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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

JANE DOE I, JANE DOE II, HELENE PETIT, )  
MARTIN LARSSON, LEESHAI LEMISH, and )  
ROLAND ODAR )

Plaintiffs,

v.

LIU QI, and DOES 1-5, inclusive )

Defendants. )

Civil Action No. C 02 0672 CW EMC

AFFIDAVIT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW  
SCHOLARS ON THE STATUS OF  
TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR  
DEGRADING TREATMENT, CRIMES  
AGAINST HUMANITY, AND  
ARBITRARY DETENTION UNDER  
INTERNATIONAL LAW

1. The undersigned are professors who specialize in international law and international human rights. A list of credentials for the undersigned is attached to this affidavit in Appendix A.

1 **I. INTRODUCTION**

2 2. Torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, crimes against humanity, and  
3 arbitrary detention are each well-recognized violations of customary international law.<sup>1</sup>  
4 These acts have been condemned by international agreements and state practice. They have  
5 also been condemned by the United States through executive statements, legislative  
6 pronouncements, and judicial decisions. In sum, the prohibitions against torture, cruel,  
7 inhuman, or degrading treatment, crimes against humanity, and arbitrary detention are each  
8 “specific, universal, and obligatory.” See Hilao v. Marcos: In re Estate of Ferdinand Marcos,  
9 Human Rights Litigation, 25 F.3d 1467, 1475 (9th Cir. 1994).

10  
11  
12 **II. TORTURE CONSTITUTES A VIOLATION OF CUSTOMARY**  
13 **INTERNATIONAL LAW**

14 3. The prohibition against torture has long been recognized in international law.  
15 According to the authoritative Restatement (Third) of the Foreign Relations Law of the  
16 United States §702(d) (1987) (“Restatement (Third)”), a state violates international law if it  
17 practices, encourages, or condones torture as a matter of state policy.

18  
19 4. Torture may result from both physical and mental pain or suffering. See, e.g., J.  
20 Herman Burgers and Hans Danelius, The United Nations Convention against Torture: A  
21 Handbook on the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading  
22 Treatment or Punishment 117, 118 (1988) (“The act of torture is defined as being the  
23 infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental. The most characteristic  
24

25 <sup>1</sup> To determine the rules of customary international law, courts may look to numerous  
26 sources, including multilateral and regional agreements, pronouncements of  
27 international organizations, decisions of international tribunals, and other forms of  
28 state practice. See Siderman de Blake v. Republic of Argentina, 965 F.2d 699, 714-  
715 (9th Cir. 1992). In addition, courts are to interpret international law as it has  
evolved and now exists among the nations of the world today. Kadic v. Karadzic, 70  
F.3d 232, 238 (2d Cir. 1995).

1 and easily distinguishable case is that of infliction of physical pain . . . . The acts inflicting  
 2 severe mental pain or suffering can be of very different kinds. One category consists of acts  
 3 which imply threats or which create fear in the victim”).

#### 4 5 6 **A. International Law Prohibits Torture**

7 5. The prohibition against torture is recognized in all major international  
 8 instruments. See, e.g., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Dec. 10, 1948, art. 5, G.A.  
 9 Res 217A (III), U.N. Doc. A/810, at 71 (1948) (“No one shall be subjected to torture or to  
 10 cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”). The International Covenant on  
 11 Civil and Political Rights (“ICCPR”), adopted in 1966, prohibits torture. International  
 12 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171. More than 147  
 13 countries, including the United States, have ratified the ICCPR. Article 7 of the ICCPR  
 14 provides that “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading  
 15 treatment or punishment.” This provision is non-derogable – neither public emergency nor  
 16 any other extenuating circumstance may be invoked as justification for such acts. Id. at art.  
 17 4(2).  
 18

19 6. The Human Rights Committee, which was established to monitor compliance  
 20 with the ICCPR, has clarified the nature and scope of Article 7. In General Comment No.  
 21 20, the Committee indicated that Article 7 is designed to “protect both the dignity and the  
 22 physical and mental integrity of the individual.”<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Committee, General  
 23 Comment No. 20, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/I/Rev.5 (2001), at para. 2. The determination of  
 24  
 25

26 <sup>2</sup> In General Comment No. 20, the Human Rights Committee added that Article 7 is  
 27 complemented by the positive requirements of Article 10(1), which stipulates that  
 28 “[a]ll persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect  
 for the inherent dignity of the human person.”

1 whether an Article 7 violation has occurred requires an assessment of all the circumstances of  
2 the case, “such as the duration and manner of the treatment, its physical or mental effects as  
3 well as the sex, age and state of health of the victim.” Vuolanne v. Finland, Communication  
4 No. 265/1987, U.N. Doc. Supp. No. 40 (A/44/40) at 249, 256 (1989). Thus, subjective  
5 factors can aggravate the effect of certain treatment. See Sarah Joseph et al., The  
6 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 150 (2000). The Human Rights  
7 Committee has identified numerous acts that give rise to an Article 7 violation of torture.<sup>3</sup>  
8 See, e.g., Cariboni v. Uruguay, Communication No. 159/1983, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/OP/2 at  
9 189 (1990) (abducting petitioner, keeping him hooded, bound, and seated for extended  
10 periods of time, providing him with minimal food, and subjecting him to hallucinogenic  
11 substances and psychological abuse constitutes torture); Herrera Rubio v. Colombia,  
12 Communication No. 161/1983, U.N. Doc. Supp. No. 40 (A/43/40) at 190 (1988) (beating and  
13 near drowning, hanging the detainee by his arms, and threatening his family members  
14 constitutes torture); Muteba v. Zaire, Communication No. 124/1982, U.N. Doc. Supp. No.  
15 40 (A/39/40) at 182 (1984) (beatings, mock executions, electric shocks, deprivation of food,  
16 and incommunicado detention constitutes torture); Estrella v. Uruguay, Communication No.  
17 74/1980, U.N. Doc. Supp. No. 40 (A/38/40) at 150 (1983) (abducting petitioner from his  
18 home, blindfolding him, and threatening him with amputation of his hands constitutes  
19 torture).

20  
21  
22  
23 7. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading  
24 Treatment or Punishment (“Convention against Torture”), adopted in 1984, contains similar

25  
26 <sup>3</sup> The Human Rights Committee has noted, however, that it is not necessary “to draw  
27 up a list of prohibited acts or to establish sharp distinctions between the different kinds  
28 of punishment or treatment; the distinctions depend on the nature, purpose and  
severity of the treatment applied.” Human Rights Committee, General Comment No.  
20, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.5 (2001), at para. 4.

1 prohibitions against torture. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or  
2 Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Dec. 10, 1984, 1465 U.N.T.S. 85. More than 128  
3 countries, including the United States, have ratified the Convention against Torture. Article  
4 1 defines torture as:

5 any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is  
6 intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or  
7 a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a  
8 third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or  
9 intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on  
discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at  
the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or  
other person acting in an official capacity.

10 Under the Convention against Torture, countries must take effective legislative,  
11 administrative, and judicial measures to prevent acts of torture. Significantly, Article 2(2)  
12 provides that “[n]o exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat  
13 of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a  
14 justification of torture.”

15  
16 8. The Committee against Torture, which was established to monitor compliance  
17 with the Convention against Torture, has recognized the absolute prohibition against torture.  
18 No circumstances, including terrorist threats or conditions of war, justify acts of torture. See,  
19 e.g., Committee against Torture, Israel’s Second Periodic Report under the Convention  
20 against Torture, U.N. Doc. CAT/C/18/CRP1/Add.4, at para. 134, quoted in Joseph, supra, at  
21 151. (“The Committee acknowledges the terrible dilemma that Israel confronts in dealing  
22 with terrorist threats to its security, but as a State party to the Convention Israel is precluded  
23 from raising before this Committee exceptional circumstances as justification for acts  
24 prohibited by article 1 of the Convention. This is plainly expressed in article 2 of the  
25 Convention”).  
26  
27  
28

1           9. The prohibition against torture is also set forth in a variety of United Nations  
2 instruments and statements. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture, established by the  
3 U.N. Commission on Human Rights, has issued many official statements on this matter. For  
4 example, the Special Rapporteur has expressed concern about the use of intimidation as a  
5 form of torture and has indicated that threats to the physical integrity of the victim “can  
6 amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or even to torture, especially when the  
7 victim remains in the hands of law enforcement officials.” Report of the Special Rapporteur  
8 on the Question of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or  
9 Punishment, U.N. Doc. A/56/156 (2001), at para. 8. See also U.N. Body of Principles for the  
10 Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, Principle 6, G.A.  
11 Res. 43/173, 43 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 298, U.N. Doc. A/43/49, (1988) (“No person  
12 under any form of detention or imprisonment shall be subjected to torture or to cruel,  
13 inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. No circumstance whatever may be invoked  
14 as a justification for torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”);  
15 Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, U.N. Doc. E/3048 (1957), amended  
16 E.S.C. res. 2076, 62 U.N. ESCOR Supp. (No. 1) at 35, U.N. Doc. E/5988 (1977).

19           10. Regional agreements also prohibit torture. For example, the American  
20 Convention on Human Rights (“American Convention”), which the United States has signed,  
21 provides that “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading  
22 punishment or treatment.” See American Convention on Human Rights, Jan. 7, 1970, art.5,  
23 1144 U.N.T.S. 123. See also Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture,  
24 Dec. 9, 1985, OAS Treaty Series No. 67.<sup>4</sup> The Inter-American Court on Human Rights,  
25  
26

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27 <sup>4</sup> Article 2 of the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture defines  
28 torture, in part, as “the use of methods upon a person intended to obliterate the  
personality of the victim or to diminish his physical or mental capacities, even if they

1 which reviews compliance with the American Convention, has noted that Article 5 prohibits  
2 torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment “and that all persons deprived of their  
3 liberty should be treated with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.” Neira  
4 Alegria et al. v. Peru, 3 International Human Rights Reports 362, 382 (1996). See also  
5 Bamaca Velasquez v. Guatemala, 9 International Human Rights Reports 80, 137 (2002). The  
6 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which also monitors compliance with the  
7 American Convention, has made similar findings. See, e.g., Case 10.574 (El Salvador),  
8 Report No. 5/94 (February 1, 1994) (applying electrical shocks to detainee, burning him with  
9 cigarettes, beating him, and putting a hood over his head constitutes torture).  
10

11 11. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental  
12 Freedoms (“European Convention”), which has been ratified by 43 states, provides that “[n]o  
13 one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”  
14 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Nov.  
15 4, 1950, art. 3, 213 U.N.T.S. 221. See also European Convention for the Prevention of  
16 Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Nov. 26, 1987, E.T.S. No. 126.  
17 The European Court of Human Rights, which reviews compliance with the European  
18 Convention, has indicated that the prohibition against torture is one of the most fundamental  
19 values of a democratic society. This norm is non-derogable. As the European Court noted in  
20 Selmouni v. France, 29 E.H.R.R. 403, 440 (1999), “[e]ven in the most difficult  
21 circumstances, such as the fight against terrorism and organized crime, the Convention  
22 prohibits in absolute terms torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”<sup>5</sup> In  
23  
24

25  
26 do not cause him physical pain or mental anguish.”

27 <sup>5</sup> See also Tomasi v. France, 15 E.H.R.R. 1, 56 (1993) (“The requirements of the  
28 investigation and the undeniable difficulties inherent in the fight against crime,  
particularly with regard to terrorism, cannot result in limits being placed on the  
protection to be afforded in respect of the physical integrity of individuals.”).

1 Selmouni v. France, the European Court concluded that the petitioner was subject to torture  
2 as a result of severe and repeated police beatings that left marks on his entire body and as a  
3 result of humiliating treatment. Id. at 442-443. See also Aydin v. Turkey, 25 E.H.R.R. 251  
4 (1997) (raping, beating, and blindfolding detainee constitutes torture); Aksoy v. Turkey, 23  
5 E.H.R.R. 553 (1997) (stripping detainee with arms tied behind his back and suspending him  
6 by the arms constitutes torture).

8 12. Finally, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides that “[a]ll  
9 forms of exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slave trade, torture, cruel,  
10 inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited.” See African Charter  
11 on Human and Peoples' Rights, June 27, 1981, art. 5, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3/Rev. 5  
12 (1981). The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which was established to  
13 monitor compliance with the African Charter, has found various actions to constitute torture.  
14 See, e.g., Amnesty International et al. v. Sudan, Comm. Nos. 48/90, 50/91, 52/91, 89/93  
15 (2000) (placing detainees in small cells, soaking them with cold water, and subjecting them  
16 to mock executions constitutes torture).

### 19 **B. The United States Recognizes the Prohibition against Torture**

20 13. This prohibition against torture has been recognized by the United States in  
21 executive statements, legislative pronouncements, and judicial decisions.

22 14. As indicated, the United States has ratified the ICCPR and the Convention  
23 against Torture, both of which prohibit torture.<sup>6</sup> The United States has implemented its  
24 obligations under the Convention against Torture in several ways. In 1991, for example,  
25

26  
27 <sup>6</sup> The United States has also signed the American Convention on Human Rights,  
28 which contains a similar prohibition against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading  
treatment.



1 Congress enacted the Torture Victim Protection Act, which establishes civil liability for acts  
 2 of torture. See 28 U.S.C. § 1350 (Notes). In 1994, Congress imposed criminal liability for  
 3 acts of torture, regardless of where such acts occur. See 18 U.S.C. § 2340A. In 1998,  
 4 Congress enacted the Torture Victims Relief Act to provide financial assistance to victims of  
 5 torture in the United States and abroad. See 22 U.S.C. § 2152 (History).  
 6

7 15. In October 1999, the United States Government issued its Initial Report to the  
 8 Committee Against Torture describing its compliance with the Convention against Torture.  
 9 In the Initial Report, the United States Government reiterated that torture is categorically  
 10 denounced as a matter of policy and as a tool of state authority.

11 No official of the government, federal, state or local, civilian or military, is  
 12 authorized to commit or to instruct anyone else to commit torture. Nor may  
 13 any official condone or tolerate torture in any form. No exceptional  
 14 circumstances may be invoked as a justification of torture. United States law  
 15 contains no provision permitting otherwise prohibited acts of torture or other  
 16 cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment to be employed on  
 grounds of exigent circumstances . . . or on orders from a superior officer or  
 public authority, and the protective mechanisms of an independent judiciary  
 are not subject to suspension. The United States is committed to the full and  
 effective implementation of its obligations under the Convention throughout  
 its territory.

17 Committee Against Torture, “Consideration of Reports Submitted By States Parties Under  
 18 Article 19 of the Convention: United States of America” (Oct. 15, 1999), U.N. Doc.  
 19 CAT/C/28/Add.5 (2000), at 5 (“Initial Report of the United States”).<sup>7</sup> The Initial Report  
 20 notes that “[e]very system of criminal law in the United States clearly and categorically  
 21 prohibits acts of violence against the person, whether physical or mental, which would  
 22 constitute an act of torture within the meaning of the Convention.” Id. at 26.  
 23

24 Such acts may be prosecuted, for example, as assault, battery or mayhem in  
 25 cases of physical injury; as homicide, murder or manslaughter when a killing  
 results; as kidnapping, false imprisonment or abduction where an unlawful

26  
 27 <sup>7</sup> The United States Government made a similar pronouncement to the Human Rights  
 Committee in 1994. See Human Rights Committee, “Initial Reports of States Parties:  
 28 United States of America,” U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/8 I/Add.4 (1994).

1 detention is concerned; as rape, sodomy, or molestation; or as part of an  
2 attempt or conspiracy, an act of racketeering, or a criminal violation of an  
individual's civil rights.

3 Id. Other specific issues raised in the Initial Report with respect to torture include police  
4 brutality, abuse of detainees, and substandard prison conditions. Id.

5 16. U.S. courts have also recognized the international prohibition against torture. In  
6 Filartiga v. Pena-Irala 630 F.2d 876, 880 (2d Cir. 1980), the Second Circuit indicated that:

7  
8 in light of the universal condemnation of torture in numerous international  
9 agreements, and the renunciation of torture as an instrument of official policy  
10 by virtually all of the nations of the world (in principle if not in practice), we  
find that an act of torture committed by a state official against one held in  
detention violates established norms of the international law of human rights,  
and hence the law of nations.

11  
12 See also Mehinovic v. Vuckovic, 198 F. Supp. 2d 1322 (N.D. Ga. 2002) (torture is a well-  
13 recognized violation of customary international law); Wiwa v. Royal Dutch, 2002 U.S. Dist.  
14 LEXIS 3293, \*21 (S.D.N.Y. 2002) (torture constitutes fully recognized violation of  
15 international law); Doe v. Islamic Salvation Front, 993 F. Supp. 3, 8 (D. D.C. 1998)  
16 (international law prohibits torture); Doe v. Unocal, 963 F. Supp. 880, 890 (C.D. Cal. 1997)  
17 (international law prohibits torture); Abebe-Jira v. Negewo, 72 F.3d 844, 847 (11th Cir.  
18 1996) (citing Filartiga precedent that official torture is now prohibited by the law of nations);  
19 Kadic v. Karadzic, 70 F.3d 232, 243 (2d Cir. 1995) (“[O]fficial torture is prohibited by  
20 universally accepted norms of international law . . . .”); Xuncax v. Gramajo, 886 F. Supp.  
21 162 (D. Mass. 1995) (torture is a well-recognized violation of customary international law);  
22 Paul v. Avril, 901 F. Supp. 330 (S.D. Fla.1994) (imposing civil liability for acts of torture);  
23 Hilao v. Marcos: In re Estate of Ferdinand Marcos, Human Rights Litigation, 25 F.3d at 1475  
24 (torture is a specific, universal, and obligatory norm of international law); Trajano v. Marcos:  
25 In re Estate of Ferdinand Marcos, Human Rights Litigation, 978 F.2d 493, 499 (9th Cir.  
26 1992) (“And, as we have recently held, ‘it would be unthinkable to conclude other than that  
27  
28

1 acts of official torture violate customary international law.”); Siderman de Blake v. Republic  
2 of Argentina, 965 F.2d 699, 716 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1992) (“There is no doubt that the prohibition  
3 against official torture is a norm of customary international law . . .”).

4 17. Based on the foregoing review, it is evident that the prohibition against torture is  
5 a specific, universal, and obligatory norm under international law.  
6

7  
8 **III. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT CONSTITUTES A**  
9 **VIOLATION OF CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL LAW**

10 18. The prohibition against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is also recognized  
11 in international law. According to the Restatement (Third), supra, at § 702(d), a state  
12 violates international law if, as a matter of state policy, it practices, encourages, or condones  
13 cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

14 19. There is a close relationship between torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading  
15 treatment. The difference between these two violations of international law can be measured  
16 by the severity of the act and the degree of suffering. “Degrading treatment” is an act that  
17 tends to humiliate the victim; “inhuman treatment” is the deliberate infliction of severe  
18 mental or physical suffering.<sup>8</sup> Torture constitutes the most aggravated form of severe  
19 physical or mental suffering.<sup>9</sup> See generally Nigel S. Rodley, The Treatment of Prisoners  
20

21  
22 <sup>8</sup> See generally The Greek Case, 12 Yearbook of the European Convention on Human  
23 Rights: 1969 186 (1972).

24 <sup>9</sup> In its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, the State Department  
25 defines torture

26 as an extremely severe form of cruel, inhuman, or  
27 degrading treatment or punishment, committed by or at  
28 the instigation of government forces or opposition  
groups, with specific intent to cause extremely severe  
pain or suffering, whether mental or physical.  
Discussion concentrates on actual practices, not on  
whether they fit any precise definition, and includes use

1 under International Law 77-78 (2d ed. 1999) (“So, for torture to occur, a scale of criteria has  
2 to be climbed. First, the behavior must be degrading treatment; second, it must be inhuman  
3 treatment; and third, it must be an aggravated form of inhuman treatment, inflicted for certain  
4 purposes”). In addition, torture requires purpose; cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment does  
5 not. Id. at 84-85.

6  
7 20. In sum, determinations of whether torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading  
8 treatment have occurred require an assessment of all the circumstances in the case, including  
9 the form and duration of mistreatment, the level of suffering, the physical and mental status  
10 of the victim, and the purpose of the perpetrator.<sup>10</sup>

11  
12 **A. International Law Prohibits Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment**

13  
14 21. The prohibition against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is recognized in  
15 all major international instruments. See, e.g., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, supra,  
16 at art. 5 (“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or  
17 punishment”); ICCPR, supra, at art. 7 (“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel,

18  
19 \_\_\_\_\_  
20 of physical and other force that may fall short of torture  
21 but which is cruel, inhuman, or degrading.

22 U.S. Dep’t of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998 – Volume II  
23 1984 (1999).

24 <sup>10</sup> In Selmouni v. France, the European Court noted that definitions of torture and  
25 inhuman or degrading treatment must be interpreted in light of present-day conditions.

26 [T]he Court considers that certain acts which were  
27 classified in the past as “inhuman and degrading  
28 treatment” as opposed to “torture” could be classified  
differently in [the] future. It takes the view that the  
increasingly high standard being required in the area of  
the protection of human rights and fundamental liberties  
correspondingly and inevitably requires greater firmness  
in assessing breaches of the fundamental values of  
democratic societies.

Selmouni v. France, 29 E.H.R.R. at 442.

1 inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”). Article 16(1) of the Convention Against  
2 Torture also prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment:

3 Each State Party shall undertake to prevent in any territory under its  
4 jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment  
5 which do not amount to torture as defined in article 1, when such acts are  
6 committed by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a  
7 public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

8 22. The Human Rights Committee has affirmed the prohibition against cruel,  
9 inhuman or degrading treatment on numerous occasions. See, e.g., Tshishimbi v. Zaire,  
10 Communication No. 542/1993, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/53/D/542/1993 (1996) (abducting  
11 petitioner and incommunicado detention constitutes cruel and inhuman treatment); Mukong  
12 v. Cameroon, Communication No. 458/1991, U.N. Doc. Supp. No. 40 (A/49/40) (1994)  
13 (incommunicado detention, depriving petitioner of food, and threatening with torture and  
14 death constitute cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment). The Committee has also found  
15 that physical beatings constitute cruel and inhuman treatment. See Henry v. Trinidad and  
16 Tobago, Communication No. 752/1997, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/64/D/752/1997 (1999) (detainee  
17 beaten on the head, requiring stitches). See also Hylton v. Jamaica, Communication No.  
18 407/1990, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/51/D/407/1990 (1994); Linton v. Jamaica, Communication  
19 No. 255/1987, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/46/D/255/1987.

20 23. The United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under  
21 Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment,  
22 and no circumstances may be invoked as justification for such acts. U.N. Body of Principles,  
23 supra, at Principle 6. The Body of Principles contains the following description of cruel,  
24 inhuman or degrading treatment.

25  
26 The term “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” should be  
27 interpreted so as to extend the widest possible protection against abuses,  
28 whether physical or mental, including the holding of a detained or imprisoned  
person in conditions which deprive him, temporarily or permanently of the use

1 of any of his natural senses, such as sight or hearing, or of his awareness of  
2 place and the passing of time.

3 Id.

4 24. The prohibition against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is also recognized  
5 in all the regional instruments. For example, the American Convention on Human Rights  
6 provides that “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading  
7 punishment or treatment.” American Convention, supra, at art. 5. The Inter-American  
8 Commission on Human Rights has found several acts to constitute cruel, inhuman or  
9 degrading treatment. See, e.g., McKenzie v. Jamaica, Case No. 12.023 (2000) (keeping  
10 prisoners in overcrowded conditions for 23 hours a day with inadequate sanitation, poor  
11 lighting and ventilation constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment); Valladares v.  
12 Ecuador, Case No. 11.778 (1998) (holding petitioner incommunicado for more than 22 days  
13 constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment); Congo v. Ecuador, Case No. 11.427  
14 (1998) (holding detainee in a small isolated cell constitutes inhuman and degrading  
15 treatment).  
16

17 25. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental  
18 Freedoms provides that “[n]o one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading  
19 treatment or punishment.”<sup>11</sup> European Convention, supra, at art. 3. The European Court of  
20 Human Rights has recognized that determinations of whether torture or other inhuman or  
21 degrading treatment have occurred depend on the unique circumstances of the case and the  
22 status of the individual victim. See, e.g., Tyrer Case, 2 E.H.R.R. 1 (1978). According to the  
23 Court, the distinction between torture and inhuman or degrading treatment derives principally  
24 from a difference in the intensity of the suffering inflicted. Ireland v. United Kingdom, 2  
25  
26

27 <sup>11</sup> The European Convention differs from other international and regional instruments  
28 by not using the term “cruel” in its definition of inhuman or degrading treatment. This  
omission has little, if any, significance. See Rodley, supra, at 75.

1 E.H.R.R. 25, 80 (1979). The word “torture” attaches a special stigma to deliberate treatment  
2 causing very serious and cruel suffering of particular intensity.<sup>12</sup> *Id.* The European Court  
3 has found various acts to constitute inhuman or degrading treatment. *See, e.g., Tekin v.*  
4 *Turkey* 31 E.H.R.R. 95 (2001) (blindfolding a prisoner, threatening him with death,  
5 providing no bed or blankets, denying food and liquids, stripping him naked and hosing him  
6 with cold water, and beating him with a truncheon constitutes inhuman and degrading  
7 treatment); *Ribitsch v. Austria*, 21 E.H.R.R. 573 (1996) (beatings and abuse administered by  
8 police constitutes inhuman and degrading treatment); *Assenov v. Bulgaria*, 28 E.H.R.R. 652  
9 (1998) (bruises received from beating would have been sufficient for article 3 violation if  
10 petitioner had proved state action); *Ireland v. United Kingdom*, 2 E.H.R.R. 25 (1979) (use of  
11 five interrogation techniques consisting of wall-standing, hooding, subjection to noise, sleep  
12 deprivation, and deprivation of food and water constitutes inhuman and degrading treatment).  
13  
14

15 26. Finally, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights provides that “[a]ll  
16 forms of exploitation and degradation of man particularly slavery, slave trade, torture, cruel,  
17 inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited.” African Charter,  
18 *supra*, at art. 5. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has found various  
19 actions to constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. *See, e.g., Media Rights Agenda*  
20 *v. Nigeria*, Comm. No. 224/98 (2000) (chaining detainee to the floor day and night in solitary  
21 confinement constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment); *Huri-Laws v. Nigeria*  
22 Comm. No. 225/98 (2000) (detaining petitioner in a dirty cell without charge and without  
23 access to medical attention constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment).  
24

25  
26 <sup>12</sup> According to the European Commission on Human Rights, degrading treatment is  
27 defined as action that interferes with the dignity of the individual. *East African Asians*  
28 *v. United Kingdom*, 3 E.H.R.R. 76 (1973). “It follows that an action, which lowers a  
person in rank, position, reputation or character, can only be regarded as ‘degrading  
treatment’ in the sense of Article 3, where it reaches a certain level of severity.” *Id.* at  
80.

1  
2 **B. The United States Recognizes the Prohibition against Cruel, Inhuman or**  
3 **Degrading Treatment**

4 27. This prohibition against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment has been  
5 recognized by the United States through executive statements, legislative pronouncements,  
6 and judicial decisions.

7 28. Congress has adopted legislation that recognizes the prohibition against cruel,  
8 inhuman or degrading treatment as a human right. See 7 U.S.C. § 1733 (prohibiting  
9 agricultural commodities to countries that practice cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment);  
10 22 U.S.C. § 262d(a)(1) (stating U.S. policy is to channel international assistance away from  
11 countries that practice cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment); 22 U.S.C § 2151n  
12 (prohibiting development assistance to countries that practice cruel, inhuman or degrading  
13 treatment); 22 U.S.C. § 2304 (prohibiting security assistance to countries that practice cruel,  
14 inhuman or degrading treatment).  
15

16 29. In its Initial Report to the Committee against Torture, the United States affirmed  
17 its obligations under Article 16 of the Convention against Torture, which prohibits cruel,  
18 inhuman or degrading treatment. According to the Initial Report, “Article 16 embodies an  
19 important undertaking by which States Parties to the Convention must act to prevent cruel,  
20 inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment not amounting to torture within territories  
21 under their jurisdiction.” Initial Report of the United States, supra, at 64. The Initial Report  
22 also noted that the prohibition against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is consistent  
23 with the prohibition against cruel, unusual, and inhumane treatment as set forth in the United  
24 States Constitution.<sup>13</sup> Id. at 65. Among the acts characterized in the Initial Report as cruel,  
25  
26

27  
28 <sup>13</sup> This explains the United States reservation to Article 16 of the Convention against  
Torture, which provides:



1 inhuman or degrading treatment were: police brutality, substandard prison conditions,  
 2 improper segregation of prisoners, sexual abuse of detainees, abuse of the mentally retarded  
 3 and mentally ill in public facilities, discrimination of inmates with disabilities, and non-  
 4 consensual medical and scientific experiments. Id. at 65-70.

5  
 6 30. U.S. courts have also recognized the international prohibition against cruel,  
 7 inhuman or degrading treatment.<sup>14</sup> See Mehinovic v. Vuckovic, 198 F. Supp. 2d at 1344  
 8 (cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is well-recognized violation of customary  
 9 international law); Wiwa v. Royal Dutch, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS at \*21 (“The international  
 10 prohibition against ‘cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment’ is as universal as the  
 11 proscriptions of torture, summary execution, and arbitrary arrest . . . .”); Cabello v.  
 12 Fernandez-Larios, 157 F. Supp. 2d 1345, 1362 (S.D. Fla. 2001) (cruel, inhuman or degrading  
 13 treatment is a violation of customary international law); Jama v. U.S. Immigration and  
 14 Naturalization Service, 22 F. Supp.2d 353, 363 (D.N.J. 1998) (“American Courts have  
 15

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16  
 17 [T]he United States considers itself bound by the  
 18 obligation under Article 16 to prevent “cruel, inhuman  
 19 or degrading treatment or punishment,” only insofar as  
 20 the term “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or  
 21 punishment” means the cruel, unusual and inhumane  
 22 treatment or punishment prohibited by the Fifth, Eighth  
 23 and/or Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of  
 24 the United States.

25 136 Cong. Rec. S10090, S10093 (July 19, 1994). See also Initial Report of the United  
 26 States, supra, at 65.

27 <sup>14</sup> In Forti v. Suarez-Mason, 672 F. Supp. 1531 (N.D. Cal. 1987), aff’d Forti v. Suarez-  
 28 Mason, 694 F. Supp. 707 (N.D. Cal. 1988), the District Court indicated that the  
 prohibition against cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment had not attained the status  
 of customary international law. However, this ruling has been superceded by  
 subsequent developments. For example, the United States had not ratified the ICCPR  
 or the Convention against Torture when the Forti ruling was made. Both of these  
 treaties prohibit cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. In addition, most of the  
 international jurisprudence on cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment appeared after  
 the Forti ruling was made. It is not surprising, therefore, that subsequent rulings in the  
 federal courts have recognized the status of the prohibition against cruel, inhuman or  
 degrading treatment under customary international law.

1 recognized that the right to be free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is a  
2 universally accepted customary human rights norm”); Doe v. Islamic Salvation Front, 993 F.  
3 Supp. 3, 8 (D.D.C. 1998) (international law prohibits cruel treatment); Xuncax v. Gramajo,  
4 886 F. Supp. at 187 (cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is a well-recognized violation of  
5 customary international law); Paul v. Avril, 901 F. Supp. at 330 (imposing civil liability for  
6 acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment).  
7

8 31. Based on the foregoing review, it is evident that the prohibition against cruel,  
9 inhuman or degrading treatment is a specific, universal, and obligatory norm under  
10 international law.  
11

#### 12 **IV. CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY CONSTITUTE A VIOLATION OF** 13 **CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL LAW**

14 32. The prohibition against crimes against humanity was first recognized by the  
15 Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. See Restatement (Third), supra,  
16 at § 702, rpt. note 1. The Nuremberg Charter was adopted to ensure that serious human  
17 rights abuses committed during World War II by the military and political leaders of Nazi  
18 Germany were punished. See generally M. Cherif Bassiouni, Crimes against Humanity in  
19 International Criminal Law (2d ed. 1999). Under the Nuremberg Charter, acts constituting  
20 crimes against humanity included murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation,  
21 imprisonment, torture, rape, persecution on political, racial or religious grounds, or other  
22 inhuman acts committed against a civilian population. Charter of the International Military  
23 Tribunal, August 8, 1945, art. 6(c), 82 U.N.T.S. 284. In its ruling, the International Military  
24 Tribunal acknowledged the status of crimes against humanity under international law and  
25 convicted several defendants of this crime. See The Nurnberg Trial, 6 F.R.D. 69 (1946).  
26  
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28

### A. International Law Prohibits Crimes Against Humanity

1  
2 33. Since the adoption of the Nuremberg Charter, the prohibition against crimes  
3 against humanity has been firmly recognized in several international instruments. In 1946,  
4 for example, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the principles set forth in the  
5 Nuremberg Charter and the subsequent decision of the International Military Tribunal. See  
6 G.A. Res. 95, 1 GAOR U.N. Doc. A/64/Add.1, at 188 (1946). These principles were  
7 reaffirmed in 1968 with the adoption of a treaty to prevent the application of statutory limits,  
8 such as statutes of limitation, to crimes against humanity. See Convention on the Non-  
9 Applicability of Statutory Limits to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, Nov. 26,  
10 1968, art. 1(b), 660 U.N.T.S. 195, reprinted in 8 I.L.M. 68 (1969). See also Principles of  
11 International Co-Operation in the Detection, Arrest, Extradition and Punishment of Persons  
12 Guilty of War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, G.A. Res. 3074, U.N. Doc.  
13 A/9039/Add.1 (1973).  
14  
15

16 34. Recent developments have affirmed and expanded the scope of crimes against  
17 humanity under international law. In 1993, the United Nations Security Council established  
18 the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (“ICTY”) to prosecute serious  
19 violations of international law committed in that territory, including genocide, war crimes,  
20 and crimes against humanity. See Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the  
21 former Yugoslavia, U.N. Doc. S/RES/827 (1993), reprinted in 32 I.L.M. 1192 (1993). The  
22 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (“ICTR”) was established by the Security  
23 Council in 1994 to prosecute serious violations of international law in Rwanda. See Statute  
24 of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, U.N. Doc. S/RES/955 (1994), reprinted in  
25 33 I.L.M. 1602 (1994). Both statutes expanded the list of enumerated offenses for crimes  
26 against humanity. These included murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation,  
27  
28

1 imprisonment, torture, rape, persecution on political, racial, and religious grounds, or other  
2 inhumane acts. There are, however, significant differences between the two statutes. While  
3 the Statute for the ICTY requires a nexus between crimes against humanity and armed  
4 conflict, the Statute for the ICTR contains no such requirement. Even the ICTY itself has  
5 noted that the requirement of a nexus between crimes against humanity and another crime  
6 was unique to the Nuremberg Charter (and its own statute) and had been abandoned under  
7 customary international law. Prosecutor v. Tadic, Case No. IT-94-1, Decision on the  
8 Defense Motion for Interlocutory Appeal on Jurisdiction (Oct. 2, 1995), at para. 140. Thus,  
9 crimes against humanity can now occur in the absence of an armed conflict. See generally  
10 Guénaël Mettraux, “Crimes against Humanity in the Jurisprudence of the International  
11 Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda,” 43 Harvard International  
12 Law Journal 237 (2002).

13  
14  
15 35. The International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda  
16 have affirmed these developments and the status of crimes against humanity under  
17 international law. In Prosecutor v. Tadic, for example, the ICTY noted that “the customary  
18 status of the prohibition against crimes against humanity and the attribution of individual  
19 criminal responsibility for their commission have not been seriously questioned.” Prosecutor  
20 v. Tadic, Case No. IT-94-1, (May 7, 1997), at para. 623.

21  
22 36. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides the most current  
23 definition of crimes against humanity under international law. Article 7 of the Rome Statute  
24 defines crimes against humanity as any of the following acts when committed as part of a  
25 widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of  
26 the attack:

- 27 (a) Murder;

- 1 (b) Extermination;
- 2 (c) Enslavement;
- 3 (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population;
- 4 (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of  
5 fundamental rules of international law;
- 6 (f) Torture;<sup>15</sup>
- 7 (g) Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced  
8 sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;
- 9 (h) Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political,  
10 racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or  
11 other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under  
12 international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or  
13 any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;<sup>16</sup>
- 14 (i) Enforced disappearance of persons;<sup>17</sup>
- 15 (j) The crime of apartheid;
- 16 (k) Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great  
17 suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

18 Because of its recent codification in the Rome Statute, Article 7 represents the most  
19 authoritative interpretation of crimes against humanity in international law. See generally  
20 Commentary on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Otto Triffterer ed.,  
21 1999).

22 <sup>15</sup> The definition of torture is further defined as “the intentional infliction of severe  
23 pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, upon a person in the custody or under  
24 the control of the accused; . . . .” Rome Statute, supra, at art. 7(2)(e). The Rome  
25 Statute definition differs from the Convention against Torture definition because it  
26 omits the purpose requirement. Thus, the Rome Statute definition recognizes that the  
27 random, purposeless, or sadistic infliction of severe pain or suffering may constitute  
28 torture.

<sup>16</sup> The definition of persecution is further defined as “the intentional and severe  
deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the  
identity of the group or collectivity.” Rome Statute, supra, at art. 7(2)(g).

<sup>17</sup> The definition of enforced disappearance is further defined as “the arrest, detention  
or abduction of persons by, or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of, a  
State or a political organization, followed by a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation  
of freedom or to give information on the fate or whereabouts of those persons, with  
the intention of removing them from the protection of the law for a prolonged period  
of time.” Rome Statute, supra, at art. 7(2)(i).

1           37. The Rome Statute requires four elements for establishing a crime against  
2 humanity: (1) a violation of one of the enumerated acts; (2) committed as part of a  
3 widespread or systematic attack; (3) directed against a civilian population; and (4) with  
4 knowledge of the attack.<sup>18</sup> Significantly, even a single act by an individual, taken within the  
5 context of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, can constitute a  
6 crime against humanity. See Prosecutor v. Tadic, Case No. IT-94-1-T, (May 7, 1997), at  
7 para. 649 (“Clearly, a single act by a perpetrator taken within the context of a widespread or  
8 systematic attack against a civilian population entails individual criminal responsibility and  
9 an individual perpetrator need not commit numerous offences to be held liable”). Similarly,  
10 the knowledge requirement does not require individual knowledge of the entire attack in all  
11 of its details. Indeed, it is not even necessary to demonstrate that the perpetrator knew that  
12 his actions were inhumane or rose to the level of crimes against humanity. Knowledge can  
13 also be actual or constructive. Id. at para. 657.  
14  
15

### 17           **B. The United States Recognizes the Prohibition of Crimes against Humanity**

18           38. The United States has recognized the prohibition of crimes against humanity on  
19 several occasions. In a submission to the Trial Chamber of the ICTY, for example, the  
20 United States argued:  
21

22           The relevant law and precedents for the offences in question here – genocide,  
23 war crimes and crimes against humanity – clearly contemplate international  
24 as well as national action against the individuals responsible. Proscription of  
25 these crimes has long since acquired the status of customary international law,  
26 binding on all states, and such crimes have already been the subject of  
international prosecutions by the Nuremberg and Tokyo Tribunals.

---

27 <sup>18</sup> The Rome Statute has clearly removed the purported nexus requirement between  
28 crimes against humanity and armed conflict.

1 Amicus Curiae Brief of the United States, Prosecutor v. Tadic, IT-94-I-T, Motion Hearing  
2 (July 25, 1995), quoted in Sharon Williams, “The Rome Statute of the International Criminal  
3 Court: From 1947 - 2000 and Beyond,” 38 Osgoode Hall Law Journal 297, 313 (2000).  
4 While the United States recently announced it did not intend to become a party to the Rome  
5 Statute, it did so for reasons unrelated to the status of crimes against humanity under  
6 international law. Indeed, the United States has approved several United Nations resolutions  
7 recognizing the status of crimes against humanity under international law. See Cabello v.  
8 Fernandez-Larios, 157 F. Supp. 2d at 1360.

10 39. The prohibition of crimes against humanity has been recognized by several  
11 domestic courts as an established principle of customary international law. See Mehinovic v.  
12 Vuckovic, 198 F. Supp. 2d at 1352 (“Crimes against humanity have been recognized as a  
13 violation of customary international law since the Nuremberg trials and therefore are  
14 actionable under the ATCA”); Wiwa v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co., 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS  
15 at \*27 (“In sum, under the definition of ‘crimes against humanity’ provided in Article 7 of  
16 the I.C.C. [Rome Statute], plaintiffs must demonstrate (1) violation of one of the enumerated  
17 acts, (2) committed as part of a widespread attack against a civilian population, (3) with  
18 knowledge of the attack.”); Cabello v. Fernandez-Larios, 157 F. Supp.2d at 1360 (citing  
19 Princz v. Federal Republic of Germany, 26 F.3d 1166, 1173 (D.C. Cir. 1994)) (United States  
20 recognizes its legal obligation to condemn crimes against humanity); Quinn v. Robinson, 783  
21 F.2d 776, 799-800 (9th Cir. 1986); In re Extradition of Demjanjuk, 612 F. Supp. 544, 566-8  
22 (N.D. Ohio 1985).

25 40. Based on the foregoing review, it is evident that the prohibition of crimes against  
26 humanity is a specific, universal, and obligatory norm under international law.





1 arbitrary detention.<sup>21</sup> For example, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights established a  
2 Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in 1991 to investigate cases of detention imposed  
3 arbitrarily or otherwise inconsistently with relevant international standards. See U.N.  
4 Commission on Human Rights Res. 1991/42. According to the Working Group, arbitrary  
5 detention is a violation of international law. The Working Group classifies cases of arbitrary  
6 detention in the following three legal categories:  
7

8 (a) When it is clearly impossible to invoke any legal basis justifying the  
9 deprivation of liberty (as when a person is kept in detention after the  
10 completion of his sentence or despite an amnesty law applicable to him)  
11 (category I);

12 (b) When the deprivation of liberty results from the exercise of the rights or  
13 freedoms guaranteed by articles 7, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal  
14 Declaration of Human Rights and, insofar as States parties are concerned, by  
15 articles 12, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on  
16 Civil and Political Rights (category II);

17 (c) When the total or partial non-observance of the international norms  
18 relating to the right to a fair trial, established in the Universal Declaration of  
19 Human Rights and in the relevant international instruments accepted by the  
20 States concerned, is of such gravity as to give the deprivation of liberty an  
21 arbitrary character (category III).

22 Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/1998/44 (1997).

23 44. The prohibition against arbitrary detention is recognized in each of the regional  
24 human rights systems. See American Convention on Human Rights, supra, at art. 7(3) (“No  
25 one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest or imprisonment.”); European Convention for the  
26 Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, supra, at art. 5(1) (“Everyone has  
27 the right to liberty and security of the person.”); African Charter on Human and Peoples’  
28 Rights, supra, at art. 6 (“Every individual shall have the right to liberty and to the security of  
his person. No one may be deprived of his freedom except for reasons and conditions  
previously laid down by law. In particular, no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.”).

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<sup>21</sup> See also U.N. Body of Principles, supra, at Principle 2 (“Arrest, detention or imprisonment shall only be carried out strictly in accordance with the provisions of the

1           45. Significantly, the prohibition against arbitrary detention is not limited by a  
2 temporal component. For example, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention does not  
3 focus on the length of the detention in determining whether a deprivation of liberty is  
4 arbitrary. Rather, it considers whether the detention falls within one of the three categories  
5 set forth in its mandate. See, e.g., Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention,  
6 U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/2002/77/Add.1 (2001). Thus, claims of arbitrary detention can be found  
7 even in cases lasting less than 24 hours. The Human Rights Committee, for example, has  
8 identified violations of Article 9 of the ICCPR in cases where the petitioner was detained for  
9 a relatively “short” period of time. See, e.g., Spakmo v. Norway, Communication No.  
10 631/1995, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/67/D/631/1995 (1999) (detention of approximately 8 hours);  
11 Tshionga a Minanga v. Zaire, Communication No. 366/1989, U.N. Doc.  
12 CCPR/C/49/D/366/1989 (1993) (detention of approximately 18 hours).

13  
14  
15           46. Similar findings have been made by the regional tribunals. In Quinn v. France,  
16 21 E.H.R.R. 529 (1995), for example, the petitioner was detained by French authorities for a  
17 period of 11 hours in the absence of lawful authority. The European Court determined that  
18 this detention was in violation of Article 5 of the European Convention. See also Litwa v.  
19 Poland, 33 E.H.R.R. 1267 (2000) (detention of six hours and thirty minutes constitutes a  
20 violation of Article 5 even where detention was a “lawful” option under domestic law, but  
21 unnecessary under the circumstances). The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights  
22 has made similar determinations. In Loren Laroye Riebe Star v. Mexico, three individuals  
23 residing in Mexico were detained without access to a lawyer or judicial remedies, each for  
24 periods of less than 24 hours. They were then summarily removed from Mexico. The Inter-  
25 American Commission determined that these acts constituted arbitrary detention in violation  
26 law and by competent officials or persons authorized for that purpose.”).  
27  
28

1 of Article 7 of the American Convention. Loren Laroye Riebe Star v. Mexico, Case 11.610,  
2 Inter-Am. C.H.R. Report No. 49/99 (1999), at para. 41.

3  
4 **B. The United States Recognizes the Prohibition against Arbitrary Detention**

5 47. In statements before international tribunals, the United States has argued that  
6 arbitrary detention is a violation of international law. For example, the United States argued  
7 before the International Court of Justice that arbitrary detention is contrary to fundamental  
8 international norms. Significantly, the International Court of Justice agreed. “[T]o deprive  
9 human beings of their freedom and to subject them to physical constraint in conditions of  
10 hardship is in itself manifestly incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the United  
11 Nations, as well as with the fundamental principles enunciated in the Universal Declaration  
12 of Human Rights.” Case Concerning United States Diplomatic and Consular Staff in Tehran,  
13 1980 I.C.J. 42, at para. 91.

14  
15 48. U.S. courts have repeatedly held that arbitrary detention violates international  
16 law. See Martinez v. City of Los Angeles, 141 F.3d 1373, 1384 (9th Cir. 1998) (“Detention  
17 is [also] arbitrary if it is not accompanied by notice of charges; if the person detained is not  
18 given early opportunity to communicate with family or to consult counsel; or is not brought  
19 to trial within a reasonable time.”). See also Mehinovic v. Vuckovic, 198 F. Supp. 2d at  
20 1349; Wiwa v. Royal Dutch, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS at \*17; Ma v. Ashcroft, 257 F.3d 1095,  
21 1114 (9th Cir. 2001); Xuncax v. Gramajo, 886 F. Supp. at 184; Paul v. Avril, 901 F. Supp. at  
22 330; Siderman de Blake v. Argentina, 965 F.2d at 717; Committee of U.S. Citizens Living in  
23 Nicaragua v. Reagan, 859 F.2d 929, 940 (D.C. Cir. 1988); Forti v. Suarez-Mason, 672 F.  
24 Supp. at 1541; Fernandez-Roque v. Smith, 622 F. Supp. 887, 903 (D.C. Ga. 1985).

25  
26 49. While most U.S. courts have addressed claims of arbitrary detention in cases of  
27  
28

1 extended detention, this does not establish a temporal requirement. Indeed, at least one court  
2 has recognized claims of arbitrary detention even for periods of less than 24 hours.<sup>22</sup> In Paul  
3 v. Avril, 901 F. Supp. at 330, for example, the district court awarded compensatory and  
4 punitive damages to an individual who was detained for less than ten hours. While the  
5 Restatement (Third) § 702(e) indicates that prolonged arbitrary detention is a violation of  
6 international law, the subsequent commentary indicates that a single, brief arbitrary detention  
7 may give rise to a violation. Given the unambiguous nature of the relevant treaty provisions  
8 as well as the various tribunal rulings on this matter, there is simply no basis for adding a  
9 temporal component to arbitrary detention.  
10

11 50. Based on the foregoing review, it is evident that the prohibition against arbitrary  
12 detention is a specific, universal, and obligatory norm under international law.  
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17 <sup>22</sup> Another U.S. court, declined to determine whether international law requires  
18 arbitrary detention to be “prolonged,” noting the difficulty of applying such a  
19 standard. Eastman Kodak Co. v. Kavlin, 978 F. Supp. 1078, 1094 (S.D. Fla. 1997).  
According to the District Court, imprisonment of less than two weeks for purposes of  
20 extortion is sufficient to state a claim for arbitrary detention. Even assuming that  
21 “prolonged” is an element required in an arbitrary detention claim, the court noted:

22 [T]he Court sees no reason why a prison stay of eight or  
23 ten days cannot be considered a ‘prolonged’ detention.  
24 Defendants implicitly assume that whatever ‘prolonged’  
25 means, it must mean more than eight or ten days. But  
26 why? What does it mean for a detention to be  
27 prolonged? If the standard were purely comparative,  
then Nelson Mandela's [sic] twenty-seven year  
imprisonment for political reasons might set a very high  
threshold of duration for the actionability of ‘arbitrary  
detention’ claims. Under such a standard, even the Forti  
plaintiff's four years in detention might not look  
particularly “prolonged.” But that cannot be right. The  
actionability of one plaintiff's claims cannot depend on  
the degree of evil perpetrated on another plaintiff.

28 Id.

1 **VI. CONCLUSION**

2 51. Torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, crimes against humanity, and  
3 arbitrary detention are each well-recognized violations of customary international law. These  
4 acts have been condemned in international agreements and state practice. They have also  
5 been condemned by the United States through executive statements, legislative  
6 pronouncements, and judicial decisions. In sum, the prohibitions against torture, cruel,  
7 inhuman, or degrading treatment, crimes against humanity, and arbitrary detention are  
8 specific, universal, and obligatory.  
9

10  
11 AFFIRMED:

12  
13 S/  
14 WILLIAM J. ACEVES  
15 SARAH H. CLEVELAND  
16 JOAN FITZPATRICK  
17 RONALD SLYE  
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**ATTESTION REGARDING SIGNATURES**

I, Joshua Sondheimer, declare under penalty of perjury under the Laws of the United States that affirmations as to the contents of the foregoing Affidavit of International Law Scholars on the Status of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, Crimes Against Humanity, and Arbitrary Detention Under International Law, and concurrence in the filing of this document, have been obtained from each of the above-named signatories.

Dated: July 3, 2002

s/Joshua Sondheimer  
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**APPENDIX A**

**SUMMARY OF CREDENTIALS**  
**AFFIDAVIT REGARDING TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR**  
**DEGRADING TREATMENT, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY AND**  
**ARBITRARY DETENTION**

**WILLIAM J. ACEVES** is Professor of Law and Director of the International Legal Studies Program at California Western School of Law. Professor Aceves teaches Human Rights Law, Comparative Law, Foreign Affairs and the Constitution, and Law and International Relations. He was previously a Ford Foundation Fellow in International Law at the UCLA School of Law. Professor Aceves is a member of the Executive Committee of the American Branch of the International Law Association and the Chair of the Extradition and Human Rights Committee. He is a member of the Litigation Advisory Council of the Center for Justice & Accountability and a Cooperating Attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights. He is also a member of the Amnesty International USA Legal Support Network Steering Committee. Professor Aceves has published articles in several law reviews and written several essays for the prestigious American Journal of International Law. He was the principal author of the 2002 Amnesty International USA report on torture and impunity. Professor Aceves has extensive experience in human rights litigation, having submitted amicus briefs to the First Circuit, Fourth Circuit, Fifth Circuit, Ninth Circuit, Tenth Circuit, and the United States Supreme Court. He has also appeared before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Migrants.

1 **SARAH H. CLEVELAND** has been named the Marrs McLean Professor of  
2 International Law, effective as of September 2002, at the University of Texas School  
3 of Law. A member of the faculty since 1997, she teaches and writes primarily in the  
4 areas of human rights, international law, constitutional law and foreign relations law.  
5 She has served as an investigator or legal adviser in human rights situations around the  
6 globe, including in Cuba, Kenya and Namibia, and has testified before the U.S.  
7 Congress on human rights and refugee issues. She is a graduate of Yale Law School,  
8 Brown University, and Oxford University, where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar.  
9 She served as a law clerk to Associate Justice Harry A. Blackmun.

11  
12 **JOAN FITZPATRICK** is the Jeffrey & Susan Brotman Professor of Law at the  
13 University of Washington, where she has taught since 1984. She is the author of six  
14 books and numerous articles on international human rights, refugee law, domestic  
15 incorporation of international law, and constitutional law. She is a member of the  
16 Board of Editors of the *American Journal of International Law*, and Vice President of  
17 the Procedural Aspects of International Law Institute. She worked for the Department  
18 of Justice in the 1970s, and contributed to the seminal memorandum submitted by the  
19 State Department in the case of *Filartiga v. Pena-Irala*. She is a member of the  
20 Advisory Council of the Center for Justice & Accountability.

23  
24 **RONALD C. SLYE** is an associate professor at Seattle University School of Law,  
25 where he teaches public international law, international human rights law, poverty  
26 law, and property law. He is the author or co-author of numerous articles and books in  
27 those fields, and is currently writing a book on the legitimacy of amnesties for gross  
28



1 violations of human rights. He is a member of the Operating Committee of the  
2 Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation, and was a visiting professor at the Community Law  
3 Centre at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. From 1997 to the  
4 present, he has been a consultant in public international law and human rights to the  
5 South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Professor Slye received a J.D.  
6 from Yale Law School in 1989, co-taught Yale's international human rights law clinic  
7 (1993-96), and served as the Associate Director of the Law School's Orville H. Schell,  
8 Jr. Center for International Human Rights.  
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