

# Canada Supports Torture: An Instrument of “Terrorism Propaganda”

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In the course of the past week, the Canadian government of Stephen Harper, has made confusing statements regarding the role of torture as a means of obtaining information from arrested “terrorist suspects”.

In December 2010, the Minister of Public Safety, Vic Toews, instructed the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to use information obtained through torture in order to prioritize “the protection of life and property.”

In the House of Commons Mr. Toews did not backtrack. “Information obtained by torture is always discounted. But the problem is, can one safely ignore it when Canadian lives and property are at stake?” Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, added: “Of course we oppose the use of torture, but we believe that Canada’s security agencies should prioritize, yes, the protection of life.” (Hélène Buzzetti, [Torture: oui dans certains cas, dit Ottawa](#), Le Devoir, February 8, 2012)

These statements are nonsensical. Information obtained through torture is either “always discounted” or it is not. One is either in favor or opposed to torture. Both Vic Toews and Jason Kenney are contradicting their own statements. They claim to be firmly opposed to torture, but are in supportive of the practice of torture. To “prioritize [...] the protection of life” simply means that using information obtained by torture is part of the available options.

Is it a matter of cognitive dissonance or an attempt to slowly make torture acceptable to the population?

Not only is torture – under no exception – prohibited by international law, but studies also show that it is completely ineffective because the information obtained through it is not valid. When submitted to torture, a person will admit anything to put a stop to their suffering. And the leaders know that.

Thus, the question we should ask is: what is the fundamental role of torture?

It is wrong to presume that the goal of torture is to collect information, to obtain confessions. Several experts suggest that authorities use torture because they wrongfully believe that it is the only way to have access to certain information. Yet, by using and condoning torture, the authorities know full well what they are doing and it has nothing to do with intelligence gathering. Torture is a propaganda tool.

The absolute goal of any authority resorting to torture is to dominate, consolidate its position of authority, of superiority, but mostly to prove, promote and protect its world view, its propaganda by spreading terror.

When used under the pretext of wanting to obtain information, torture's ultimate aim is to feed the torturing authorities' propaganda. Its purpose is to force down in a victim's throat a testimony which will subsequently "prove" the torturers' propaganda and justify their actions as well as those of their allies. This practice leads to submission and sends a clear message to whoever might want to challenge the authorities.

Revealed to the public at large, the pictures of Abu Ghraib or the violence inflicted to Qaddafi and the use of "confessions" obtained through torture by "democratic" governments have no other intent than to terrorise, encourage submission and uphold the "war on terrorism" propaganda.

*Julie Lévesque contributed to this report*

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