappeared by the U.S., and to provide an opportunity for reconciliation between the perpetrators and survivors of torture.

To this end, we must:

Acknowledge what has happened through a public investigation of the torture committed in our names by the U.S. government, including a clear and detailed account of North Carolinians' role.

We must understand the damage done to human lives, to our democracy, and to those of us who have participated.

It would be unfair to scapegoat the Aero Contractors pilots and crews while higher officials suffer no consequences.

Make an apology as a nation, as a state, and as a people.

The top U.S. officials who authorized the torture must sincerely apologize, as must those who helped carry it out. Expressing sincere remorse is a part of restoring our moral health.

Offer support and restitution to the survivors of U.S.-sponsored torture who are trying to rebuild their lives.

We will seek guidance from victims, survivors and their families to offer meaningful support.

Ensure that our state and national resources are never again used to secretly disappear people and torture them, whether they are guilty or innocent of crimes.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: NC Stop Torture Now, P.O. Box 50345, Raleigh, NC 27650-6345
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