

UU Fellowship of Huntington Passes Resolution to End Torture

Because the U.S. Congress passed a law banning torture, it would be easy to assume that we no longer need to worry that our most basic moral principle is still being violated in our name.

But that assumption is wrong.

When President Bush signed the legislation, he stated that he had the right to ignore the law whenever he believed the nation's security is at stake. And rendition – the practice of sending prisoners to other countries where they can be tortured – is continuing while we also maintain a U.S. gulag of secret prisons in Eastern Europe.

This must stop.

We at the UU Fellowship of Huntington (NY) have said with one voice that this must stop. Our social justice committee took up this issue and decided that we would be moral failures if we did not state publicly that we oppose torture for any reason: morally, because it violates the inherent worth and dignity of people; and pragmatically, because it exposes our citizens to similar tortuous treatment while failing in its supposed purpose of getting information.

Intelligence experts have said repeatedly that victims of torture will admit to anything in order to stop their pain.

Recently, our resolution to end torture [see below] was adopted by our fellowship as a whole, with the express purpose of letting our local and larger communities know our position. In composing it, we drew on a similar resolution passed by the UU Congregation at Shelter Rock (Manhasset NY) last fall. The UU Congregation at Rock Tavern (NY), the UU Fellowship of the Poconos (Stroudsburg PA), and the UU Congregation of Central Nassau (Garden City NY) have also passed similar resolutions.

It is our hope that other UU congregations pass resolutions and disseminate that fact to local media, their congressional representatives, other faith communities and in all other possible ways.

– Frances Wittelsey

Resolution Against the Use of Torture & a Call for Investigation of Reports of Abuse Against Prisoners

Whereas: The systematic use of torture as a policy of government is a crime against humanity; the right to be free of torture is a fundamental human right recognized in both the U.S. Constitution and international law and in our social and community values; and, all government-sponsored acts of torture, regardless of circumstance, are immoral, unjustified, and illegal:

Whereas: United States-sanctioned torture is not justified by national security needs and, in fact,

engenders hatred against Americans, does not keep us safe, and has shamed us and endangers our troops abroad and citizens at home:

Whereas: Acts of torture violate United States criminal laws, specifically the federal Anti-Torture Statute, 18 U.S.C. 2340 et seq. and the Federal War Crimes Act of 1996; violate international treaties to which the United States is a party, including the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Torture, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

Whereas: No United States policy or official, including the president, is above the rule of law, including laws against torture:

And, whereas: It is a radical and anti-American idea that the president, in time of war, is above the law because of national security, and that such a wrong-headed notion leads to corruption and abuses of power:

It is hereby resolved that: The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington firmly rejects the use of detention, incarceration, and interrogation techniques by agents of the government of the United States—or other governments to whom we have rendered prisoners--that can be construed in terms of law or common morality as torture and cruel or degrading punishment.

And, be it resolved that: The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Huntington, New York, calls upon its representatives and senators to establish an independent commission to conduct a comprehensive, public investigation into reports of abuse in U.S. detention centers; to establish whether such acts violate relevant federal and international law; to assure those responsible for crimes of torture are held accountable--all the way up the military and civilian chain of command; and to recommend safeguards to prevent further torture and mistreatment.