



SÄNDNINGSDATUM: 2008-11-19
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ENGELSKAI
ARBETSBLAD
PROGRAMNR: 101023/ra3

School of Human Rights

Torture

UN Declaration of Human Rights

Article 5:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Lead-in

We hear so much about torture nowadays: Guantánamo. Torture is often seen as a “means to an end”. What is meant by this?

Whilst Listening

1. What do we find out about torture in Zelim's story?
2. What do Amnesty International and the International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims estimate to be the extent of torture in the world today?
3. Although the declaration states “no torture”, what is the situation with the US “war on terror”? What does Professor Alan Dershowitz argue?
4. What does Tomas Hammarberg argue?
5. What was Craig Murray's job and why was he sacked?
6. How has the image of the torturer changed since 9/11?



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Discussion

I was once [during the Vietnam War] physically coerced to provide my enemies with the names of the members of my flight squadron. I did not refuse, or repeat my insistence that I was required under the Geneva Conventions to provide my captors only with my name, rank and serial number. Instead, I gave them the names of the Green Bay Packers' offensive line, knowing that providing them false information was sufficient to suspend the abuse. It seems probable to me that the terrorists we interrogate under less than humane standards of treatment are also likely to resort to deceptive answers that are perhaps less provably false than that which I once offered.

Senator John McCain (Republican, Arizona): "Torture's Terrible Toll," Newsweek, 21 Nov 05.

Question:

What potential problem does McCain see in using torture to elicit information?
Is torture ever justified as a means to an end? Why? Why not?

Activity

Working in small groups, using Zelim's story of torture in Chechnya, discuss the articles of the UNDHR this has violated and write a letter to the Ministry of Justice or an open letter to the newspaper.

Alternatively

Visit <http://www.amnesty.org/> which has news and updates of the latest in political human rights issues. Discuss the issue in groups and identify the human rights abuses and write a letter to the Ministry of Justice or an open letter to the newspaper.

See also The Wire magazine <http://www.amnesty.org/en/stay-informed/enewsletters/the-wire>

Debate

A class debate on the following subject. "Resolved, that governments should permit torture of selected high-level prisoners to obtain vital information about terrorist activities."

Next time: U.N.D.H.R. article eighteen