Torturing In The US Government

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The term torture refers to an act through which severe pain is inflicted on a person with the aim of forcing them to confess. (McCoy). Moreover, torture can be used to intimidate and coerce people into providing specific information. Torture is illegal in the United States and hence punishable within U.S. territory. According to the U.S. Supreme Court, torture is forbidden by law under the 8th Amendment. Abusive interrogation tactics such as torture should be firmly banned in the United States because they are cruel and inhuman and degrade human dignity.

Torture and Human Dignity

All acts of torture and inhuman, cruel, and degrading treatment should be banned by the United States government because they are against human dignity. These acts should be condemned because they degrade the dignity of human life. Drivers of radicalization should be at the forefront of suppressing these repressive acts, which include incarceration, unrestricted police authority, and any form of torture. This is because, through torture, victims are subjected to immense pain and even death, which in turn degrades the value of human life. Moreover, subjecting people to torture violates the morally inviolable intrinsic worth of a person, causing them to lose their self-respect and dignity. In this sense, torture should be abolished in the United States and internationally.

Legal Safeguards Against Abuse

No state should tolerate or allow torture or any other physical or psychological abuse. Exceptional situations such as war, political instability, internal insecurity, public emergencies, and states of war should never be used to justify torture and other acts of inhuman treatment within its jurisdiction. In this regard, regulatory laws should be put in place to control all interrogation procedures and protect prisoners from ill-treatment during interrogation. These regulatory mechanisms are aimed at defending prisoners who are deemed defenseless.

The Strategic Failure of Torture

In addition to being illegal and immoral, torture does not provide any strategic advantage. Moreover, abusing and subjecting people to torture violates the morally inviolable intrinsic worth of a person, causing them to lose their self-respect and dignity. Torturing people humiliates and devastates them.

In this sense, torture should be abolished in the United States and internationally. According to Barack Obama, the former president of the United States, torture was morally wrong and should be abolished at all costs. Obama made efforts to discredit torture as a method and measure of national security preservation. In his assertion, torture made the country less safe and morally degraded terrorist suspects. During his presidency, he ordered interrogations to be conducted humanely and hence prohibited torture and abuse of prisoners. For instance, he ordered the use of the Army Field Manual, which regulated interrogation practices.

Neuroscience of Coercive Interrogation

Neurological science has also shown that abuse and torture are ineffective ways of interrogating criminals. According to Shane O'Mara, a neuroscience professor, both physical and psychological torture compromise the mind, cognitive function, and mood, which are significant in extracting the right information. According to Bell, scientific studies in conjunction with various aspects of neurochemistry have suggested that the chances of obtaining truthful information through the use of torture tactics are very low. This rationale is based on the fact that repeatedly induced stress, pain, disorientation, fear, lack of control, and anxiety impair cognitive function and the ability to remember past information. Based on these facts, it is evident that torturing terrorists is more likely to produce the opposite of the intended result of coercive interrogation and, hence, should never be applied.

Constitutional and Human Rights Protections

According to United States regulations, all acts of torture are inhumane, illegal, and punishable by law. The Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution bans excessive bail, fines, abusive punishments, and cruel treatment of all people convicted of crimes. Additionally, the United States field manual dictates that persons in custody or under conviction should not be subjected to torture or any form of degrading treatment because they are protected by U.S. law. Techniques such as beatings, shock, burns, and sexual abuse are prohibited by U.S. and international law.

Regional Human Rights Standards

The American Convention on Human Rights also forbids torture and views it as a violation of human rights. According to the ACHR, all human beings have a right to humane treatment, and therefore, torture violates this right (Robertson and John). Article 15 of the ACHR prohibits actions against another person on any specified ground. Additionally, the convention criminalizes all acts and attempts of torture as offenses under criminal law, and such actions are punished through severe penalties according to their severity. In other words, the U.S. government has incorporated laws that regulate and guarantee compensation to all torture victims.

International Treaties Against Torture

Acts of torture have adverse effects on the victim. In this sense, several treaties have been enacted to counteract the practice of torture. These treaties include the Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil Rights. These treaties ban acts of abuse such as sleep deprivation, exposure to cold or hot surfaces, being forced to stand for long periods, and being threatened. These acts are excruciating for the victim, and all necessary measures should be undertaken to suppress them.

The Ticking Bomb Counterargument

However, utilitarian thinkers believe that torture can be permitted and justified on certain grounds. For instance, according to them, torture can be justified when it is necessary to save lives. According to Luban, a supporter of torture argues that if torture is the only means of generating information necessary to stop a ticking bomb, then it should be applied to save the lives at stake (p 250). Additionally, most researchers have put forth the idea that torture helps safeguard national security because it leads to the acquisition of vital information regarding matters of national security, which can then be acted upon. However, other humane mechanisms, such as acting in a friendly manner, can still be applied to save the situation rather than using torture (Vanderhallen and Geert 67). In my opinion, torture should not be justified on any grounds.

The Case for Humane Interrogation

In conclusion, human rights experts, intelligence professionals, and researchers have proved the ineffectiveness of torturing people in order to gain actionable intelligence. Applying emotional, physical, and psychological pressure only forces victims to give false confessions just to end the painful experience. Therefore, in this regard, torture should be prohibited and made illegal under the law. This is because torture diminishes the values of life, morality, and human dignity and also violates the rights of the victim. Other effective interrogation techniques that respect human dignity should be adopted based on the fact that torture is not effective and only inflicts undesirable pain on the victim while yielding no useful information. Moreover, torturing prisoners is illegal and punishable by law.

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