

"Taser Torture In America - A Call For Congressional Hearings"

Dear Senator Reid, Speaker Pelosi and Congressional Black Caucus:

We call on our Congress to speak out and organize public hearings on the systemic human rights violations occurring with Federal funding against black, Latino, Native American and other Americans.

While there continues to be considerable media and congressional attention to torture in Guantanamo, there is comparatively little attention to the mounting evidence of human rights violations in the streets of America by a number of police departments across America, including torture and killings of black children, women and men through-out the United States through the use and abuse of Tasers.

We want Congress to stand up with us against the police pre-trial electrocution of black children, women and men by taser.

We believe that few Americans support spending our tax dollars on torture, which violates our moral, religious and legal traditions.

Most Americans expect an American policing policy that ensures the rights of all individuals regardless of race, greed, color, national origin, sex, disability or political or religious affiliation.

We believe most Americans would favor Congressional hearings as to whether our own U.S. police, policing policies and actions violate Federal and International laws prohibiting human rights violators.

Evidence of widespread police abuse of tasers is more than enough to warrant our concern and justify a congressional inquiry.

We propose that Congress undertake serious oversight into the extent to which our taxes are funding human rights violations and torture by tasing, and provide an alternative roadmap to the restoration of our democratic values. We want Congress to make sure that police pre-trial electrocution of black children, women and men by taser stops.

1. We are calling on the U.S. Attorney General and the Justice Department to aggressively fulfill its most basic mandate of enforcing the law. Torture by tasing is a crime, and the Justice Department is the right place to initiate an independent top-to-bottom investigation of the torturing of black children men, women and children by local police jurisdictions throughout the United States. It's important that the general public understand the 'use of force continuum' used by law enforcement officials, and how it is abused by many in the law enforcement community. (See the use-of-force-continuum provided by the blog Electronic Village) Note: Although there is a Justice Department Review of TASER-related Deaths the on-the-spot pre-trial electrocutions continues.

2. Congress should investigate whether US police tasing policies violate Federal or international civil and human right laws, including the U.N. Convention against Torture, and international covenants against cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of citizens even in cases of so-called "state emergencies".

3. Congress should require the effective regulation of Taser use and require police/citizen review panels by Federal, state and local police and security agencies, including strict adherence to international human rights standards, or act to defund all such Federal, State and local police and security agencies who violate taser use regulations that would be established by Congress. No Federal stimulus dollars should be used to purchase tasers.

We ask the Congress to hold congressional hearings to reach its own conclusions regarding the use and abuse of tasers, particularly as it relates to minority group members such as blacks, Native Americans and Latinos.

As you know the UN's Committee against Torture has declared that Taser use can constitute a form of torture, while USA: Amnesty International has an on-going concern about the use of tasers on American citizens. With all the conversation about the Bush torture memos and torture in the United States, we the undersigned bring up the issue of torture of black Americans at the hands of police in the United States. We urge you to stand up against the police pre-trial electrocution of black children, women and men by taser.

We have sent 2,161 letters to Congress so far. Please join us!

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