OMNI NEWSLETTER # 9 ON US TORTURE, WAR CRIMES, LAWLESSNESS, APRIL 16, 2014.

Compiled by Dick Bennett, Building a Culture of Peace.

(#1 October 5, 2007; #2 May 9, 2011; #3 June 26, 2011; #4 Oct. 21, 2011; #5 Feb. 25, 2012; #6 June 12, 2012; #7 Feb. 23, 2013; #8 June 23, 2013).

OMNI NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT

JUNE IS UN TORTURE AWARENESS MONTH
JUNE 26 IS UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE
JULY 17 IS UN INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DAY, INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

OMNI EVENTS

UN TORTURE AWARENESS MONTH, June 22, 2013: us TORTURE and MURDER PROTEST AT FEDERAL BLDNG, FAYETTEVILLE.
UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE, JUNE 26, Film at OMNI, War on Whistleblowers
UN International Justice Day, July 17, Book Forum

My blog:  War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesricharbennett.blogspot.com/
www.faypublic.tv/watch
My Newsletters:
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
See Bush, Cheney, Civil Liberties, Constitution, Lawlessness, Militarism, NDAA newsletters, Rice (Condoleeza).

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For OMNI’s newsletters go to:  http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/.  Knowledge, including of the worst behavior, strengthens the search for the best.

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Contents Nos. 3-8

EXCELLENT DEFENSE OF THE CONSTITUTION BY JUDGE KAPLAN AND AMY DAVIDSON
Some of the responses to the exclusion of a witness from the trial of Ahmed Ghailani—let’s take Liz Cheney’s, for an easy, blatant example—seem to assume that if torture plus due process equals difficulty getting a conviction, then there is a problem with due process. No: there is a problem with torture. There are many problems with it, actually (moral, epistemological, political). But we are all weak and the idea of beating up or drowning a person can be tempting, apparently. That is why the penalties for torture have to be very high. One practical reason not to torture people is that it messes up prosecutions.

Liz Cheney wrote to TPM that

By insisting on trying Ahmed Ghailani in civilian court with full constitutional rights, instead of by military commission, President Obama and Attorney General Holder are jeopardizing the prosecution of a terrorist who killed 224 people at U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. If the American people needed any further proof that this Administration’s policy of treating terrorism like a law enforcement matter is irresponsible and reckless, they received it today.

Really, we received proof that the Bush Administration’s use of torture was irresponsible and reckless. What is Cheney actually saying about military commissions? If the exclusion of evidence gained by torture is “proof” of the need for military commissions, does that mean that they are necessary because they allow us to torture? All the more reason to avoid them. (And there are some limits even there: Charles Stimson, a former Bush Administration official, told the Washington Post that “It’s not clear the outcome would have been any different in a commission.”) What is so desirable about torture that we would create contorted legal structures—and throw away ones that have served us well—as tools for torturing?
Let’s even assume, for the sake of argument, that the information you get from torture is sometimes accurate. When someone will say anything to make torture stop, how do we know which things he says are good or not? More torture?

The defense, by the way, does not just get to cry torture and get things thrown out. From Judge Lewis Kaplan’s order:

The Court has had the benefit of extensive evidentiary submissions, a three-day hearing at which Abebe and representatives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the CIA, the Tanzanian National Police testified, legal briefs, and skilled argument. On the basis of that record—including importantly its assessment of the credibility of the only witnesses called to testify who actually were present when Abebe was persuaded to confess his role, to implicate Ghailani, and to cooperate with authorities—it now finds and concludes that the government has failed to prove that Abebe’s testimony is sufficiently attenuated from Ghailani’s coerced statements to permit its receipt in evidence.

The issue was attenuation because the prosecution did not even contest that Ghailani had been “coerced.” (One also wonders how Abebe, who was expected to testify that he had sold TNT to Ghailani, was “persuaded.”) More from Kaplan:

The Court has not reached this conclusion lightly. It is acutely aware of the perilous nature of the world in which we live. But the Constitution is the rock upon which our nation rests. We must follow it not only when it is convenient, but when fear and danger beckon in a different direction. To do less would diminish us and undermine the foundation upon which we stand.

When you lose a game because of fairly called penalties you don’t blame the penalties; you blame the fouls. And it’s not like this game is over: Ghailani is still on trial, and one would think that the government has some other evidence against him. It should: it won an indictment against him in 1998, and chased him for six years before even learning Abebe’s name. If we’d caught him in the beginning, without the benefit of secret prisons or Guantánamo, we still could have dealt with him, in America and on American terms. He has been in New York for several months now, and the city is doing all right.

It is also interesting to contrast the discreet exclusion of a single witness because of torture—while the prosecution itself proceeds—with the way both the Bush and Obama Administrations have been able to get entire cases thrown out by invoking the state-secrets privilege. Courts do know how to act surgically, if they are allowed to.

So why does it bother Liz Cheney and others so much that an accused murderer would be tried for his crimes in a real, solid court? Is it simply because it belies the need for fake courts and indefinite detention? (That setup has yielded hardly any completed prosecutions.) Or is
the idea that we have to use military commissions so that no one will know what we did in the years after September 11th? Building a system that, going forward, will undermine the rule of law is no way to deal with the past. Courts can do that, too.

KEYWORDS

• AHMED GHAILANI;

• GUANTANAMO;

• LIZ CHENEY;

• TORTURE

Charles Pierce. Torture, the CIA, and How We Lost Our Herd Immunity. Charles Pierce, Esquire, Reader Supported News, April 8, 2014

Pierce writes: "Herd immunity remains controversial, and not just among the anti-vaccination folks, but the idea seems sound enough to use to describe what's going on now as we stumblingly re-examine the crimes and horrors of what the government did in our name between the years 2001 and 2008."

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The CIA Torture Impunity Challenge


Glaser writes: "The White House and the CIA are currently engaged in an unrelenting battle to cover up the George W. Bush administration’s torture program and to maintain a system of impunity for what are obvious war crimes."

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Senators Go to War Over Torture


Klaidman reports: "The Krass nomination is serving as a proxy battle for one of the most intense and enduring wars between the Senate Intelligence Committee and the CIA in recent
memory: the fate of the committee's massive and, according to sources familiar with it, brutally critical, report on the agency's harsh interrogation program.”


Excerpt: "A dozen years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, it is appalling that official reports about the extent and nature of the rendition, detention and torture that came in their aftermath are still being kept from the American public and even members of Congress."

**READ MORE**
Report: US Military Doctors Complicit in Torture

Experts say health professionals used to design and participate in cruel, inhumane, and degrading torture of military detainees

- Jacob Chamberlain, staff writer

According to a study published this week, doctors and psychologists working for the U.S. Department of Defense and CIA have participated in the physical and psychological torture of suspected terrorists in the post-9/11 era. The report, Ethics Abandoned: Medical Professionalism and Detainee Abuse in the War on Terror, was conducted by the 19-member Task Force on Preserving Medical Professionalism in National Security Detention Centers over a two-year period. The report describes how doctors employed by the DoD and CIA "designed and participated in cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment and torture of detainees," and reveals vast breaches of ethical codes of conduct for health professionals in the name of counterterrorism.

“The American public has a right to know that the covenant with its physicians to follow professional ethical expectations is firm regardless of where they serve,” said Task Force member Dr. Gerald Thomson, Professor of Medicine Emeritus at Columbia University. “It’s clear that in the name of national security the military trumped that covenant, and physicians were transformed into agents of the military and performed acts that were contrary to medical ethics and practice. We have a responsibility to make sure this never happens again.”

According to the group, the ways in which the DoD and CIA have breached medical ethics standards include, but are not limited to:

- Using doctors for abusive interrogation; consulting on conditions of confinement to increase the disorientation and anxiety of detainees;
- Using medical information for interrogation purposes;
• Force-feeding of hunger strikers;
• Implementing rules that permitted medical and psychological information obtained by health professionals to be used in interrogations;
• Requiring physicians and nurses to forgo their independent medical judgment and counseling roles, as well as to force-feed competent detainees engaged in hunger strikes even though this is forbidden by the World Medical Association and the American Medical Association;

The DoD justifies the violations by characterizing health professionals engaged in interrogation as “safety officers,” the report highlights.

“Putting on a uniform does not and should not abrogate the fundamental principles of medical professionalism,” said David Rothman, president of Institute on Medicine as a Profession (IMAP), who was behind the Task Force. “‘Do no harm’ and ‘put patient interest first’ must apply to all physicians regardless of where they practice.”

Highlighted in the report is a condemnation of the controversial use of force-feeding on hunger-striking prisoners in the Guantanamo Bay military prison in Cuba.

The Task Force said force-feeding is a form of torture and ignores human rights rules governing prisoners of war, as outlined in the Geneva Conventions.

“The DoD should prohibit the use of force-feeding… and restore physicians to the proper role of having a true doctor-patient relationship with detainees engaged in hunger strikes. Taking that course not only is consistent with medical ethics and human rights but can prevent the confrontations that have characterized hunger strikes at Guantánamo,” the report states.

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Greetings Dick [from Tom B],

I just finished the new book "The Brothers" about the Dulles brothers.

On page 135, and others also, the program of secret CIA prisons for torture is documented. "He (Alan Dulles) established secret prisons in Germany, Japan, Panama Canal Zone where suspected double agents were subjected to what would later be called ‘enhanced interrogation’."
Too bad those who made their careers profiting from the Military Industrial Complex can't seem to admit to the problems as they are and that they seek to brand reformers as the problem causers.


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**Torture: Religious Ethics and National Security**

By: [John Perry](http://www.amazon.com/John-Perry-Author/dp/0805094970/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1382642566&sr=8-1&keywords=The+Bros)

**NOVALIS PRESS (CN) / 2005**

**Product Information**

- **Format**: Paperback
- **Number of Pages**: 192
- **Vendor**: Novalis Press (CN)
- **Publication Date**: 2005

**Publisher's Description**

Until recently, torture was chiefly associated with foreign juntas or other notorious human rights abusers. In light of the "war on terror" this has changed dramatically. Whether it is the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the policy of "extraordinary rendition" of terror suspects into the hands of overseas interrogators, or questions regarding the authority of the U.S. President to take extreme measures for the sake of national security--suddenly the practice of torture has become a matter of urgent public debate. Reviewing the history and practice of torture, and the arguments used to justify it, Perry takes us into minds of both the torturers and their victims. Ultimately, showing why torture is different from other acts of war, and why it is fundamentally immoral: "not only because it violates the dignity we owe to the human person but also because it directly or indirectly degrades any society that would tolerate it."

[I read a positive rev. in *The Catholic Worker* (June-July 2007): “human rights advocacy from a Roman Catholic perspective”; close analysis of the ‘tragic case of the Canadian Maher]
Lisa Hajjar, Professor of Sociology, University of California-Santa Barbara, has recently published *Torture: A Sociology of Violence*. She is working on legal issues surrounding the prosecution of accused perpetrators of 9/11 and the USS Cole bombing.

Jadaliyya (J): What inspired you to write this book?

Lisa Hajjar (LH): Torture is my great and terrible obsession. I think, read, write, and talk about torture all the time, as anyone who knows me can attest. I was inspired to write this book in order to share my knowledge, my passion, and—to be blunt—my anger about torture with college students, although hopefully people who are not students also will find it interesting. This book, like others in the Routledge series, Framing Twenty-First Century Social Issues, is geared primarily to college classroom teaching; it costs less than ten dollars, is about sixty pages long, has discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and a glossary of key terms and concepts at the back.

Of course everyone who writes books hopes lots of people will read them. But my inspiration for writing this book is partly instrumental: I hope that many students will be assigned Torture in a class, and that reading it will inspire them to contribute to changing the national conversation about torture. The national conversation in the US continues to be dominated by those who propagate falsehoods, like the ludicrous assertion that torture produces “good intelligence,” or that waterboarding is not “torture” if Americans do it, or that some people have no right not to be tortured. I wrote this book in order to arm students with information and analysis so that they might be intellectually empowered to be boldly, aggressively, and unapologetically anti-torture. This book is a cri de couer to the next generation of leaders and voters.

Another inspiration for writing this book was a desire to synthesize my work on law and conflict, violence and human rights in one slim and accessible volume. I boiled down and blended some of the arguments that are dispersed in various scholarly articles and chapters. Among the key questions that I raise and answer in this book are: Why do states torture? Does torture work? Why is the right not to be tortured so uniquely important? Why is torture so prevalent? Why is accountability for torture so important legally and so fraught politically?

J: What particular topics, issues, and literatures does the book address?

LH: This book is not just about US torture in the “war on terror,” although that is how it begins and ends. It includes a history of torture, going back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. The use of violence to elicit statements from suspects or witnesses to crimes in these ancient law-state-society complexes made the practice of torture necessary and legitimate means of enforcing the law and maintaining social order. Starting in the twelfth century, the reliance on
torture to obtain confessions was replicated and expanded in continental Europe. The practice of pre-modern torture was affected by major historical events, like the Black Plague, the Protestant Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and centuries of religious wars, inquisitions, and witch hunting.

The history of torture is also deeply embedded in the socio-political and legal transformations that mark the rise of modernity. Starting in the eighteenth century, torture was abolished from the legal systems in many countries in the sense that it was no longer an acceptable means of law enforcement to elicit confessions. The abolition of torture and its political delegitimization are integral to the emergence of the modern rule of law and limitations on governmental powers, political transformations of state sovereignty to reflect and accommodate demands for national self-determination, and the socio-legal construction of human beings as rights-bearing subjects. The first extract below is drawn from the section of the book that discusses abolition and delegitimization.

Yet despite abolition and delegitimization, torture did not stop. Rather, it went “underground,” so to speak, to become an extra-legal practice, usually conducted in clandestine or otherwise inaccessible settings. The paradox of torture in the modern era is that it is both pervasive and illegal. I explain its twentieth and twenty-first century pervasiveness by anchoring the analysis around two key questions: Why torture? Who is deemed torturable? In answering these questions, I offer a comparative framework that highlights the relationship between regime types (totalitarian, authoritarian, colonial, democratic) and official perceptions and practices of national security. I provide examples drawn from all over the world. The second excerpt below discusses Israeli torture of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

The other side of the paradox, torture’s illegality, opens up a vista onto the relationship among violence, rights, and law. The legal abolition of torture produced the right not to be tortured; this is a negative right, meaning that there is no right to engage in the prohibited practices that
are legally defined as torture. I use the discussion of torture and rights to engage more broadly and comparatively with different kinds of rights, including the creation and development of human rights in the post-World War II era. I also emphasize that torture is a crime, comparable in some ways to other gross crimes in international law: genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In the post-Cold War era, the enforceability of international criminal law has undergone some substantial changes, including the establishment of new institutions and new uses for the doctrine of universal jurisdiction. I link these developments to recent efforts to hold people responsible for torture legally accountable.

In the last part of the book, I discuss the effects of torture on victims, perpetrators, perpetrating institutions, and whole societies where torture is or has been rampant. The third excerpt below locates the consequences of US torture in a broader global and historical perspective.

**J: How does this work connect to your previous research and writing?**

**LH:** The most enduring theme of my scholarship focuses on contestations over “what is legal” in the context of war and other forms of violent political conflict. My first book, *Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza* (University of California Press, 2005), includes extensive research on torture as a multifaceted phenomenon, as well as anti-torture activism and litigation. Since 9/11, much of my work has focused on the US global “war on terror,” especially the government’s interrogation and detention policies. Because US policies in the post-9/11 era either resembled or emulated the Israeli government’s approach to law and conflict, my expertise on Israel/Palestine positioned me to be an early interlocutor and analyst of some of the most contentious issues arising in the context of the “war on terror.” Because the Bush administration strived to “legalize” torture through a radical reinterpretation of international and domestic laws governing the interrogation and detention of prisoners captured in war, litigation emerged as—and remains—the primary strategy for challenging American torture and other issues related to the status and treatment of such prisoners. Anti-torture work in the US has been dominated by lawyers, and cumulatively takes the form of a legal campaign. I am writing a monograph based on my ethnographic study of this anti-torture legal campaign.
I have deep respect and admiration for people who have engaged in the hard and often frustrating work of fighting against the use of torture and pursuing accountability for perpetrators. In the US, theirs has been a rather lonely struggle, in the sense that there has emerged no wider popular support for these causes. On the contrary, according to numerous public opinion polls and social scientific research, popular acceptance of torture is on the rise. By writing this short teaching book, I hope to contribute to changing that fact by raising students’ (and others’) awareness about what is wrong with torture.

Excerpts from Torture: A Sociology of Violence and Human Rights

http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/9480/new-texts-out-now_lisa-hajjar-torture_a-sociology-

GOOGLE SEARCH SEPT. 16, 2012

Scholarly articles for Hajjar, Torture, Sociology of Violence
Does torture work? A sociolegal assessment of the ... - Hajjar - Cited by 5

... torture: law, violence, and political identity - Parry - Cited by 12
Search Results


2. *Torture: A Sociology of Violence* and Human Rights (Framing 21st ...)


4. Lisa Hajjar, author of *"Torture: A Sociology of Violence and Human* ...
This is the most comprehensive, and most comprehensively chilling, study of modern torture yet written. Darius Rejali, one of the world's leading experts on torture, takes the reader from the late nineteenth century to the aftermath of Abu Ghraib, from slavery and the electric chair to electrotorture in American inner cities, and from French and British colonial prison cells and the Spanish-American War to the fields of Vietnam, the wars of the Middle East, and the new democracies of Latin America and Europe.

As Rejali traces the development and application of one torture technique after another in these settings, he reaches startling conclusions. As the twentieth century progressed, he argues, democracies not only tortured, but set the international pace for torture. Dictatorships may have tortured more, and more indiscriminately, but the United States, Britain, and France pioneered and exported techniques that have become the lingua franca of modern torture: methods that leave no marks. Under the watchful eyes of reporters and human rights activists, low-level authorities in the world's oldest democracies were the first to learn that to scar a victim was to advertise iniquity and invite scandal. Long before the CIA even existed, police and soldiers turned instead to "clean" techniques, such as torture by electricity, ice, water, noise, drugs, and stress positions. As democracy and human rights spread after World War II, so too did these methods.

Rejali makes this troubling case in fluid, arresting prose and on the basis of unprecedented research—conducted in multiple languages and on several continents—begun years before most of us had ever heard of Osama bin Laden or Abu Ghraib. The author of a major study of Iranian torture, Rejali also tackles the controversial question of whether torture really works, answering the new apologists for torture point by point. A brave and disturbing book, this is the benchmark against which all future studies of modern torture will be measured.

Review:

"Rejali's approach is to track the different behaviors, trends and traditions in torture throughout history to see who influenced whom and what they did...Rejali, a leading expert
on government interrogation techniques, reaches key conclusions. First, monitoring by
human rights groups doesn't stop torture, it simply causes torturers to resort to techniques
that don't scar...Second, most contemporary torture traditions were passed on like crafts
from teacher to apprentice...Third, Rejali writes, a person being tortured is likely to say
whatever he thinks his captors want to hear, making it one of the poorest methods of
gathering reliable information."--Laurel Maury, Los Angeles Times

"Torture and Democracy immediately lays claim to be the most compendious and the most
rigorous treatment of the subject yet written. Saul Bellow used to say that we are constantly
looking for the book it is necessary to read next. On torture, this is it...Torture and
Democracy is the anatomy of sneaky. Rejali regales us with tales of every technique of
torture known to man...Rejali's analysis of efficacy is exemplary: at once prudent and
trenchant, historically alert and morally sentient."--Alex Danchev, Times Higher
Education

"[A] magisterial study of torture and how it has developed as a social and moral issue with a
focus on developments through the last century."--Scott Horton, Harper's Magazine

More reviews

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● Darius Rejali's Home Page


Author:

Lisa Guenther
Why the living death of solitary confinement is both a form of political and racial violence and an attack on the structure of being itself

In this profoundly important and original book, Lisa Guenther examines the death-in-life experience of solitary confinement in America from the early nineteenth century to today’s supermax prisons. Documenting how solitary confinement undermines prisoners’ sense of identity and their ability to understand the world, Guenther demonstrates the real effects of forcibly isolating a person for weeks, months, or years.

In an unusually vigorous interrogation of philosophy and the social sciences, Lisa Guenther addresses one of humanity’s greatest inhumanities and its perversely long, extensive history in America. Guenther offers a compelling critique of solitary confinement, in the course of which she pushes phenomenology beyond its classical limits, revealing our inherent inter-subjectivity, our need for both interaction and anonymity, and the moral imperative that America end this cruel and barbaric form of punishment. An urgently needed, powerfully argued study of one of the nation’s gravest moral and socio-political failings. Orlando Patterson, Harvard

Steve Coll | Torture and the Bush White House

Coll writes: "C.I.A. memoirs have become a well-populated genre. As with mysteries or science fiction, most entries are at least diverting, as long as you are willing, on occasion, to suspend disbelief."

READ MORE
The Question
by
Henri Alleg

Title: The Question
Author: Henri Alleg
Genre: Non-fiction
Written: 1958 (Eng. 1958)
Length: 107 pages
Original in: French
Availability: The Question - US
The Question - UK
The Question - Canada
La question - France

- French title: *La question*
- Translated by John Calder
- With a new Afterword by the author, translated by David L. Schalk
- With a Foreword by Ellen Ray (2006)
- With a Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (1958)

Our Assessment:

**B+**: disturbing historical document, useful reminder

See our review for fuller assessment.

Review Summaries

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From the Reviews:

- "Henri Alleg's incendiary little book (.....) (S)uccinct and affecting" - David Levi Strauss, Bookforum

- "Written with spare and simple candor, the book is much more than a scalding footnote to fever-hot headlines. The Question does not stop with the Algerian question but goes on to ask: What does it mean to be a human being? It tells of the shame and glory of man." - Time

The complete review's Review:

Henri Alleg's account of being tortured by the French authorities in Algeria in the late 1950s was a landmark book, a bestseller that "has the distinction of being the first book banned in France since the eighteenth century" and was widely translated. The introductory material, including Jean-Paul Sartre's piece, provides much of the background and the circumstances surrounding the Alleg-case, and the story surrounding the book and the man is an interesting one in and of itself.

A Frenchman living in Algeria, Alleg was the publisher of the leftist Alger républicain. He was arrested by the French (though he doesn't mention any specific charge being made against him) and almost immediately subjected to a gruesome series of tortures, in order to get him to talk (about who he worked with and for, and where they can be found). The descriptions of the torture are striking and horrible (and fortunately not too extensive), but an equally strong impression is left by the descriptions of those doing the dirty work. For the most part, it seems they were just trying to push his body to see how much it could take; getting actual information doesn't seem to have been that high a priority (or if it was they sure did a bad job in how they went about trying to break him). When they dope him up on pentothal (to use a different -- and doctor-assisted -- approach) the attempt to get him to talk is almost comic.

It's a ridiculous game, with human beings as the playthings -- and it's completely surreal, as when one of the big paras asks:
"Were you tortured in the Resistance?"
'No; it's the first time,' I replied.
'You've done well,' he said with the air of a connoisseur. 'You're very tough.'

Alleg's book is perhaps most shocking because it shows torture simply as another way of life. Sure, officially the French weren't too proud of it and denied they were doing this, but for all these people it was just business as usual, pointless violence and evil institutionalised. There were some participants who obviously didn't feel comfortable with what they were doing, and showed some sort of mercy to the victims; others were completely merciless.

Sartre sums things up well in his Preface, including the observation:

Appalled, the French are discovering this terrible truth: that if nothing can protect a nation against itself, neither its traditions nor its loyalties nor its laws, and if fifteen years are enough to transform victims into executioners, then its behaviour is not more than a matter of opportunity and occasion. Anybody, at any time, may equally find himself victim or executioner.

He also notes:

Torture is neither civilian nor military, nor is it specifically French: it is a plague infecting our whole era. There are brutes East as well as West.

That was half a century ago, but the plague remains. Indeed, his discussion is just as relevant as ever, the arguments much the same:

How are the torturers justified? It is sometimes said that it is right to torture a man if his confession can save a hundred lives. This is nice hypocrisy.

And:

Arrests are made at random. Every Arab can be 'questioned' at will. The majority of the tortured say nothing because they have nothing to say unless, to avoid torture, they agree to bear false witness or confess to a crime they have not committed.

As the other introductory pieces note, the book is sadly relevant again today, as the United States has joined the list of pathetic nations that employ torture (using, among other things, the creative excuse that what they do isn't torture, at least not the way they define it (never mind that it is according to everybody else's definition ...)).

Alleg's Afterword, from almost five decades after the events, still betrays considerable bitterness, not so much about what was done to him as to how those responsible were protected by the authorities. Remarkably, wholesale condemnation of these practices, past and present, is hard to find, the practise excused as necessity or the torturers excused as just doing their duty -- so, too, now in the United States.

In her Foreword Ellen Ray warns that: "today in the United States we run risk that the public has become anesthetized to what is happening", but it seems
more like there simply isn't that widespread moral outrage that such conduct calls for: far too many citizens buy the administration line that in the 'war against terror' anything goes -- even a little bit of torture (especially when it's done offshore, and mainly to those darker-skinned foreigners ...). Perhaps Alleg's account can help open some eyes to the dehumanizing futility of torture in practise; one can always hope.

Links:

The Question:

- University of Nebraska Press publicity page
- Les Éditions de Minuit publicity page

Reviews:

- Al-Ahram Weekly
- Philippe Nadouce (French)
- Time

La Question - the film:

- IMDb page

About the Author:

Henri Alleg is French journalist who was editor of Alger républicain.

[I also read a positive rev. in The Catholic Worker (June-July 2007. – Dick).]

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Comments: 202-456-6213
Visitor's Office: 202-456-2121

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Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:
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American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Friends Committee for National Legislation (FCNL)

END TORTURE NEWSLETTER #9

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Dick Bennett

Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

jbennet@uark.edu

Blog

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

j.dick.bennett@gmail.com

(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703