



Globalizing Torture. CIA Secret Detention and Extraordinary Rendition, Open Society Justice Initiative, New York 2013, pp 212.

“Today, more than a decade after September 11, there is no doubt that high-ranking Bush administration officials bear responsibility for authorizing human rights violations associated with secret detention and extraordinary rendition, and the impunity that they have enjoyed to date remains a matter of significant concern. But responsibility for these violations does not end with the United States. Secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations, designed to be conducted outside the United States under cover of secrecy, could not have been implemented without the active participation of foreign governments. These governments too must

be held accountable.”

This report provides for the first time the number of known victims of secret detention and extraordinary rendition operations and the number of governments that were complicit. 136 individuals were subjected to maltreatment and severe torture. And 54 countries, which equals 28 per cent of the member states of the United Nations, have taken part in this criminal and unlawful undertaking by the US government and the CIA initiated in the course of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, up until now, the full scale and scope of foreign government participation - as well as the number of victims - remains unknown, largely because of the extreme secrecy maintained by the United States and its partner governments.

Up until now, none of the “Bush warriors” have been brought to justice, not to speak of other heads of states that supported this largest illegal torture program. The list of the countries shows how successful and smoothly the cooperation between democracies and dictatorships can be. This excellent report, edited by the “Open Society Foundation”, a New York-based human rights organization, gives a severe problem an airing that’s unflattering for democracies and should lead, at the end, to massive indictments of many heads of states before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague.

The mastermind behind US president George W. Bush, vice president Dick Cheney, said on September 16, 2001: “We also have to work, through, sort of the dark side, if you will. We’ve got to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussion, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies, if we’re going to be successful. That’s the world these folks operate in, and so it’s going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective.” In this speech, the basis for a highly classified and unlawful program of the CIA was set. As the report shows, there have been single cases of detentions and extraordinary renditions authorized by previous US presidents, but not in this large scale.

The report shows also that torture was not only done by CIA interrogators but also by friendly governments like Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, Saudi-Arabia, Algeria, Albania, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe and others dictatorships. Many Western democracies such as Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, to name a few, were very helpful to give active and logistical support for the secret CIA flight around the world to bring “terror suspects” for a “special treatment” to the dictatorial friends.

By doing that, the US government violated domestic and international law, thereby diminishing its moral standing and eroding support for its counterterrorism efforts worldwide as these abuses came to light. In many countries throughout the Middle East, the US is "highly regarded" for its behavior. The US does not deserve the blame solely, because without the active help of numerous foreign governments these illegal and unlawful operations could not have been carried out. By actively participating in these operations, these governments too violated domestic and international laws and further undermined the norm against torture.

What happened to the victims of these criminal actions? Besides Canada, only Sweden, Australia, and the United Kingdom have issued compensation, the latter two in the context of a confidential settlement. The German torture victim, Khaled al-Masri, took his case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and won. Macedonia, where al-Masri was abducted and transferred to a dungeon in Afghanistan, has to pay compensation for personal suffering.

Although, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence voted to approve a comprehensive report on CIA detention and interrogation, the report is still classified. The United States and most of its partner governments have failed to conduct effective investigations in their illegal actions. From the start of his presidency, Obama was against criminal charges against Bush and his cronies. The country must look forward not backwards, was his answer. The Obama administration did not end extraordinary rendition because it belongs to the history of the United States. In 2009, President Obama did issue an executive order that disavowed torture, ordered the closure of secret CIA detention facilities, and established an interagency task force to review interrogation and transfer policies and issue recommendations on "the practices of transferring individuals to other nations." Due to congressional pressure, he was unable to close the detention camp in Guantanamo Bay.

In a list of recommendations, the report advised not only the US government but also the other governments involved how to solve this dark chapter in order to regain their credibility. Hopefully, this extremely useful report will trigger a new debate about the involvement of governments in the largest torture program that has been ever launched by a US government and their Western democratic allies. Such an open debate distinguishes democracies from dictatorships.

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<http://www.eurasiareview.com/07022013-globalizing-torture-cia-secret-detention-and-extraordinary-rendition-oped/>

<http://between-the-lines-ludwig-watzal.blogspot.de/2013/02/globalizing-torture-cia-secret.html>