

'Abolish torture now,' religious leaders say: Inhumane treatment called morally intolerable

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Twenty-seven U.S. religious figures, including some evangelical Christians, have endorsed a strong statement against the use of torture by the American military and security forces, saying “the soul of our nation” is at stake.

“Let America abolish torture now—without exceptions,” concluded the short statement by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture in an ad in the June 13 *New York Times*.

Evangelical signers included author-pastor Rick Warren, president Ted Haggard of the National Association of Evangelicals, Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw and Roberta Hestenes, minister-at-large with World Vision.

The campaign, founded at Princeton Theological Seminary in January by theology professor George Hunsinger, released its statement June 6.

The group’s news release noted that on the previous day the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Pentagon has decided to omit from new detainee policies a key tenet of the Geneva Convention barring “humiliating and degrading treatment.” Religious leaders previously had been concerned by news reports of violations by soldiers in Iraq and jailers at Guantánamo prison and of the U.S. transfer of some detainees to countries known to use torture in questioning prisoners.

Torture degrades everyone involved—perpetrators and victims, the statement said. “Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable.”

Other signers included former president Jimmy Carter, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, Greek Orthodox archbishop Demetrios of New York, emergent-church leader Brian McLaren, Islamic Society of North America national director Sayyid M.

Syed and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel.