

ETHICAL ACTION RESOLUTION

Approved by membership on 8/24/2008

Preamble:

In April of 2008 at the annual assembly the American Ethical Union adopted a *Statement Reaffirming Its Opposition to Torture*, calling upon our government to immediately stop the practice of torture everywhere, to honor human rights everywhere, and to atone for any actions taken contrary to these principles.

In this same year, Rep. Paul Luebke and Rep. Linda Coleman introduced a bill in the North Carolina legislature to make the offenses of torture and enforced disappearance felonies. This anti-torture bill is the first in the nation and could be used as a basis to investigate acts of extreme rendition alleged to have originated in the state.

Resolution:

Resolution in Opposition to Torture

The North Carolina Society for Ethical Culture, acting on our belief in the worth of every human being and in the highest ethical values, condemns the use of torture and finds it a violation of basic human rights.

We endorse the statement of the American Ethical Union passed in April of 2008, *Statement Reaffirming Its Opposition to Torture* (see below).

We support the bill introduced in the North Carolina legislature, *North Carolina No Place for Torture Act*, (see below) which makes torture and enforced disappearance felonies.

We pledge to take an active role in ending these condemned practices by using our meetings as a forum for discussion of these issues to educate ourselves and the community, and through individual actions of protest and contacts with legislators.

STOP TORTURE BILL

H 2417, Crimes of Torture and Enforced Disappearance, would create state criminal laws covering these two acts. Torture would be defined to include the intentional infliction of serious physical or mental pain or suffering, by or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official, in order to obtain a confession or punish or intimidate. Enforced disappearance is defined as the arrest, detention, or abduction of a person by or with the authorization of a state or a political organization, followed by a refusal to either acknowledge the deprivation or give information about the person's fate or whereabouts, with the intention of depriving the detainee of due process of law. The bill would give the state jurisdiction not only if the crimes were actually committed in NC, but also if 1) a person commits an act in NC that is in furtherance of a conspiracy to commit the actual offense outside NC, or 2) if a person enters into a conspiracy to commit one of the offenses in NC, even if the conspiracy was created elsewhere. *Introduced by Reps. Luebke, Harrison, Coleman, Jones; referred to House Judiciary I Comm*

Statement Reaffirming Its Opposition to Torture*

Adopted by the 93rd Assembly of the AEU
Austin, Texas, April 2008

WHEREAS: Respect and reverence for human dignity is the foremost principle of Ethical Culture, and the use of torture is the most heinous violation of human dignity, and

WHEREAS: The American Ethical Union remains absolutely and unalterably opposed to the employment of torture by the military, intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies, or other actors public or private, and

WHEREAS: The employment of torture in direct and willful violation of the United Nations Convention on Torture has become a component of American policy in its "War on terror,"

THEREFORE: The American Ethical Union calls upon the Congress and President of the United States:

- To immediately and unconditionally cease the practice of torture everywhere, including the transfer of prisoners to other jurisdictions where torture may be employed, and
- To allow unfettered access and inspection of any and all sites and facilities, and
- To avow without reservation to abide by its international agreements and honor the highest standards of human rights, and
- To openly recognize and apologize for all transgressions, to allow for due process, and, whenever and wherever possible, to make restitution to their victims.

FURTHERMORE: We call upon the Leaders and members of The American Ethical Union to inspire and advocate for the end of present American policy and the "torture debate" through Sunday addresses in accord with the National Leaders' Council Paper in Support of the Resolution Against Torture.

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* UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE (Article 1) The term "torture" means 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, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

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