



Fédération internationale de l'Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la Torture
International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture
Federación Internacional de la Acción de los Cristianos para la Abolición de la Tortura

[Press release] **The revival of torture? The United States of America threatens to regress**

Washington – Paris, 3 February 2017 - FIACAT and its network rally to denounce the new American President's remarks in favour of the use of torture.

"...if nothing can protect a nation against itself, neither its traditions nor its loyalties nor its laws, and if 15 years are enough to transform victims into executioners, then its behavior is no more than a matter of opportunity and occasion. Anybody, at any time, may equally find himself victim or executioner."

Jean-Paul SARTRE, "Une victoire", afterword to *La Question* by Henri ALLEG, Lausanne, La Cité, 1958

In his first interview after becoming President of the United States on 25 January 2017, on the ABC television channel, Donald Trump repeated that he supported the use of torture, considering that acts such as water boarding were effective: "*Absolutely I feel it works*".

These words echo his campaign statements. He had said he was prepared to bring back waterboarding and "*a hell of a lot worse*" if elected.

The use of such techniques, which experience has shown to be ineffective, directly flouts various commitments the United States has made at regional and international levels, primarily the United Nations Convention against torture, which it ratified in 1994. Over and above these commitments, the ban on torture rests on *jus cogens*, the peremptory norms of international law. No derogation from these norms is permitted and they are thus binding on every State regardless of whether a treaty has been ratified or not.

Despite Mr Trump's words, it will fortunately be difficult, as the Republican Senator John McCain has stated, for torture to be reintroduced in practice in the United States, owing to the clear position of American law on this subject. Hence the new President's proposal will most likely encounter strong opposition from the Senate and the American Congress. It would also seem that it does not meet with the approval of the new CIA Director, Mike Pompeo, who recently spoke out against the use of torture.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur against torture, Mr Nils Melzer, has already responded to these statements, calling on the American government to respect the norms established in the United States. However, public opinion must remain on the alert and make it quite clear that it will fight tooth and nail against this incipient backsliding.

FIACAT and the ACATs, whose members are Christians of all faiths, condemn torture as an indefensible attack on personal dignity which degrades the person who has recourse to it. They refer to the emphatic condemnation of all forms of torture voiced by Pope Francis, who urged Christians to fight against what he termed a "serious sin". They would also draw attention to the major campaign being directed by evangelical American protestants at the authorities in their

La FIACAT est une organisation internationale non gouvernementale de défense des droits de l'homme qui lutte pour l'abolition de la torture et de la peine de mort

country to prevent a revival of torture, which they consider incompatible with Christian convictions about the sanctity of human life¹.

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”

Matthew 25,40

FIACAT and the ACAT network thus strongly condemn the words of the President of the United States Donald Trump and call on the Federal government, military and civil officials and the elected representatives of the American population to oppose the reinstatement of torture.

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¹ Christian Post, Torture is a denial of Jesus, available on <http://www.christianpost.com/news/torture-is-a-denial-of-jesus-173309/>