

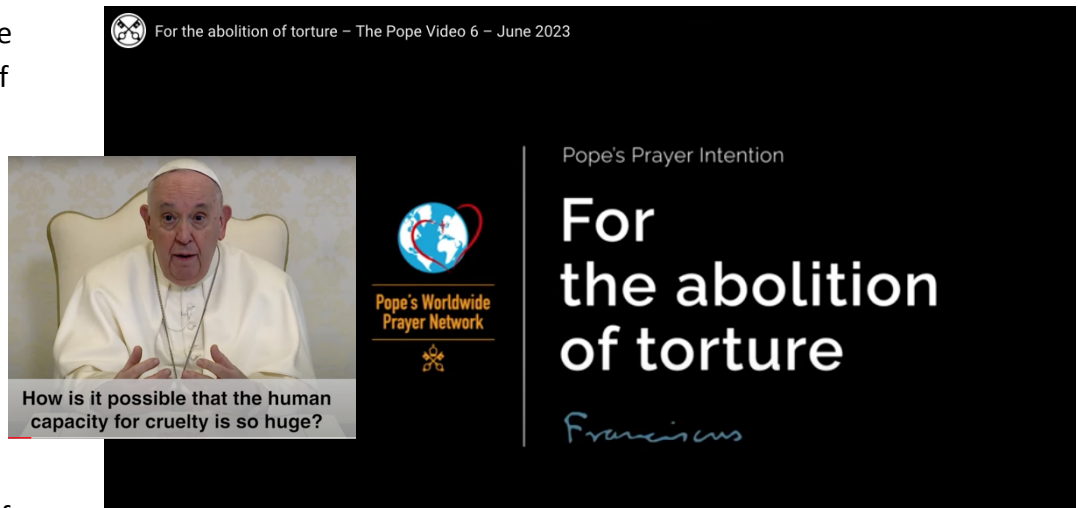


# PRAY - STUDY - ACT

## June is Torture Awareness Month

### Pope Francis's prayer intention for June 2023 is for the abolition of torture

In this month's video, available at <https://thepopevideo.org/> Pope Francis says, "Torture is not past history. Unfortunately, it's part of our history today. ... There are extremely violent forms of torture. Others are more sophisticated, such as degrading someone, dulling the senses, or mass detentions in conditions so inhumane that they take away the dignity of the person. ... Let us put a stop to this horror of torture. It is essential to put the dignity of the person above all else. ... Let us pray that the international community commit itself concretely to abolish torture, guaranteeing support to victims and their families."



### What is Torture Awareness Month?

*From the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT):* In 1997, the United Nations decided to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the enactment of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by declaring June 26 the **International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**.

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed the UN Convention Against Torture, which says: "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, international political instability or any other public emergency may be invoked as justification for torture." The U.S. Senate ratified the Convention in 1994.

Unfortunately, after September 11, 2001 ... [in] the name of the war on terrorism, CIA and military interrogators tortured 9/11 detainees using "enhanced interrogation techniques." The infamous photos from Abu Ghraib and the release of tens of thousands of pages of formerly-secret government documents prove that the government violated this country's principles and promises by torturing human beings. These actions were both immoral and illegal. To date, both the White House and Congress have refused to establish an independent Commission of Inquiry, and the full extent of the torture program has yet to be revealed.

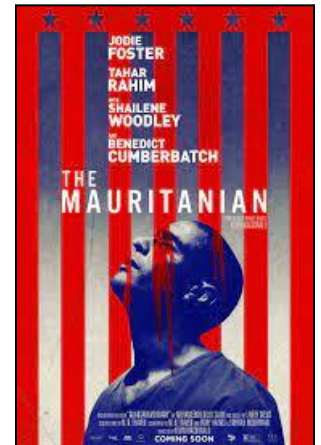
Torture Awareness Month is an effort by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and allied organizations to ensure that we, as a nation, take the time to honor the courage and struggle of torture survivors from around the world, and to organize a variety of effort to ensure that U.S. Americans are aware that U.S.-sponsored torture is a wrong that must be righted. Through vigils, letters-to-editor campaigns, programs in congregations and other activities, the aim is to raise the nation's consciousness about torture as a moral issue that must be addressed in public policy.

## PRAY

- **Prayer “Jesus, Our Tortured Brother Today”** – Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace and former staff member Sr. Dianna Ortiz, OSU, wrote the enclosed prayer for Pax Christi USA in the early 2000s. Make it a part of your prayer this month and share it with others in your parish, local group, religious community, school, etc. Feel free to share the prayer electronically or order prayer cards from the Pax Christi USA store through our website.
- **Host a prayer vigil:** You might hold a brief prayer vigil on Facebook Live or in-person. Prayers and other resources are available on NRCAT’S website ([www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)).

## STUDY

- **Host a screening and discussion of the NRCAT film "Torture in Our Name":** This 35-minute documentary, directed by filmmaker Matthew Gossage, features movement leaders with first-hand experience of solitary confinement and faith leaders from three state campaigns to end solitary – the Louisiana Stop Solitary Coalition, the New York Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement/#HALTSolitary Campaign, and New Jersey Prison Justice Watch. The film is a call to action for communities of faith and conscience to engage in the growing nationwide movement to end the torture of solitary confinement. Go to the NRCAT website ([www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)) to learn more about the film and download a discussion guide to help you plan your screening and discussion.
- **Watch "The Mauritanian":** The film tells the story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi and his fight for freedom after being detained, tortured, and imprisoned without charge in Guantanamo. Now available for streaming from \$4.99, we encourage you to watch it and to invite others to watch it as well. If you get a group to watch it (either together or separately) you can then use NRCAT's The Mauritanian Viewing and Discussion Guide (available on the NRCAT website, [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)) to organize an online or in-person post-watch discussion and advocacy group.



## ACT

- **Sign the National Pledge:** Visit the NRCAT website to add your name to and download a printable version of NRCAT's new National Pledge: A Moral Call to End the Torture of Solitary Confinement. After you sign it, invite others to sign it.
- **Display a banner:** Do you have an anti-torture banner? If you don't have a banner but would like to display one, banners are available at a reduced rate or free of charge for congregations to display with messages including "Close Guantanamo" or "Solitary Confinement = Torture." Please contact Rev. T.C. Morrow at 202-547-1920 or by email ([tmorrow@nrcat.org](mailto:tmorrow@nrcat.org)) if you are interested in acquiring a banner from NRCAT.
- **Write a letter to the editor:** Sample talking points on closing Guantanamo are on the NRCAT website ([www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)).
- **Raise awareness or share action alerts on social media:** Use social media to promote anti-torture messages during June.

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***Thanks to our colleagues at the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT, [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)) for providing these resources and suggestions to mark Torture Awareness Month.***