

June 26, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC, 20500

Dear President Obama:

As advocates for a more open government, we write to urge you to declassify the CIA's post 9/11 detention and interrogation program, and to support a Senate Intelligence Committee vote to release to the public its comprehensive report based on a nearly four year investigation into that program (the "SSCI report"). The public needs access to the facts about the CIA's post 9/11 detention and interrogation practices in order to engage in informed and meaningful discussion and to effectively evaluate the actions of its government.

When you entered office, you committed to "creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government." In your January 2009 Memorandum to heads of executive departments and agencies, you said: "We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government."

We appreciate your commitment to open government as well as your recent efforts to make U.S. counterterrorism policy more transparent, including your May 23, 2013 speech at the National Defense University. You acknowledged during that speech that the United States engaged in torture, and that in doing so we compromised our basic values. Yet some continue to justify torture by claiming that it saved lives. Members of the Senate Intelligence Committee familiar with the SSCI report insist that claim is false. But because the evidence itself remains classified, public debate on this solemn issue revolves largely around popular fiction like the movie *Zero Dark Thirty* and the television show *24*. That is no way for a democracy to function.

More than a decade after September 11, and almost four and a half years since you shuttered the CIA detention facilities, the official secrecy surrounding the CIA's detention and interrogation program cannot be justified on the basis of national security. A Senate Armed Services Committee report examining the military's treatment of detainees in U.S. custody was made public years ago, and a great deal has been reported in open sources about the CIA's "black sites."

The public deserves to know the full scope and scale of what was done in its name and to decide for itself whether claims about torture's efficacy stand up in light of the actual facts. We recognize that it may be necessary to continue to protect certain discrete items of operational information that retain their sensitivity. But that can be accomplished through minimal redaction of relevant documents and does not justify ongoing classification of the program writ large. By declassifying the CIA program and supporting a Committee vote to release the SSCI report, you can empower the public and take a substantial step towards fulfilling your vision of unparalleled open government. We strongly urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC)
The Brennan Center for Justice
Californians Aware
Center for Effective Government
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Essential Information
Federation of American Scientists
Friends Committee on National Legislation
The Fund for Constitutional Government
The Government Accountability Project
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Security Archive
No More Guantánamos
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project on Government Oversight (POGO)
September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Society of American Archivists
The Constitution Project