

Take a good look at my face!

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international / human rights / commentary

Propaganda has largely replaced news in the modern world; this is particularly the case with regimes that flout law, civil liberties and humanitarian issues. Occasionally the news cannot be manipulated contorted or dressed in fine lies to make it palatable. This is the case with torture.

There is not a lot journalists can 'do' with torture except of course emphatically condemn it; however, right-wing propagandists continue to present this appalling practice as necessary. In these circles torture becomes a "valuable tool;" yet torture remains a heinous, reprehensible criminal act that classifies its proponents as the lowest form of uncivilised, amoral human being.

Today George W Bush vetoed legislation outlawing the use of torture by various American agencies. In his radio address Bush referred to torture as a "valuable and necessary tool" - Bush displayed not the slightest concern for what is undeniably the most heinous act any civilised person could engage in. Is it a coincidence that torture is the favourite method of totalitarian dictatorships and despotic regimes? Bush/America today has joined the ranks of Nazis, Communists, Fascists, gangsters and organised criminals -- fine company indeed!

Is it time America took a good look in the mirror to see what it has become? America today has become everything it once hated! I have nothing more to add to the following report from Reuters.

Bush vetoes U.S. bill outlawing CIA waterboarding

(Adds comments by Pelosi, Kennedy in paragraphs 4-6)

WASHINGTON, March 8 (Reuters) - U.S. President George W. Bush on Saturday vetoed legislation passed by Congress that would have banned the CIA from using waterboarding and other controversial interrogation techniques.

Lawmakers included the anti-torture measure in a broader bill authorizing U.S. intelligence activities.

"Because the danger remains, we need to ensure our intelligence officials have all the tools they need to stop the terrorists," Bush said in his weekly radio address. He added that the vetoed legislation "would diminish these vital tools."

House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California said Democrats would try to overturn Bush's veto and said U.S. moral authority was at stake.

"We will begin to reassert that moral authority by attempting to override the president's veto next week," Pelosi said.

Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts called Bush's veto "one of the most

shameful acts of his presidency."

It is unlikely that Democrats, the majority party in Congress, could muster enough votes to overturn Bush's veto. The bill passed the House and Senate on partisan votes, short of the support needed to reverse the president.

The House approved the legislation in December and the Senate passed it in February despite White House warnings it would be vetoed.

CIA Director Michael Hayden told Congress last month that government interrogators used waterboarding on three suspects captured after the Sept. 11 attacks.

The simulated drowning technique has been condemned by many members of Congress, human rights groups and other countries as a form of illegal torture.

The U.S. Army Field Manual prohibits waterboarding and seven other interrogation methods and the bill would have aligned CIA practices with the military's.

In a message to CIA employees on Saturday after Bush's veto, Hayden said the CIA would continue to work strictly within the law but said its needs were different from that of the U.S. Army and that the CIA needed to follow its own procedures.

"There are methods in CIA's program that have been briefed to our oversight committees, are fully consistent with the Geneva Convention and current U.S. law, and are most certainly not torture," Hayden said.

In his remarks, Bush did not specifically mention waterboarding.

But he said: "The bill Congress sent me would not simply ban one particular interrogation method, as some have implied. Instead, it would eliminate all the alternative procedures we've developed to question the world's most dangerous and violent terrorists." (Reporting by Richard Cowan; Editing by Eric Beech)

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