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## **Nobody Gets to Torture**

Editorial  
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The administration's latest salvo against a Senate ban on "cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment" of foreign prisoners is appalling - and pitiful. Its proposal that CIA operatives be exempted from the ban would set into law a class of citizens who are allowed to torture other human beings, an action that goes against the deepest values of this country. And to give carte blanche to an agency suspected in the deaths of at least eight prisoners in Iraq and holding an unknown number of "disappeared" people whom even the International Red Cross doesn't know about is folly.

Senators voted 90-9 to include the anti-torture declaration in a military appropriations bill. The language is not in the House version, and it's shocking that there is even doubt whether a ban on "cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment" of foreign prisoners will remain as the bill is finalized in joint Senate-House committee sessions. The White House has lobbied hard against the ban, even threatening that President Bush would veto the entire bill. The veto would be this president's first - a sorry legacy.

No American has the right to torture another human. It is unfortunate that senators must spell this out in law, but they must. The administration has failed spectacularly to stick to the promises the United States made as a signatory to the Geneva Conventions half a century ago and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment a decade ago.

CIA agents work in prisons with U.S. military personnel. At Abu Ghraib, prisoners were handed over to CIA agents for abuse. Other agents ordered Navy SEALs to beat detainees at the Navy's Camp Jenny Pozzi in Iraq. In camps in Iraq and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, CIA agents held prisoners in separate facilities; their names were on no lists, their status and futures unknown. Confusion over whether some forms of torture were legal has come from the top, with rulings by the White House counsel saying wartime rules don't cover people captured in a war on terror and with a failure to find fault with the leaders behind the stream of deaths and abuses reported from the field.

Torture is cruel, immoral and, from a practical point of view, ineffective if the goal is to obtain solid information. No group of Americans should be permitted to engage in this heinous practice. No law should condone lawlessness.