



## **Campaign to Ban Torture: American Voices for American Values**

An interview with Douglas A. Johnson, Director of the Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis, and a spokesperson for the Campaign to Ban Torture.

(ON-SCREEN TEXT)

**Douglas A. Johnson, Director  
Center for Victims of Torture  
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DOUG JOHNSON: We've been operating for a long time, we've worked with the United States government when it was one of the major movers and shakers in campaigns to end torture around the world. And to have gone from that action and that moral stature to promoting torture is a real fall, and I'd have to say it was a depressing one for us. It made human rights people, it made clinicians like ours feel very isolated from mainstream culture.

What we have found encouraging was in fact a rising number of voices that initially were a surprise to us. And one of the most surprising were military officers, retired flag officers, generals, and admirals that began to speak out and say, 'this is wrong,' and 'this doesn't work.' We knew it didn't work, but I started hearing interrogators saying 'this is crazy, this is not the way to get effective information' to hear those voices speaking out was encouraging and then also to find evangelical leaders beginning to speak out on this...

So we decided to try and build a campaign with those voices – the voice of the religious community that clearly says to us, that reminds Americans that this is immoral, that this is not us, and those voices of practical experience, people who've been deeply involved in protecting our country and our security throughout their lives telling us that this is exactly the wrong way to do it. And we think that this is a very powerful set of voices that the American people have to pay attention to, even if the administration doesn't, though it should, and that's when we decided to launch the campaign based on key principles that each of these communities agreed to, and that should be the basis for an executive order for the new president...

On the question of how we repair the damage of interrogation, we think that needs to be based on certain fundamental, widely held principles of the American people, and that would be approved by the international community. Those principles are these. First of all, whatever we do in interrogation should be based on the Golden Rule. Now, that sounds soppy, perhaps, but it's a really interesting part of the U.S. Army Field Manual on interrogation which was written by professional interrogators to train in very intensive ways some of our very best interrogators throughout the government, and that's in the Army, whose job it was to find information quickly on the battlefield while time was of the essence.

And one of the things the field manual says as guidance to its interrogators is this. If you're in doubt about what you're doing and whether or not it's legal and approved, think of this. If you would not want this happening to an American soldier or an American citizen, don't do it...

The second issue is to have one national standard; not multiple standards, but one standard that affects all of the government. We've seen that the confusion that was created intentionally or not by the policies of the Bush Administration, filtered from the CIA to the Army back and forth, and having two different standards is untenable for the long-term. Whatever the lowest standard is will be the U.S. standard and policy in the way the world views us, so there needs to be one standard...

The third issue is a fundamental understanding and agreement to abide by the rule of law, both our own law and the laws that we have been the fundamental engine behind creating on international law. And that if we have a strength, a moral strength in the world, it is viewed—it's our claim to a rule of law and of building a rule of law that both protects us and gives us moral strength around the world.

And, finally, there needs to be clarity and accountability. So, there is going to be a debate in this country about whether or not we prosecute everyone who's been involved in torture and how far up the chain we go. And that's going to be a very important debate. But what the next President needs to say from the outset is that from this point forward, let there be no confusion. That anybody who violates these norms, who violates the law, will be prosecuted and will pay the consequence. They will be accountable.

Military people have argued that it's been the confusion of this set of accountability which has allowed the chaos of war to bring people into doing what's despicable, that they need clarity and an important role of the President, of the Commander in Chief, is to establish that clarity and that accountability on these values. So, however the debate continues and however our systems respond to the accountability of those now engaged in this conduct, the President has to clarify that no more will be tolerated.

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