



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Rights Groups: New Administration Abuses ‘National Security’ Defense
Refusal to Disclose Repeats Bush Tactics and Furthers Injustice

September 18, 2009, New York and Washington DC—In response to the CIA’s refusal to confirm or deny the existence of torture documents, three human rights groups called on President Obama to hold true to his promise of a new and transparent era.

A statement by Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), and the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHR&GJ) at NYU School of Law came in response to news that in its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) litigation, the government refused to acknowledge the existence of the following documents:

- Cables discussing use of sleep deprivation and the slap, ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ referred to in the Office of Legal Counsel Bybee and Bradbury memos on Abu Zubaydah and Khalid Sheikh Mohamed; and,
- Documentation from the U.S. government to the Yemeni government concerning CIA secret prisoners Mohamed Bashmilah and Salah Nasser Salim Ali.

Jayne Huckerby, Research Director, CHR&GJ, on behalf of the groups:

“As the public record on the U.S. secret detention program continues to grow, the government’s persistent secrecy becomes more inexcusable by the day. The Obama Administration should provide the countless individuals who were disappeared—including CHR&GJ’s client Mohamed Bashmilah—with the basic dignity they have long been denied, starting with an acknowledgment that the U.S. abducted and imprisoned them secretly, without explanation, and without any recourse to justice.”

Background

AIUSA, CCR, and CHR&GJ have filed FOIA requests with several U.S. government agencies, including the CIA. They filed the lawsuit in June of 2007. Morrison & Foerster

LLP serves as co-counsel in the case. The FOIA litigation seeks information about individuals who are—or have been—held by the U.S. government or detained with U.S. involvement, as part of the government’s ghost detention, rendition, and coercive interrogation program. The requests also seek information about the government’s legal justifications for its secret detention and extraordinary rendition programs.

Comprehensive information about the identities and locations of prisoners in CIA custody—as well as the conditions of their detention and the specific interrogation methods used against them—has never been publicly revealed. The rights groups charge that this lack of transparency continues to prevent scrutiny by the public and the courts, leaving detainees vulnerable to abuse and torture.

For more information or copies of legal filings in the case and released documents, please contact jnessel@ccrjustice.org, opgehaffen@juris.law.nyu.edu, or ssingh@aiusa.org,

For more information about the organizations involved, please see their websites: www.ccrjustice.org, www.chrgj.org, and www.amnestyusa.org.

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