

Islam Condemns Torture

Torture in Islam is considered a major violation to the fundamental rights of someone or of some living being. It occurs when unduly pain or suffering is inflicted upon a living creature; a creation of Allah Almighty. Muslims know that every act of aggression done to others, no matter how small or how large, will be questioned on the Day of Judgment. It is because of this thorough questioning in the court of justice of Allah Almighty on this day that a Muslim should avoid harm and injury to others lest he brings himself to total ruin.

The Messenger of Allah Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"Do you know who is the one who is bankrupt?" They said, "The bankrupt is the one who has no money and no possessions." He said, "Among my Ummah (nation), the one who is bankrupt is the one who will come on the Day of Resurrection with prayer and fasting and Zakaah (to his credit), but he will come having insulted this one, slandered that one, consumed the wealth of this one and shed the blood of that one, and beaten that one. So they will all be given some of his good deeds, and when his good deeds run out, before judgment is passed, some of their sins will be taken and cast onto him, then he will be cast into the Fire." (Muslim)

The United Nations has defined torture as:

"Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind."

While this definition seems more specific to human beings, Islam has condemned all forms of torture even against animals and other living creatures.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent as "Rahmatul-il Aalameen" or as a mercy for all that exists. No situation passed by in which mercy was deprived except that he would address it.

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Once he passed by a man who had his sheep on the ground and was sharpening his knife in preparation for slaughter. He rebuked: "Do you want to kill it twice?! Wouldn't it be not more appropriate if you sharpened your blade before laying the sheep down!"

If he (Prophet [peace be upon him]) ever saw any animal over-loaded or ill-fed he would pull up the owner and say, "Fear Allah in your treatment of animals!"

Ibaadallah (Servants of Allah)! If these are the consequences for animals, how about human beings whom Allah has honored? Human beings are considered as being the most exalted of all creation as Allah says in the Quran:

"And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam... and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with [definite] preference." (Qur'an 17:70)

But despite the countless number of international agreements prohibiting torture, we still witness the endless cycle of torture of human beings whether it is done by individuals, organizations or by nations. Today, torture is given new names, such as, rendition or enhanced interrogation technique, whereby someone is captured and often taken to foreign places to be tortured for information.

It is time that we stand up for what is right and just and call on the international community to be upholders of justice. Allah commands:

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness." (Qur'an 5:8)

For this very reason, the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) was exceptionally kind in dealing with his most bitter of enemies. In the Battle of Badr, which he won, there were many prisoners of war. He took care of their needs, provided them with food and water.

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If the Muslims capture their enemies, they should not harm them or torture them with beatings, depriving them of food and water, leaving them out in the sun or the cold, burning them with fire, or putting covers over their mouths, ears and eyes and putting them in cages like animals. Rather, they should treat them with kindness and mercy, and feed them well.

In the Quran, Allaah commends the righteous saying:

"And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [Saying], 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.'" (Qur'an 76:8-9)

Ibn 'Abbaas, one of the Prophet's companions, said: *"In those days, their prisoners were mushnkeen (idol worshippers); on the day of Badr, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) commanded them to be kind to their prisoners, so they [Muslim soldiers] used to put the prisoners before themselves when it came to food."*

On the other hand, the Romans and those who came before them of the Assyrians and Pharaohs, all used to put out their prisoners' eyes with hot irons, and whip them, feeding them to dogs or hungry lions, such that the prisoners preferred death over life. All these are totally forbidden in Islam.

Even in Islamic law, a person cannot be tortured into confession. Such confession is not valid in Islam and if he gives any information under duress, then the information extracted cannot be used against him.

Torture, oppression and aggression are all strictly prohibited as we are told in a Hadith Qudsi in which the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said that Allah Says: *"O My servants! I have forbidden dhulm (oppression, aggression) for Myself, and I have made it forbidden among you, so do not oppress one another."*

How to free ourselves from committing oppression:

- 1 - Prevent it by avoiding it at all costs.
- 2 - Seek forgiveness from those you have wronged.
- 3 - Beware of the Divine court of justice in the afterlife.
- 4 - Realize that the supplication of the oppressed is answered by Allah immediately.

About ICNA

The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) is a leading American Muslim organization dedicated to the betterment of society through the application of Islamic values. Since 1966, ICNA has worked to build relations between communities by devoting itself to education, outreach, social services and relief efforts.

In the past decade, ICNA has expanded its reach across the US while maintaining an active presence in local communities. The ICNA Council for Social Justice, a branch of ICNA dedicated to representing the Muslim voice on matters of social justice was formed in 2009. ICNA has worked to establish connections between Islam and the public, collaborating with numerous Muslim organizations to reach this end. ICNA also works closely with many national interfaith organizations for the betterment of society. By focusing on self-development, education, outreach and social services, ICNA has cemented its place as a leading grassroots organization in the American Muslim community.

About ICNA CSJ

ICNA Council for Social Justice (CSJ) is a social justice/human rights organization that strives to systematically facilitate assertive Muslim involvement in the field of human struggle for the rights of the poor and oppressed in the United States. Established by the Islamic Circle of North America, CSJ enters the social justice/human rights arena in America to cooperate with existing social justice efforts, and organize new initiatives when appropriate, to eliminate barriers to full citizenship rights and privileges, work to restore civil liberties required for a democratic society, and raise public awareness and work to remove the gross inequities of the US criminal justice system.



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ICNA COUNCIL FOR
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