

April 16, 2016

Torture is a no-brainer

Dear Editor,

Torturing a suspected terrorist to save hundreds or even thousands of lives... sounds like a no-brainer, right? Yup, a no-brainer as in zero thinking involved. Why is that, you ask?

1. Well for starters, we might not have the right guy. Believe it or not, humans (and law enforcement) are fallible and sometimes people in the wrong place at the wrong time are swept up (see Guantanamo prison population). Sometimes people even confess to crimes they did not commit, so how would torture help?
2. Torture does not work. As CIA and FBI documents show, even after dozens of water boarding torture sessions, many terrorists continued to give false and/or misleading information. The only method that led to actionable intelligence (for example, Osama Bin Laden's hideout), came from conversations with terror suspects by expert interrogators.
3. Finally torture is immoral. Authoritarians and fascists throughout history have and still do torture people, and for some reason we should emulate them? But even if torturing a suspect was the lesser of two evils (the proverbial "ticking time bomb" scenario), just because something is moral, that does not mean it should be legal. Breaking the speed limit to get a trauma victim to a hospital is moral, but that doesn't mean that speeding should be legal.

Torture really is a no-brainer.

John Donovan