Extraordinary Rendition, the Canadian Edition: National Security and Challenges to the Global Ban on Torture

Alex Neve
Amnesty International, Canada, Ontario, Canada
Received 18 April 2006; accepted 10 May 2006

Abstract
Since the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States, concerns that counter-terrorism laws and practices are directly and indirectly causing human rights violations have mounted. Much of the international focus has been on the United States. This paper highlights, however, that it is a debate with a truly global dimension. The author examines particular concerns that Canadian law enforcement and security agencies may have been complicit in the imprisonment and torture abroad of Canadian citizens who were of interest in the context of national security investigations. The cases are situated in the wider debate about torture that has emerged worldwide in recent years, and argues that any move to create exceptions to the absolute prohibition of torture, enshrined in numerous international treaties, would lead to both injustice and insecurity.

Rendición extraordinaria, versión canadiense: la seguridad nacional y los retos de la prohibición internacional de la tortura

Desde los ataques terroristas en Estados Unidos del II de Septiembre, crece la preocupación de que las leyes y prácticas antiterroristas producen directa e indirectamente violaciones de derechos humanos. El principal foco de atención han sido los Estados Unidos. Los puntos principales de esta ponencia reflejan que se trata de un debate con verdadera dimensión internacional. Su autor examina particularmente la posible complicidad de las autoridades canadienses en la captura y tortura internacional de ciudadanos canadienses. Estos casos se sitúan en el más amplio debate sobre la tortura que se viene desarrollando internacionalmente en estos años y la ponencia argumenta que cualquier tendencia a crear excepciones a la prohibición absoluta de la tortura, contenida en numerosos tratados internacionales, conducirá a la vez a la injusticia y a la seguridad.
La rendition extraordinaire, l’édition canadienne: sécurité nationale et défis à l’interdiction globale de la torture

Depuis le 11 septembre les attaques terroristes aux États-Unis, les soucis que les lois et les pratiques contre-terroristes entraînent directement et indirectement des violations de droits de l’homme montent. En grande partie, le regard international reste sur les États-Unis. Cet article accentue, cependant, que c’est une discussion dans une dimension véritablement globale. L’auteur examine des intérêts particuliers que les agences canadiennes d’application de loi et de sécurité ont pu avoir été complices dans l’emprisonnement et la torture des citoyens canadiens qui étaient d’intérêt dans le contexte des investigations de sécurité nationale. Les cas sont situés au cours de la discussion plus large au sujet de la torture qui apparaît dans le monde entier ces dernières années, et agissent du fait que tout mouvement de créer des exceptions à la prohibition absolue de la torture, enchâssée dans de nombreux traités internationaux, mènerait à l’injustice et à l’insécurité.

Keywords
renditions, torture, extraordinary rendition, Canada, national security

Introduction

The beating started that day and was very intense for a week, and then less intense for another week. That second and the third days were the worst. I could hear other prisoners being tortured, and screaming and screaming. The cable is a black electrical cable, about two inches thick. They hit me with it everywhere on my body. Where they hit me with the cables, my skin turned blue for two or three weeks, but there was no bleeding. At the end of each day, they would always say, “Tomorrow will be harder for you.” So each night, I could not sleep – I did not sleep for the first four days, and slept no more than two hours a day for about two months.

They immediately started beating me very hard. The beating was very different than in Syria – it was as if they were trained in martial arts. My hands were cuffed behind my back, and I was still hooded. They kicked me all over my body, and I was sent flying all over the room. Then they forced me to crouch down low, which caused a lot of pain in my knee. If I tried to move, or fell forward, they would beat me. They were yelling at me and insulting my family members and my religion. They asked me about my sister, who was living in Egypt. They said she was being held in the next room and that they were going to rape her. I felt completely broken, and collapsed, and started to repeat the false confession he had given in Syria, because I thought it was what they wanted to hear.

The interrogator told me to take off my jacket, shoes and socks. He told me to lie on the floor with my stomach down, my head on the floor, my hands behind my back and my legs up. They lashed the soles of my feet and it felt like they were pouring lava on me. I flipped because of the pain and they ordered me to lie back on my stomach. One person stood on my head, the other on my back, and they took turns beating my feet and kicking me with their wooden-