

Amnesty International: Torture and Human Rights Violations

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[Washington's Blog](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

(Additions to Amnesty excerpts are in italics or brackets. Bold emphases added.)

[USA:](#)

Torture: Amnesty International USA is partnering with human rights allies around the world for a two-year global campaign to stop torture, from Chicago to Nigeria

- [Chicago](#) police under the direction of former Commander Jon Burge systematically tortured more than 100 people of color
- ...officers repeatedly shocked Anthony [Holmes] with an electric shock box referred to by the detectives as the “ni**er box.” They wrapped the wires around his shackles while suffocating him with a plastic bag. Anthony passed out from the pain [and later] confessed to a murder he did not commit. His confession kept him behind bars for thirty years.
- ...detectives tortured Darrell [Cannon] ... They pressed a cattle prod to his testicles and put it into his mouth. ...They repeatedly made him believe that they had loaded a shotgun and rammed in into his mouth, pulling the trigger which, at each click, made him think his head was about to be blown off. ...Darrell falsely confessed – and spent 24 years in prison on the basis of his confession.
- [As Obama ensures of all torture committed by the US] Neither Burge nor any of the detectives under his command have been prosecuted for torture. Not one of the torture survivors have received the reparations (financial compensation, psychological counseling, vocational training) needed to make them whole, as required by international law.
- *The Intercept [noted](#) Tuesday that Obama is [voraciously](#) persecuting whistle-blowers while protecting torturers and other international and national criminals.*

Torture, prison: The USA stands virtually alone in the world in incarcerating thousands of prisoners in longterm or indefinite solitary confinement, a form of torture.

- [The number of prisoners in some form of solitary punishment in the US is] estimated to be approximately 80,000 on any given day
- ...psychological harm ... can result from isolating people even for relatively brief

periods

- *The journal New Scientist [finds](#) that psychological torture is “as bad as physical torture”.*
- *The journal also points out that “US Senator John McCain, who experienced torture as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, has said that if he were forced to make a decision between enduring psychological or physical torture, he would not hesitate to pick the latter.”*
- *(Interesting side note: On roots of the USA’s unique standing in terms of its immense incarceration and prisoner isolation-torture rates, see [this essay](#) by Mark Lewis Taylor, Professor of Theology and Culture, Princeton Theological Seminary, which delves into white Christian and European ideas of isolation as a means of appeasing god. He quotes de Tocquville’s observation that US prisons were illustrations of “complete despotism”, and notes how when African Americans were transferred out of slavery and into prisons, things became even “more abject”.)*

Policing: Amnesty International condemns the excessive, unnecessary or arbitrary use of force and will not rest until all policing in the United States respects human rights.

Death Penalty: Rather than continuing a practice that has been abandoned in all but a few counties—and risking more botched executions—Oklahoma should join the national trend and end the death penalty.

- *On the occasion of one such botched execution in Oklahoma, Obama took the opportunity to dissent from virtually all of the world’s human rights organization, including Amnesty, and defend his isolated stance on the death penalty, [stating](#) “there are certain circumstances in which a crime is – is so terrible that the application of the death penalty may be appropriate”.*

[Saudi Arabia:](#)

Reforms: Noting “some positive reforms”, Amnesty reminds that “Despite the advances in recent years, the country’s human rights record has worsened. The negatives vastly outweigh the positives.”

- Raif Badawi’s case [the blogger being lashed [nearly](#) to death] is just one example we have documented of the state’s brutality in Saudi Arabia.
- Under King Abdullah’s reign, there has been an increasing crackdown on freedom of expression. All of the country’s prominent human rights activists have either been jailed, forced into silence, or fled the country. Hundreds have been imprisoned for “crimes” such as using social media to discuss human rights issues or for “insulting the King”.
- Throughout his reign, hundreds of people have been beheaded and several hundreds sentenced to death. Severe discrimination against women continues in

law and practice, including through an archaic driving ban and a deeply discriminating guardianship system which requires women to get the permission of a male relative to work, seek higher education and travel. Citizens and foreigners alike are banned from practicing their religions freely if they do not comply with the state's version of Sunni Islam. Torture remains rife.

- The list of violations doesn't end there.

[Libya:](#)

Amnesty notes that "since February 2011" (the civil war and US-led aggression against Libya), the country has descended into "chaos" and "spiraling war crimes ... waged by rival groups and their supporters seeking vengeance"

- *The Washington Times [reported](#) yesterday on "secret tapes" that show how the Obama regime (led in this case by Hillary Clinton) [fabricated](#) the idea of an impending humanitarian crisis (Human Rights Watch dismissed the idea that such a crisis would occur), and rejected negotiations in favor of detonating explosives in Libya, an act of aggression, to bring about an illegal regime change. Libya was one of seven countries that, according to Gen. Wesley Clarke, W. Bush had made [plans](#) to "take out".*
- *Washington's Blog [reported](#), citing the Daily Mail, that 'The White House and senior Congressional members,' the group wrote in an interim report released Tuesday, 'deliberately and knowingly pursued a policy that provided material support to terrorist organizations in order to topple a ruler [Muammar Gaddafi] who had been working closely with the West actively to suppress al-Qaeda.'*
- *"The United States ... knowingly facilitat[ed] the provision of weapons to known al-Qaeda militias and figures,' Clare Lopez ... former CIA officer, told MailOnline." ([WB](#))*
- *For why the US committed [aggression](#) against Libya, also see "[Why Libya?](#)"*

[Nigeria:](#)

New evidence shows that the Nigerian military were repeatedly warned of impending Boko Haram attacks on Baga and Monguno which claimed hundreds of lives...

- *Boko Haram warned the inhabitants of Baga and surrounding villages almost two months ago that they would be coming to attack the troops and the civilian JTF [Joint Task Force]." Sources told Amnesty International that after the Baga attack on 3 January, Boko Haram members informed locals that their "next target is Monguno," and that these civilians informed the local military.*
- *One Monguno resident told Amnesty International: "There was a warning. Everyone was aware. Boko Haram came on Wednesday last week [21 January] and asked the villagers [in nearby Ngurno] to leave because they are coming to attack the barracks. The villagers told the soldiers."*

- As former US marine Ross Caputi and Prof. Noam Chomsky [note](#), Boko Haram's warning to civilians to flee from the impending attack is precisely the same courtesy the USA granted civilians in Fallujah, though the US killed 4-6,000 civilians in that town and may have caused an epidemic of birth defects and mutations, in addition to destabilizing Iraq and introducing and empowering terrorist groups throughout the wider region.
- Sheldon Richman [notes](#): "Before Americans invaded Iraq, al-Qaeda was not there. Nor was it in Syria, Yemen, and Libya."

Boko Haram was also strengthened by the US-led destruction of Libya:

- [Al Jazeera](#): "...heavy weapons such as SAM-7 anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles...were either surreptitiously obtained by posing as Gaddafi's supporters or indirectly purchased from mercenaries who had acquired these arms from Libyan depositories. ...these arms have been transferred to groups such as Ansar Dine, Boko Haram and MUJAO, emboldening and enabling them to mount more deadly and audacious attacks.
- [Commentary Magazine](#): "Unsecured Libyan weapons went to Boko Haram"
- [Human Rights First](#): "Unsecured Libyan stockpiles empower Boko Haram and destabilize African Sahel"
- [NBC News](#): "Apart from benefiting from sympathizers in the Nigerian military, the Islamic terror group is able to purchase small arms and occasionally some larger weaponry in nearby conflict zones, 'probably Libya' ... The collapse of Libya has further flooded the market"
- [Reuters and United Nations](#): "The Libyan civil war may have given militant groups in Africa's Sahel region like Boko Haram and al Qaeda access to large weapons caches, according to a U.N. report released on Thursday. ... Boko Haram killed more than 500 people last year and more than 250 this year in Nigeria."
- [Washington Post](#): "Boko Haram ... militants, who traveled to northern Mali last year to join the fight there, have returned with heavy weapons from Libya, presumably from former Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi's arsenal."

[Israel:](#)

Palestinian Murad Shtewi sits in an Israeli prison. His "crime?" Daring to protest the Israeli military occupation that his village lives under.

- In Murad's village of Kufr Qaddum, much of the land has been confiscated by the Israeli authorities for the purposes of building and servicing the illegal Israeli settlement block of Kedumim.
- ...an Israeli military court announced that [Shtewi] would be released from prison

in February. Even so, he still won't be truly free. Like so many other Palestinians, Murad faces re-arrest if he chooses to participate in any future protest.

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