



## Establishing International Standards for the Treatment of Prisoners

Over the years, prisons have changed in such a way that they now convey a sense of civilization. When we look back at history, we find that kingdoms, dynasties used many violent and barbaric methods for all sorts of reasons, for example: interrogation, punishment, and so on... However, it was known that a prisoner in any kingdom had rights and that he was protected by the word of the king or whatever ruler reigning at that time. In these times, it was the ruler's word that assured the prisoners of their simple rights, however, kingdoms disappeared and were replaced by a "civilization" and in a civilized world, everything can be changed for the sake of a better future, a safer community. Thus, governments started manipulating whatever rules protected the prisoners and started abusing and mistreating them in such inhumane ways that people got doubtful and asked themselves: has anything changed throughout the years?

And so came the need, the necessity to create a few laws and principles that defended the prisoners' rights and from that sprung the 11 basic principles for the treatment of prisoners by the UN in 1990. The principles include the simplest of human rights, however, one can surely imagine how out of control these prisons have gotten for people to sign a mandate and approve of rules that were already approved and set in our society, the rules that are our basic perception of right and wrong. If the UN found it of the utmost importance to issue these principles, then I cannot fathom what sort of atrocities went on in these prisons.

When talking about prisoners, we must realize that there are 3 main types of prisoners: political prisoners such as activists and movement leaders, war criminals, who are basically people who either committed horrific crimes against humanity during wars or people that worked for no particular side and were mercenaries mostly for whomever promised them the most money and finally, petty and "regular" criminals - everyday prisoners ranging from robbers to murderers. This last type of prisoner is rather different as the crimes they have committed aren't nearly as severe as the crimes of other prisoners.

Governments are indifferent to these "regular" criminals, because they usually do their time in prison and return to society, or at the least try to do so.

The governments' main interests are the aforementioned war criminals and political prisoners, and the governments are willing to do whatever

they can, whatever is in their power, to get information out of these prisoners. They put "civilization" aside and practice the oldest, most agonizing, terrifying atrocities and barbaric methods of torture that are only "improved" and become more horrific and painful as time goes by, being designed to inflict the worst kind of pain possible. The worst cases of mistreatment of prisoners were Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, in addition to many modern day prisons that were the cause of political and civil unrest in several nations such as Syria and Palestine.

Even the US hired two psychologists to devise new and painful methods of torture. Guantanamo Bay was established after the 9/11 attacks, when the USA's government found it crucial to interrogate or imprison any "possible threat" to national security that was withholding "crucial information". Of course, it violated every basic and simple rule of these 11 principles, even to the extent of the simplest human rights a person could think of. For example, The International Committee of the Red Cross inspected the camp in June 2004 and the inspectors accused the U.S. military of using "humiliating acts such as solitary confinement, temperature extremes, use of forced positions against prisoners". They concluded that "the construction of such a system, whose stated purpose is the production of intelligence, cannot be considered other than an intentional system of cruel, unusual and degrading treatment and a form of torture." The United States Government reportedly rejected the Red Cross' findings and accusations at the time. The ICRC reports of several activities that were "tantamount to torture": exposure to loud noise or music, prolonged extreme temperatures, or beatings. It also reported that a Behavioral Science Consultation Team (BSCT), also called 'Biscuit,' and military physicians communicated confidential medical information to the interrogation teams (weaknesses, phobias ....), resulting in the prisoners losing confidence in their medical care. There were also several claims of attempted suicides - around 40 attempts, of which 21 were successful. Yet again, the government denied the accusations, claiming that it was all an attempt at the defamation of the government and a very "devious" method of libel.

A prison that can think of enough methods and ways of torture to push a prisoner to their very edge, make him doubt his medical treatment and go that extra mile and take away his own life is in my opinion indifferent to whatever "Basic Principles" the UN have implemented, as they have long crossed the line. However, if Guantanamo is not proof enough of the obvious mistreatment of prisoners, then take Abu Ghraib for example, a prison established upon the same principles of Guantanamo, right after the Americans entered Iraq.

Abu Ghraib has many unorthodox methods of torture, it relies on the more humiliating part of torture that breaks the prisoner's will and drives him to their breaking point, of course, one might think that less physical abuse

equals a better treatment. The truth is the contrary, prisoners, as crazy as it sounds, would rather prefer physical abuse than any kind of humiliation method because a torturer can only beat and physically abuse a prisoner only to the point where the prisoner starts dying during torture. However Abu Ghraib used sexual abuse, rape, and racial-religious slurs, as most of the prisoners were Muslim.

That being said, most prisoners were eventually mentally broken. The 11 basic principles speak of a way of reintegrating prisoners back into society, however, a man with this kind of memories in his head would rather brain-wash himself or seek merciful death, because he can't live with the horrors of torture forever imprinted on his memory, regardless of the fact that what happened is only known by the prisoner. Imagine telling someone that they're worthless and making them doubt everything they ever believed in. As the prisoner can't defend themselves, this will dishearten them in such a way that will test their limits and eventually break them as even the strongest person can break. Abu Ghraib goes far beyond the principles, and if you think that what happens in these two prisons is horrible enough, imagine what happens in Syria and Palestine. However, instead of torturing a man, who may or may not be a possible suspect, imagine torturing an orphaned child or a woman, who have nowhere to go, no place to live, no people to get help from.

I really think that in these modern day prisons, the aim is not to implement the UN's principles because they have proven to be worthless and trivial in the eyes of most governments, however, the aim is to reduce any amount of torture the prisons use, because the level of danger the prisoner is exposed to, who was supposed to be protected by the principles, not only doubled nor tripled, but quadrupled in such facilities. The only way of fixing this dilemma, like some people might say, is to shut these prisons down or even ban the torture methods, however, such a thing is not possible at the moment.

You can't force a government that has completely secret prisons that don't even show up on any network to change their methods, it just is not legally doable, however, these prisons must surely be aware that the people who went through hell won't forget, and if they're not lucky enough to get out alive, which is the intention of most prisons, the word will spread somehow and it will only add fuel to the fire of the already existing conflict. More protests will appear, until the time comes when the government just won't know what to do, or how to react. In the end, you can't keep provoking people even if they're restrained and defenseless and keep expecting them not to fight back somehow.