

UN Committee Against Torture Grills U.S. Again



Geneva, November 14 (RHC)-- The United States has been grilled for a second and final day by the United Nations Committee Against Torture in Geneva. The cross-examination on Thursday covered issues including CIA's "black sites," indefinite detentions at the Guantanamo military prison in Cuba and prisoner abuse.

U.S. delegates were also questioned on the sticky issue of widespread and excessive use of force by the police. Dozens of activists stood in silent protest at the room, displaying pictures from victims of police brutality, as the delegates discussed US police record.

On Wednesday, Barack Obama administration representatives acknowledged to the UN anti-torture body that "in the wake of 9/11 attacks, we regrettably did not always live up to our own values."

"We crossed the line and we take responsibility for that," acting U.S. legal advisor Mary McLeod told the 10-member UN committee in Geneva, quoting President Barack Obama. Several U.S. officials acknowledged abuses had occurred during the Bush administration.

The United States has been accused of torturing prisoners in both domestic prisons and CIA's so-called black sites abroad. Human rights groups accuse Obama of repeatedly declining to deliver justice for U.S. torture victims.

The Senate Intelligence Committee has conducted a five-year investigation into the CIA's torture program adopted in the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. But the CIA is reportedly seeking to conceal facts about its controversial interrogation methods in the upcoming report.

Jamil Dakwar, the human rights program director for the American Civil Liberties Union, criticized the U.S. delegation's performance in front of the committee on Thursday. "The U.S. responses today fall short of meeting its obligations under the anti-torture treaty," he said. "This is especially true for practices that emerged or became entrenched since President Obama came into office, such as indefinite detention at Guantanamo as well as immigration detention and deportations. President Obama's legacy on human rights is now hanging in the balance."

Earlier, the Human Rights Watch said the U.S. is not committing itself to stop torture outside US territory. The group said Washington should accept responsibility wherever it has effective control. That includes the Guantanamo prison and CIA-run facilities, such as those in Poland and Afghanistan.

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