

## **Elect to End Torture: Put Candidates on Record**

The 2008 elections were a watershed moment in the fight to end U.S.-sponsored torture. Anti-torture candidates won races across the country, and an anti-torture President was elected. Soon after taking office, President Obama moved to ban U.S.-sponsored torture by signing an executive order restricting interrogators to the guidelines in the Army Field Manual and providing the International Committee of the Red Cross with access to all detainees.

Since then, however, progress has been stymied. Congress has not passed legislation making permanent the principles of the executive order, and a Commission of Inquiry, which could help end torture forever, has not been created. Worse, public pushback from former Vice-President Cheney and other torture advocates have convinced many Americans that torture is acceptable in some circumstances.

Congress needs to act to permanently prevent the use of torture and a Commission of Inquiry must be established. This will only happen, though, if those who oppose torture make their voices heard in the 2010 elections.

**Please make your voice heard! Show up to campaign events, question candidates about torture, and publicize their responses. Below are some tips on how to do so:**

### Finding a Campaign Event:

- Call candidates' campaign offices and say "I'm eager to have an opportunity to see the candidate in person and hear his/her views on important issues. Can you tell me about any upcoming campaign events that I might be able to attend?"
- Arrange a small delegation (perhaps from your congregation or religious organization) and call candidates' campaigns to ask for a meeting between your delegation and the candidate. Say "I'm so-and-so and I represent a small delegation of people who are part of X faith community. We would like to meet with the candidate to discuss his/her views on torture. Would it be possible to arrange such a meeting?"
- Sign up for campaign email lists to receive alerts about public events.
- Follow the news to learn about upcoming candidate debates and forums. Do some research in advance of the event to learn how questions will be selected, and then submit your question in the designated manner.

### Possible Questions:

- Do you believe that the U.S. should follow the "Golden Rule" while conducting interrogations? Specifically do you believe that the U.S. should only use those interrogation techniques that it would find morally and legally acceptable if used upon a captured U.S. soldier?

- Do you believe that it is ever ethical to use torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment on a detainee?
- Do you believe that the International Committee of the Red Cross should be allowed access to all detainees to ensure that they are not abused?
- Do you believe that the U.S. should work, through the use of foreign aid and other means, to encourage other countries not to torture?
- Do you believe that the use of long-term isolation in U.S. prisons and elsewhere constitutes torture?
- Do you believe that it is ever alright for the U.S. to send a detainee to another country where he or she is likely to be tortured?

#### Tips for Getting the Best Response:

- Arrive at the event early so that you can get a seat in front.
- Be pleasant and polite. It is alright to be a little insistent about getting your question answered – but remember, the story ought to be about the candidate and his or her position on torture – not about you! Avoid getting heated or yelling, even if the candidate does so.
- When recognized, introduce yourself and state that you are a supporter of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture Action Fund.
- If the candidate has previously said or done something good with regard to torture, start by thanking him or her for that step. It is very important to let candidates know that their constituents support them when they do something good!
- Otherwise, try to introduce your question by connecting it to something the candidate has previously said. For example, if the candidate has mentioned terrorism, you might say something like “I believe it is very important to stop terrorism, but as a person of faith I’m concerned about how we do that. I believe that is never ok to use torture. On that subject, I wanted to ask...”

#### Publicizing Your Response:

- Have a friend videotape your interaction. Videotapes can be VERY important in putting candidates on record.
- Tell us what happened! Send a summary of your interaction with the candidate to [nrcatactionfund@gmail.com](mailto:nrcatactionfund@gmail.com)
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the candidates’ response.

**Thank you for your help ending torture this election season!**