

Torture and the An



By Paul Craig Roberts

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TORTURE is a violation of US and international law. Yet, president George W Bush and vice president Dick Cheney, on the basis of legally incompetent memos prepared by Justice Department officials, gave the OK to interrogators to violate US and international law.

The new Obama administration shows no inclination to uphold the rule of law by prosecuting those who abused their offices and broke the law.

Cheney claims, absurdly, that torture was

necessary in order to save American cities from nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists. Many Americans have bought the argument that torture is morally justified in order to make terrorists reveal where ticking nuclear bombs are before they explode.

However, there were no hidden ticking nuclear bombs. Hypothetical scenarios were used to justify torture for other purposes.

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US Representative Ron Paul understands the danger to Americans of permitting government to violate the law. In "Torturing the Rule of Law", he said that the US government's use of torture to produce excuses for illegal actions is the most radicalising force at work today; "The fact that our government engages in evil behavior under the auspices of the American people is what poses the greatest threat to the American people, and it

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regime tortured its captives was to coerce false testimony that linked Iraq and Saddam Hussein to Al Qaeda and September 11. Without this "evidence", the US invasion of Iraq remains a war crime under the Nuremberg standard.

Torture, then, was a second Bush regime crime used to produce an alibi for the illegal and unprovoked US invasion of Iraq.

must not be allowed to stand."

One might think that the American public's toleration of torture reflects the breakdown of the country's Christian faith. Alas, a recent poll released by the Pew Forum reveals that most white Christian evangelicals and white Catholics condone torture. In contrast, only a minority of those who seldom or never attend

Human Rights - USA

American conscience

church services condone torture.

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George Hunsinger, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, has stepped into the Christian void with a powerful book, *Torture is a*

Hunsinger destroys the constructed hypothetical scenarios used to create a moral case for torture. He points out that no such real world cases ever exist. Once torture is normalized, it is used despite the absence of the hypothetical scenario.

Hunsinger notes that "evidence" obtained by torture can have catastrophic consequences. In making the case against Iraq at the UN, former Secretary of State Colin Powell assured the countries of the world that his evidence rested

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Moral Issue. A collection of essays by thoughtful and moral people, including an American admiral and general, the book demonstrates the danger of torture to the human soul, to civil liberty, and to the morale and safety of soldiers.

Condoning torture, Hunsinger writes, "marks a milestone in the disintegration of American democracy". In his contribution,

on "facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence." Today Powell and his chief of staff, Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, are ashamed that the "evidence" for Powell's UN speech

turned out to be nothing but the coerced false confession of Al-Libi, who was relentlessly tortured in Egypt in order to produce a justification for Bush's illegal invasion of Iraq.

Some Americans, unable to face the criminality and inhumanity of their own government, maintain that the government hasn't tortured anyone, because water boarding and other "enhanced interrogation techniques" are not torture. This is really grasping at straws. As Ron Paul points out, according to US precedent alone, water boarding has been considered to be torture since 1945, when the United States hanged Japanese military officers for water boarding captured Americans.

If the Obama regime does not hold the Bush regime accountable for violating US and international law, then the Obama regime is complicit in the Bush regime's crimes. If the American people permit Obama to look the other way in order "to move on", the American people are also complicit in the crimes.

Hunsinger, Paul and others are trying to save our souls, our humanity, our civil liberty and the rule of law. Obama can say that he forbids torture, but if those responsible are not held accountable, he has no way of enforcing his order. As perpetrators are discharged from the military and re-enter society, some will find employment as police officers and prison officials and guards, and the practice will spread. The dark side will take over America. COURTESY COUNTERPUNCH

The writer is a former assistant secretary of the treasury in the Reagan administration