

June 26: United Nations International Day in Support of Torture Victims and Survivors

CALL TO PRAYER: *(Play instrumental music in the background.)*

Leader Let us form a circle so that together we may bless the space where we gather. This circle represents the world, the connectedness of all peoples, men, and women, young and old, of all faiths, nationalities, and histories. The circle also represents time and the connectedness of the past, present, and future. Here in this space, we remember the universal sin of torture in our world. We remember those who did not survive their torture and those who survived the horrors of that experience. We also remember the agents of torture, those who masterminded and authorized torture programs in the United States and around the world. Finally, we send healing energy to those who are now detained and suffering torture. We remember all families and communities whose lives have been affected by this terror.

(Leader offers a spontaneous blessing of the circle.)

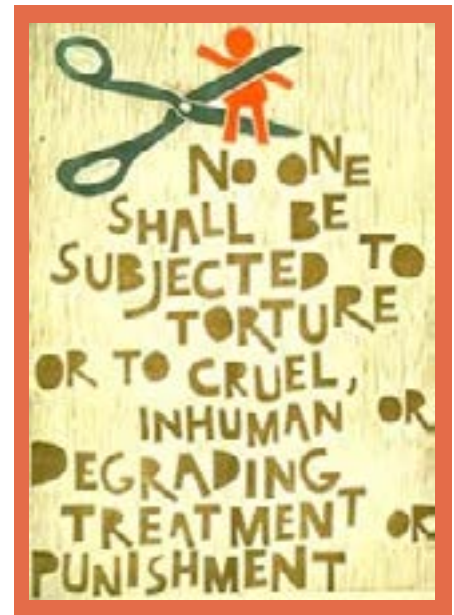
Reader 1: (Words from a torture survivor) “We who have been tortured know well what our sisters and brothers who are being subjected to torture are now suffering. We know of their physical pain, abandonment and isolation, their fear, and at times absolute terror. We know of their despair and their desire to die, to end the horror once and for all. And if death does happen, because even if one survives, something inside the survivor dies. After torture we are never the same again.”

Leader: Let us pause for a moment to think of people undergoing torture at this very moment. Think of someone who either did not survive his or her experience or did survive only to live with the horrors of torture. Add this time, you are invited to share the person’s name. Let us also share our healing thoughts with their families and communities, because torture targets not only the individual but traumatizes those they love, those they work with, and the entire society that surrounds them.

Reader 2: The practice of torture is, tragically, an everyday occurrence. Amnesty International’s Report 2014/15: The State of the World’s Human Rights together with the U.S State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 confirm that more than 100 governments in the world engage in systematic torture and ill-treatment. These acts include: electric shock, water-boarding and other forms of asphyxiation, short-shackling and so-called “stress positions,” sexual torture, enforced disappearances, massacres, long-term interrogation (including sleep, food, and water deprivation), solitary confinement, beatings, burnings, caning, excessive force by security forces, harsh prison conditions, and rendition.

LITANY OF STATES WHOSE GOVERNMENTS PRACTICE TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Leader: Now, we will remember our sisters and brothers who are subjected to torture around the world. Our communal response will be: *“We remember you. We call out your name.”*



PRAYER SERVICE

Reader 1: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, and Argentina, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 2: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Armenia, Australia, Austria, and Azerbaijan, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 3: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, and Belarus, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 4: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Benin, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, and Brunei Darussalam, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 5: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, and Canada, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 6: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, and China, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 7: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, and Cuba, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 8: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Dominica, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 9: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, and El Salvador, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 10: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Fiji, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*



PRAYER SERVICE

Reader 1: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, and Guatemala, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 2: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Greece, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, and Honduras, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 3: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, and Iraq, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 4: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Ireland, Israel and Occupied Territories, and Italy, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 5: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, and Kenya we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 6: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, and Kurdistan, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 7: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, and Libya, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 8: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Lithuania, Macedonia, Malaysia, and Maldives we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 9: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in the Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, and Moldova, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 10: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Mongolia, Morocco (Western Sahara), Montenegro, and Mozambique, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*



PRAYER SERVICE

Reader 1: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, and the Netherlands, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 2: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, and Panama, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 3: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, and the Philippines, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 4: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Poland, Portugal, Qatar, and Republic of Korea we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 5: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in the Republic of Serbia (including Kosovo), Romania, Russian Federation, and Rwanda, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 6: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, and Singapore, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 7: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Slovakia, Somalia, South Africa, and South Sudan, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 8: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Spain, Sri Lanka, and Sudan, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 9: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Syria, Taiwan, Tajikistan, and Tanzania, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 10: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Togo, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*



PRAYER SERVICE

Reader 1: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, and Turkmenistan, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 2: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Uganda, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 3: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 4: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, and Venezuela, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 5: For our brothers and sisters being tortured or ill-treated in Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, we pray:

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Reader 6: For our brothers and sisters being tortured, known as ghost detainees, those who are rendered to governments who torture.

Response: *We remember you. We call out your name.*

Sources:

- Amnesty International Report 2014/15: *The State of the World's Human Rights*, <http://bit.ly/1JdjK8q>
- U.S. State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013*, <http://1.usa.gov/18BOn4u>

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: *(Leader invites participants to pause for silent and/or shared reflection.)*

1. In what ways is torture a violation of Catholic Social Thought which is based on the dignity of the human person?
2. The *Washington Post* and ABC News¹ conducted a poll in December 2014, and found that a majority of Americans think the U.S. harsh interrogation techniques used on terrorism suspects were justified. Do you agree? Why or why not? What are the reasons governments give to justify torture?
3. The U.S. Senate Committee's stunning *Report on the C.I.A.'s Use of Torture*² details the brutal post-9/11 interrogation tactics used by the agency. If torture is a crime against humanity, why are the alleged perpetrators not held accountable?
4. How does your faith call you to respond to the practice of torture in today's world? How can you offer support to the survivor community?



PRAYER SERVICE

"I have chosen to struggle against the despair,
to fight against the hopelessness,
and to break through the walls of silence.
I join with other survivors in saying to the world,
'What happened to us
must never happen to you or your children.'
We must do more than just say the words.
We must work to rid our world of torture."
- Torture Survivor



Closing Prayer:

Liberator from Injustice, you call us to become a people of conscience.
As a people of conscience give us the courage to ask:
How much longer will we stand by and bear witness to the justification of torture?

How much longer will we accept the lies
And betrayals of yesterday's and today's leaders?

How much longer will we watch the dignity
Of our sisters and brothers be crushed beneath
The torturers' boots with the complicity of our government?

In the ages of history yet to be written, where will our names fall?
With those who chose to stand on the sidelines and absent themselves from the struggle?
Or with those who take action against this great wrong
No matter the cost to themselves?

Liberator from Injustice, you call us to be a people of action.
As a people of action, we turn to you for moral guidance and daring strength.

May we grow in our recognition of our responsibility to labor for the worldwide abolition of torture.

May we grow in our readiness to denounce our government's involvement
In torture and call for full disclosure of what it has committed in our name.

May we grow in our compassion for the tortured
As they seek to restore their dignity and trust in humanity.
May we grow in our understanding that those who torture are also in need of healing.
Oh, God, may we become vessels of conscience and action,
Carrying the promise of a better tomorrow. Amen.

Endnotes

- 1 Majority says CIA harsh interrogations justified: <http://wapo.st/1sCJPul>
- 2 U.S State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013*: <http://1.usa.gov/18BOn4u>

Contact TASSC International to join survivors in working for the abolition of torture: <http://www.tassc.org>



Center of
Concern