



**For Immediate Release**

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**Contact:**

Sharon Singh, AIUSA, 202 544 0200 x 289, [ssingh@aiusa.org](mailto:ssingh@aiusa.org)

Jen Nessel, CCR, 212 614 6449, [jnessel@ccrjustice.org](mailto:jnessel@ccrjustice.org)

Veerle Opgenhaffen, NYU IHRC/CHRGJ, 212 992 8186, [opgenhaffen@juris.law.nyu.edu](mailto:opgenhaffen@juris.law.nyu.edu)

## **CIA ACKNOWLEDGES IT HAS MORE THAN 7000 DOCUMENTS RELATING TO SECRET DETENTION PROGRAM, RENDITION, AND TORTURE**

*Human Right Groups Charge Documents Reveal CIA Stonewalled Congressional Oversight Committees; CIA Says Many Documents too Sensitive to Release*

**(New York and Washington, DC)**—The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) must stop stonewalling congressional oversight committees and release vital documents related to the program of secret detentions, renditions, and torture, three prominent human rights groups said today. Amnesty International USA (AIUSA), the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the International Human Rights Clinic at NYU School of Law (NYU IHRC) reiterated their call for information, following the CIA's filing of a summary judgment motion this week to end a lawsuit and avoid turning over more than 7000 documents related to its secret "ghost" detention and extraordinary rendition program. This motion is in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit filed in federal court last June by these groups. The organizations will file their response brief next month.

Among other assertions, the CIA claimed that it did not have to release the documents because many consist of correspondence with the White House or top Bush administration officials, or because they are between parties seeking legal advice on the programs, including guidance on the legality of certain interrogation procedures. The CIA confirmed that it requested—and received—legal advice from attorneys at the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel concerning these procedures.

“For the first time, the CIA has acknowledged that extensive records exist relating to its use of enforced disappearances and secret prisons,” said **Curt Goering, AIUSA senior deputy executive director**. “Given what we already know about documents written by Bush administration officials trying to justify torture and other human rights crimes, one does not need a fertile imagination to conclude that the real reason for refusing to disclose these documents has more to do with avoiding disclosure of criminal activity than national security.”

The CIA's admission that it possesses at least 7000 documents relating to rendition, secret detention and torture generated renewed calls by the human rights groups for transparency and accountability from the government.

“The Freedom of Information Act is one of the major checks on government criminality in this country,” said **CCR Executive Director Vincent Warren**. “The CIA has acknowledged that it has well over 7000 documents that relate to the torture and disappearance of men. These include some of our clients, like Majid Khan, who were known to be in the program. The public needs to know what crimes were committed in our name and how they were justified. This has been the most secretive, least transparent administration in history, and it is well past time for accountability.”

AIUSA, CCR, and NYU IHRC have filed FOIA requests with several U.S. government agencies, including the CIA. These FOIA requests sought information about individuals who are—or have been—held by the U.S. government or detained with U.S. involvement, and about whom there is no public record. The requests also sought information about the government’s legal justifications for its secret detention and extraordinary rendition program. Comprehensive information about the identities and locations of prisoners in CIA custody—as well as the conditions of their detention and the specific interrogation methods used against them— has never been publicly revealed. This lack of transparency continues to prevent scrutiny by the public or the courts and leaves detainees vulnerable to abuse and torture.

Although the CIA did release a paltry number of documents in response to the FOIA request, most were already in the public domain, such as newspaper articles and a single copy of the Fourth Geneva Convention which governs the treatment of civilians in times of war. The limited relevant documents that were released were documents pertaining to briefings demanded by the House and Senate Intelligence Committees regarding various aspects of the overseas detention and interrogation program.

Documents released to plaintiffs by the CIA demonstrate that many within the government itself have been unable to obtain accurate information from the CIA. These documents, which include letters from Members of Congress to the CIA, demonstrate a pattern of withholding information from Congress. In a pointed bipartisan letter on October 16, 2003, then-Chair and Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence requested that CIA Director George Tenet provide senior level briefings on the treatment of, and information obtained by, three men known to be held in secret CIA detention, admonishing the CIA by stating that the committee was “frustrated with the quality of the information” provided in past briefings.

The CIA appears to have avoided answering detailed requests for specific information, responding instead with form letters and references to briefings. These practices led to a forceful letter from Senator Carl Levin, Current Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, (then the Ranking Member) who was attempting to investigate CIA involvement in detainee deaths. In a letter dated Oct. 24, 2005, Senator Levin noted that “[t]he lack of CIA cooperation with the investigations to date has left significant omissions in the record.” The CIA’s failure to cooperate with members of Congress demonstrates the need for public scrutiny of the secret detention and extraordinary rendition program under FOIA.

“The CIA has employed illegal techniques such as torture, enforced disappearances, and extraordinary rendition,” said **Meg Satterthwaite, Director of the NYU IHRC**. “It cannot use FOIA exemptions as a shield to hide its violations of U.S. and international law.”

In its legal filings, the CIA acknowledged that this program “will continue.” Some prisoners have been transferred to prisons in other countries for proxy detention where they face the risk of torture and where they continue to be held secretly, without charge or trial. Human rights reports indicate that the fate and whereabouts of at least 30 people believed to have been held in secret U.S. custody remain unknown.

In September 2006, President Bush publicly acknowledged the existence of CIA-operated secret prisons. At the same time, 14 detainees from these facilities were transferred to Guantánamo and several more have arrived since. The administration has admitted to using so-called “alternative interrogation procedures” on those held in the CIA program, including waterboarding. The international community and the United States, in other contexts, have unequivocally deemed these techniques torture.

For more information or copies of the CIA’s legal filings and released documents, please contact [ssingh@aiusa.org](mailto:ssingh@aiusa.org), [jnessel@ccrjustice.org](mailto:jnessel@ccrjustice.org) or [opgenhaffen@juris.law.nyu.edu](mailto:opgenhaffen@juris.law.nyu.edu).

For more information about the organizations involved, please see their websites: [www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org), [www.ccrjustice.org](http://www.ccrjustice.org), or [www.chrgj.org](http://www.chrgj.org).

To see the most recent documents from this CIA filing, go to <http://www.ccrjustice.org/newsroom/press-releases/cia-foia-documents>.