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Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

Groups Press White House on Review of Senate Intel Report

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Civil liberties and human rights organizations are urging President Obama to take personal responsibility for the administration's response to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence study of the CIA's treatment of detainees after September 11.

In a May 6 letter, the groups told the president that "your administration has a responsibility to ensure that the Executive Branch response to the study is not driven by individuals who might be implicated in the CIA's use of torture."

"We are deeply troubled by reports from Senators and the press that the CIA is planning an 'aggressive' response to the Senate report, and that agency personnel have disregarded multiple requests to meet with the committee's staff," said Virginia Sloan, president of The Constitution Project, one of the groups signing the letter.

The groups said other agencies -- including the FBI, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence -- should be involved in reviewing the report, and suggested the president designate a senior White House official to coordinate a single executive branch response.

In a report released last month, The Constitution Project's bipartisan independent Task Force on Detainee Treatment found that the "high level of secrecy surrounding the rendition and torture of detainees since September 11 cannot continue to be justified on the basis of national security," and unanimously recommended the public release of the Senate Intelligence committee's report.

"We hope the White House gives the Senate report a fair and thorough response, and works towards its prompt declassification," Sloan said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee report is based on the three-year long review of millions of pages of classified documents. The committee's chair, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-

CA), called the roughly 6,000-page report "the most definitive review of this CIA program to be conducted." The committee adopted the report at a closed-door meeting last December, and asked the executive branch to submit its response by February 15. The executive branch has given no indication of when its response might be forthcoming.

In addition to The Constitution Project, other groups joining in the letter include: American Civil Liberties Union, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, National Religious Campaign Against Torture, Open Society Policy Center, Physicians for Human Rights, and The Center for Victims of Torture.

The Task Force on Detainee Treatment's full report is available at www.detaineetaskforce.org.

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About The Constitution Project
Created out of the belief that we must cast aside the labels that divide us in order to keep our democracy strong, The Constitution Project (TCP) brings together policy experts and legal practitioners from across the political spectrum to foster consensus-based solutions to the most difficult constitutional challenges of our time. TCP seeks to reform the nation's broken criminal justice system and to strengthen the rule of law through scholarship, advocacy, policy reform and public education initiatives. Established in 1997, TCP is based in Washington, D.C.