

Guantanamo in America

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In the years since the beginning of the Bush administration's "war on terror," a series of revelations have exposed the horrific torture practices used against prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, CIA "black sites" and other prisons abroad, as a matter of state policy.

These barbaric practices, which were documented in stomach-churning detail in the CIA torture report released last year, are rooted in the drive of US imperialism to plunder and dominate the world and suppress by force all opposition to its predatory aims. But the same ruling class that is waging imperialist war abroad is waging a class war at home, presiding over the enormous enrichment of the financial oligarchy at the expense of the working class.

There is no hard line between foreign and domestic policy, a fact that was given concreteness this week in the revelation, published in the *Guardian* newspaper, that one of the top interrogators at Guantanamo Bay had pioneered the methods he used at the torture camp working as a detective in Chicago.

According to the *Guardian*, Richard Zuley obtained at least one wrongful murder conviction by methods that he would later use at Guantanamo Bay: Prolonged shackling in "stress positions," threats against family members, threats that the accused could be subject to the death penalty if they did not confess and demands that those under torture implicate themselves and others.

The newspaper cites the example of one Chicago woman whom Zuley kept shackled to a wall for more than 24 hours until she confessed that she and her ex-boyfriend had committed a murder. She remains in prison to this day. Another victim, Lathierial Boyd, was released in 2013 after spending 23 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

Zuley's background and his outstanding ability to extract confessions were noticed by administrators at Guantanamo Bay, who set him to work in a team of

torturers at the prison.

Among Zuley's victims, according to the *Guardian*, was Ould Slahi, author of the recently-published book *Guantánamo Diary*, in which he recounts being tortured, sexually assaulted and beaten to within an inch of his life at the prison, to the point where he would sign any confession his torturers would put before him.

The revelations, declared the *Guardian*, express "a continuum between police abuses in urban America" and the torture perpetrated in the name of the war on terror. The case of Zuley is hardly an aberration, however. The American ruling class presides over a country that incarcerates a greater percentage of its population than any other in the world, where the brutal treatment of prisoners is a daily reality.

A recent report from the American Civil Liberties Union, for example, documents the horrific conditions facing over 80,000 people in solitary confinement in the US prison system, including the mentally ill, mentally handicapped and children. The barbaric practice has been declared a form of torture by the United Nations.

According to the ACLU, 95 percent of those subjected to solitary confinement reported developing symptoms of psychological illness, such as panic or anxiety attacks and hallucinations. In Texas alone there are more than 100 prisoners who have spent *more than 20 years* in tiny cells for 22 hours a day, with virtually no direct contact with any other human beings.

Domestic prisons, which are increasingly being used to hold those accused of terrorism, often as a result of entrapment by intelligence agencies, are introducing rules similar to those in force abroad. Next week, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the body that oversees civilian penitentiaries, will implement a new rule that, in the words of law professor David M. Shapiro "all but prevents prisoners incarcerated in the United States and

suspected of connections to terrorism from speaking with their families.”

Shapiro notes that another set of recently introduced methods “make an unprecedented inroad into the attorney-client privilege, permitting federal agents to intercept communications between certain prisoners deemed a threat to national security and their attorneys.” He adds that prisons in New York and Colorado have already used these methods.

The prison system, including the continued barbaric practice of state-sanctioned executions, is only part of a broader apparatus, including a militarized police force that kills with impunity and an intelligence system that spies on the population in violation of basic democratic rights. Whether under Republicans or Democrats, Bush or Obama, the state functions ever more openly as an instrument of violence and repression.

If the methods utilized at Guantanamo and elsewhere represent in part the “export” of techniques used within the US, it is also true that the brutal methods honed by the ruling class abroad will be transferred ever more directly back into the United States, applied to suppress the growth of political opposition to war and social inequality.

The reemergence of torture, forced confessions, and other medieval practices is part of the repudiation of democratic legal and political forms under the pressure of growing social inequality.

The American financial aristocracy, which makes its wealth through fraud and swindling, and the degraded thugs they hire to carry out their dirty work in prisons, police precincts and torture chambers, see the legal norms of due process and equality under the law as impediments to their plunder, violence and murder.



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