

February 18, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned, are members of an international coalition of former senior military and law enforcement officers and officials who are united by our total opposition to the use of torture during interrogations, which we regard as ineffective, unreliable, and counterproductive, as well as immoral and illegal. More broadly, we believe that governments and security services that violate human rights and use abusive and heavy-handed security and counterterrorism measures – including torture, “disappearing,” extrajudicial killings, mass arrests, and violent responses to peaceful protests – are undermining their own stability and inflaming extremism by alienating and radicalizing their own citizens.

As a result, we are writing to urge you to use the opportunity presented by the Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to convey to the United States’ global partners that the effectiveness of CVE efforts is largely dependent on the extent to which a country’s security forces adhere to human rights standards, particularly during counterterrorism-related operations. Put another way, the actions from which countries refrain while undertaking counterterrorism operations are equally as important as the actions they take in support of CVE; what they don’t do is as critical to a successful CVE program as what they do.

As former high-ranking security sector professionals we are certainly not advocating treating terrorists with “kid gloves.” But acting forcefully and decisively when confronting dangerous extremists is not the same thing as carrying out draconian and arbitrary measures that undermine public trust, alienate people, and push them towards radicalization and extremism; such measures are self-defeating and negate the intended effect of even the most well-planned and well-meaning CVE efforts. We therefore strongly encourage you to state clearly to CVE Summit participants that counterterrorism procedures and operations that do not uphold human rights standards only serve to fuel extremism and render CVE efforts moot.

- Brigadier General Wilson Boinett (Ret.) (Kenya)
- General Lamine Cisse (Ret.), former Commander of the Armed Forces and Minister of the Interior (Senegal)
- General Ray Henault (Ret.), former Chief of the Defense Staff, former Chairman of the NATO Military Committee (Canada)
- Tariq Parvez, former Director General of the National Investigation Agency; former National Coordinator of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (Pakistan)
- Brigadier General Augustino Ramadhani (Ret.), former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Tanzania)
- Stephen White, former Assistant Chief Constable and Head of Force Operations for the Police Service of Northern Ireland; former Special Advisor to the European Union’s Secretary General and Head of Mission for the EU’s Integrated Rule of Law Mission for Iraq (United Kingdom)

cc:

The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State

The Honorable Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State

The Honorable Rose Gottemoeller, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security

The Honorable Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights

The Honorable Christine Wormuth, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

The Honorable William Brownfield, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

The Honorable Michael Lumpkin, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/ Low-Intensity Conflict

The Honorable Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Honorable Tina Kaidanow, Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism

Mr. Stephen Pomper, Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, National Security Council