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RE: Torture and the Nomination of Gina Haspel to be CIA Director

Dear Senator NAME:

As national Catholic advocacy organizations, we write to ask you to oppose the nomination of Gina Haspel to be CIA Director. While we recognize that Ms. Haspel is an experienced career CIA employee; her role overseeing torture in the CIA's black site in Thailand raises serious questions and using basic moral standards for human dignity disqualifies her from leading the agency.

Most of Ms. Haspel's career is classified, leaving the public with little on which to evaluate her nomination. Public reports, though, which have not been disputed by the CIA, indicate that she supervised the CIA black site in Thailand while Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri was tortured through a variety of techniques – including waterboarding. CIA records indicate that agency interrogators at that site were at times at “the point of tears and choking up” and “likely to elect transfer away from the site.” There is no indication, however, that Ms. Haspel attempted to stop the use of torture at the site – indeed she may have been transferred there to tamp down on concerns the interrogators at the site had over the legality of the techniques being used.

Confirming someone who actively supervised torture to be CIA Director would send a very unhealthy, unethical, and anti-rule of law message to the world. Our friends and allies would question our opposition to torture, and tyrants and dictators would once again point to us to justify their own use of torture. Those at the CIA, the FBI, and in our military who objected to torture would be betrayed as they watched someone who was responsible for torture elevated above them. American Catholic pastoral and humanitarian aid workers would be distrusted and endangered. It would also be understood as a message of support for torture by our President – who has repeatedly stated his personal interest in restarting the torture program.

Ms. Haspel's undisputed role supervising torture should be reason enough for Senators to vote against her nomination. Additionally, though, the CIA's decision to selectively declassify no more than a handful of pages from her more than three decade career makes it impossible for the American people to fairly evaluate someone who has been nominated for a Cabinet-level position. A CIA spokesperson recently told the NYTimes that the agency “is being more robust than normal in supporting this nomination.” In essence, that means that the agency Ms. Haspel now effectively heads, and which has admitted to supporting her nomination, has used its authority to prevent the release of almost any information about her role in the torture program, let alone the rest of her career. Keeping this information from the American people is an inappropriate and undemocratic use of classification authority.

We ask our Senators to demand that the full record of Ms. Haspel's involvement in torture be made public prior to the consideration of her nomination. Further, we pray that you will see her role supervising torture as disqualifying and vote against this nomination.

Sincerely,