

Hello, my name is Julia Dennen, and I'm here with the Religious Action Center; I am so honored to have the opportunity to speak with you today about the very important issue of the US's use of torture. The UN defines torture as "Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, intentionally inflicted upon a person to obtain information, a confession, or as punishment they have committed or are suspected to have committed". Torture comes in a wide variety of forms, everything from water boarding that we hear about on the news, to indefinite detention, which is continually used at Guantanamo bay. The information extracted through these tactics is automatically suspect, since the victim will do or say anything to end the pain and suffering. Studies have shown that most of the time, the information we obtain through these means is inaccurate do to this, and is therefore useless. When we as a nation use torture to gather information, we are no better than those of whom we are inflicting the pain on. We are supposed to be fighting a war on terror, yet we commit the same crimes upon the victims, that we are trying to stop. By continuing to use torture tactics we are enabling a vicious cycle of violence and crime.

As a reform Jew, the lessons I have been brought up with have instilled a moral obligation within me to do the right thing and help others. The torah reads; "What is it that God wishes of you, O Man. Only to do Justice and love mercy". There are so many ways to collect the information we need from prisoners of war and terrorists, but torture should no longer be one of them. Last year, I was sitting at services when my Rabbi said something that has stuck with me for all this time. She said; balancing the scale of justice and compassion is extremely difficult, but as Jews, whenever we are given the chance, tip the scale towards compassion.

Right now, our nation does not have legislation that bans the use of torture, even though we have signed international laws that prohibit it. At this point in time we have

executive orders in place, but that is not enough. These orders are easily overturned. President Obama is only in office for three more years, and the ban on torture can be completely lifted when he is gone. To ensure that we will no longer use these terrible forms of torture, we must create a law that strictly bans all use of torture, without of exception. Such a law has been introduced in past congresses; it is called the American Anti-Torture Act and was lead by representative Jared Nadler. This bill would make the current ban on torture permanent. I urge our congressmen to co-sponsor the American Anti-Torture Act when it is reintroduced. By doing this, they can truly make a difference in this world for the better, and help curb the use of torture worldwide. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me today, it was an honor to be able to share my cause with you, and I hope you will support us in this fight to end torture.

-Julia Dennen