

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - March 25, 2014

Contact: Larry Akey, Director of Communications, (202)580-6922 [o] or (202)580-9313 [c], lakey@constitutionproject.org

The Constitution Project Says White House Must Lead Declassification of Torture Report

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Citing the CIA's inherent conflict of interest, The Constitution Project has joined an alliance of civil liberties and human rights groups in telling President Obama that it is "imperative" that White House staff take the lead in declassifying the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on the agency's detention and interrogation of suspected terrorists in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001.

In a [letter](#) delivered to the White House yesterday, the groups cited a recent pledge by President Obama that he is "absolutely committed to declassifying" the Senate report "so that the American people can understand what happened in the past, and that can help guide us as we move forward."

The groups wrote that the committee's more than 6,000-page report "apparently documents that the CIA repeatedly lied to Congress, the Justice Department and the White House. It seems obviously inappropriate to permit the agency assessed in the report to decide what parts of it your Administration believes the American people should see."

To highlight the agency's conflict of interest, the letter cited blistering allegations by the committee's chair, Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), that the CIA had secretly searched computers made available to the committee, deleted files from them and triggered potential criminal proceedings against congressional staff. The CIA has denied the allegations.

Organizations joining The Constitution Project, a bipartisan legal watchdog group, in signing the letter are the ACLU, Amnesty International USA, the Center for Victims of Torture, Human Rights First, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, the Open Society Policy Center and Physicians for Human Rights.

The committee adopted the report, which is based on the review of millions of pages of classified documents, on a bipartisan vote in December, 2012. Although the report remains classified, [sources familiar](#) with it have said that it concludes that the CIA's interrogation program was brutal, unnecessary and ineffective.

Feinstein [called the report](#) "one of the most significant oversight efforts in the history of the United States Senate." She has indicated she wants the committee to vote on declassification by the end of March.

The Constitution Project is part of a large and growing [chorus of supporters](#) for declassifying the Senate report to the fullest extent possible and making it available to the public.

TCP's support for declassification and release of the report is based on the [recommendations](#) of its Task Force on Detainee Treatment, a bipartisan group of experts that concluded that the U.S. government had engaged in torture of terrorism suspects and that the nation's then-most senior officials bear responsibility for those abuses. The Task Force further found that "[t]he 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 recommended declassification of the SSCI report among other information.

#

[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.