

from "Rewriting Torture: Manufacturing a Primer of Abuse in US Domestic Prisons"

Susan A. Phillips. *Social Justice*, 2016, Vol. 43, No. 4 (146) (2016), pp. 44-68

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A 2009 "Prison: Theory, Ethnography, and Action" class compared reports of torture conducted at Abu Ghraib with similar experiences in US domestic prisons. Susan A. Phillips, professor of Environmental Analysis at Pitzer College (then associate professor), published the results. Phillips summarizes: "[The project] shifted expertise from academics to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals....In the outcome, the altered report turned out to be a rigorous, well-documented primer of ill treatment, structural problems, and troubling legal and extralegal practices within US prisons" (p.50).

In 2007, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) detailed concerns about maltreatment of individuals then in CIA custody. That report, leaked to journalist Mark Danner, appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 2009 as "ICRC Report on the Treatment of Fourteen 'High Value Detainees' in CIA Custody by the International Committee of the Red Cross"

Original ICRC report >>

ICRC Report	Altered Report
Introduction	Introduction
1. Main Elements of the CIA Detention Program	1. Main Elements of the US Prison System
1.1. Arrest and Transfer	1.1. Arrest and Transfer
1.2. Continuous Solitary Confinement and Incommunicado Detention	1.2. Continuous Solitary Confinement
1.3. Other Methods of Ill-treatment	1.3. Other Methods of Ill-treatment
1.3.1. Suffocation by Water	1.3.1. Use of Non-Lethal Weapons
1.3.2. Prolonged Stress Standing	1.3.2. Deaths in Custody
1.3.3. Beatings by Use of a Collar	1.3.3. Exposure to Disease
1.3.4. Beating and Kicking	1.3.4. Beating and Kicking
1.3.5. Confinement in a Box	1.3.5. Overcrowding
1.3.6. Prolonged Nudity	1.3.6. Prolonged Nudity
1.3.7. Sleep Deprivation and Use of Loud Music	1.3.7. Sleep Deprivation
1.3.8. Exposure to Cold Temperature/Cold Water	1.3.8. Exposure to Extreme Temperature
1.3.9. Prolonged Use of Handcuffs and Shackles	1.3.9. Prolonged Use of Restraints
1.3.10. Threats	1.3.10. Threats
1.3.11. Forced Shaving	1.3.11. Rape and Sexual Violence
1.3.12. Deprivation/Restricted Provision of Solid Food	1.3.12. Deprivation/Restricted Provision of Food
1.4. Further Elements of the Detention Regime	1.4. Further Elements of the Detention Regime
2. Conditions of Detention in Later Stages	2. Normalized Conditions of Detention
3. Health Provision and Role of Medical Staff	3. Health Provision and Role of Medical Staff
4. Legal Aspects Related to Undisclosed Detention	4. Legal Aspects Related to Detention
5. Fate of Other Persons Who Passed through the CIA Detention Program	5. Fate of Other Persons Who Pass through the US Prison System
6. Future Use of the CIA Detention Program	6. Future use of the US Prison System

All of the information contained in the students' report is based on documented occurrences and first-person narratives of prison life in the United States.

<< Class report

Comparison table appears in "Rewriting Torture: Manufacturing a Primer of Abuse in US Domestic Prisons," p.52-53. Full article is available from public libraries through JSTOR.

This summary prepared by V. Spatz, May 2025.

This report was intended as an accounting of some of the abuses taking place on US domestic territory. Whether these comprise torture is only part of the point. We assert, just as the ICRC might, that our system needs remedy. We seek that remedy with you, the reader.

-- "Rewriting Torture: Manufacturing a Primer of Abuse in US Domestic Prisons," p.64