

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

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Obama Must Step Up on CIA Torture Report, Groups Say

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A coalition of civil liberties, human rights and open government groups joined The Constitution Project in urging President Obama to intercede in the dispute over declassification of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee's report on the CIA's detention and treatment of suspected terrorists after 9/11. In a [letter](#) to the White House released earlier today, the groups called on the president to reconsider redactions to the report proposed by his administration.

Noting Obama's [professed desire](#) to give the American public the information it needs to understand what was done in its name, the groups wrote that this cannot happen if the redactions to the report "conceal the truth and render the account impossible to understand."

The groups urged the president to limit redactions to those required to protect current, legitimate intelligence sources and methods. "In this case, the clear impression is that they have been used strategically to obscure the truth," the letter said.

At issue are the administration's proposed deletions from the report's executive summary. Intelligence Committee chair, Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), [said](#) that redacting the material the CIA wants to keep classified would "eliminate or obscure key facts that support the report's findings and conclusions."

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper [claimed](#) that more than 85 percent of the executive summary has been approved by the administration for declassification, and more than half the proposed redactions are in footnotes. But as committee member Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) [pointed out](#), "Try reading a novel with 15 percent of the words blacked out - it can't be done properly." In addition, [according to](#) Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.), the redactions include "information that has already been publicly disclosed in the [SASC] report on detainee abuse that was reviewed by the administration and authorized for release in 2009."

On April 3, the committee voted 11-3 to authorize release of the executive summary, findings, conclusions and dissenting views of its more than 6,000 page report on the CIA's post-9/11 rendition, detention and interrogation program. Those who have read the report say it documents abuse that was far more brutal and widespread than commonly understood, and that the CIA misled the Justice Department and Congress about the program's safety, efficacy and necessity -- findings

that mirror those contained in an April, 2013 [report](#) from TCP's bipartisan, blue-ribbon Task Force on Detainee Treatment.

Among those joining TCP in signing the letter are the ACLU, the Center for Victims of Torture, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. Last spring, many of the same organizations [called on](#) the president to take the lead in declassifying the report, expressing concern that the CIA would use the declassification process to continue hiding embarrassing information.

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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.