

GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB VIEWING + ACTION GUIDE

GHOSTSOFABUGHRAIB.ORG



MOXIE FIRECRACKER FILMS

WORKING FILMS 

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

America cannot – and should not – torture. This simple statement has been greatly challenged in the years following 9/11. Under the blanket protections of fighting the “war on terror” at any cost, our bedrock principles have eroded, our legislators have been compliant, the media response timid, and the courts rendered rudderless and conflicted. We are left to depend on individuals who have the courage to speak out. That is what we are asking you to do in a landmark campaign to help bring an end to U.S. sanctioned torture.

The *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* campaign is structured around nationwide, grassroots community screenings of the Emmy Award winning, 78-minute documentary by Rory Kennedy which premiered on HBO in February 2007. The film explores how the abuses at the Iraqi prison in 2003 still remain etched in our national consciousness. *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* encourages its audience to ask: What do the events at the prison still say about America? Our government? Our military? Ourselves? These are questions that we still need to answer as a community and as a nation, now more than ever before.

This guide will help you prepare to show the film and initiate a dialogue that will allow participants to process what they’ve seen and identify ways to become involved in efforts to stop torture. Included are suggested steps for organizing your screening, publicizing your event, engaging attendees in meaningful action, following up with your audience and staying involved with the *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* Campaign.

A national movement to end U.S. torture policy is urgently needed. It begins with your participation and commitment. We thank you for your support.

This guide was created collaboratively by the following:



MOXIE FIRECRACKER FILMS

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Special Thanks: *The national audience and community engagement campaign for Ghosts of Abu Ghraib received major support from The Fledgling Fund, Bill Unger and Teresa Luchsinger, David & Anita Keller Foundation, Agora Foundation, and Susan C. Harrington.*

For more information, visit www.ghostsofabughraib.org or contact Molly Murphy at Working Films: mmurphy@workingfilms.org or 910-342-9000.



HOSTING A SCREENING OF GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB

EARLY PREPARATION: DURING THE WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT

In the weeks leading up to your screening of *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, ensure maximum turnout and support from your community through the following steps:

Involve Community Members

Invite community leader(s) to plan and co-host the event with you. Together, create an agenda for your screening and discuss appropriate steps for facilitating a post-film conversation and committing to follow-up actions in response to issues raised in the film. You might consider using an experienced facilitator to moderate the post-screening program. If this is the case, allow the facilitator to preview the DVD in advance of the screening.

Set Goals

It is important to articulate what you want the event to accomplish. The ideas provided in the "Action" section at the end of this guide are designed to help you set goals for your screening and to develop steps to pursue after the event. Visit www.ghostsofabughraib.org for information on the film and the issue of U.S. sponsored torture and plan to engage your audience in a meaningful way.

Delegate

Asking for help in planning the screening will make the process more manageable and guarantee that others are equally invested in the screening's success.

Get the Word Out

In advance of the screening, reach out to potential participants through weekly bulletins, monthly newsletters, e-mail lists, and social networking sites. Also distribute printed flyers (a sample flyer is enclosed at the end of the guide and can be downloaded at www.ghostsofabughraib.org/screeningflyer). The flyer should include the name of your organization or group (along with any co-hosts), the date and time of the event, the specific details of your event, a short description of the film, and an email address and phone number for people to find out more information and R.S.V.P. their attendance if necessary.

Be sure to reach out to people outside of your own group or organization to attend the screening event. Personally invite key leaders; such as religious clergy, elected officials, or military personnel. Share with them why you think their participation is of value.

Effectively Publicize the Event

Communicate your plans to local newspapers, radio stations and TV stations. Any advance publicity or news coverage of the event will help you have a much broader turnout and impact. If you think there is a possibility that media will attend the screening, we encourage you to prepare a press packet to give them when they arrive and (if possible) have a representative from your organization available to answer questions.

Secure the Basics

To avoid technical glitches, preview the DVD and test your player and TV before screening. Also take the time to make sure you have the following:

- A venue for your screening that will accommodate the expected number of attendees and provide a comfortable atmosphere for your group. This could be your living room, a community center, or an auditorium.
- A television or projector with a screen that is big enough for everyone to see.
- A DVD player.
- A powerful enough audio system, especially in larger venues.
- Seating that allows everyone a good view of the screen.
- An information table where you can place sign-up sheets and handouts for individuals who want to get involved.
- An accessible entrance for people with disabilities.



THE AGENDA

A well-planned agenda will give participants the opportunity to have an in-depth, meaningful experience at the screening. Below is a sample agenda that can serve as a guide for the screening.

FORMAT

Required Window

You should allow at least 2 hours to show the film, hold a discussion, and make follow-up plans.

Start On Time

Do not begin any later than 10 minutes before the posted time. This will give latecomers an opportunity to join the group, but will not excessively delay the event.

Briefly Introduce the Film

Introduce the film and any special guests. Ask everyone to stay for the discussion and share what time you expect the event to end. ("Please stay after the film is over; we will have a facilitated dialogue and discuss next steps we can take to make a difference.")

View the Film, 78 minutes

Facilitated Dialogue With or Without Discussion Questions

See the suggested discussion questions listed in Addendum D of this guide.

Get Your Audience to Take Action

Print the **ACTION HANDOUT** (page 11) and share with audience members.

Closing

It is important to emphasize that a commitment to ending torture does not end with the screening, but by continuing to stay involved. Share some examples of how your group can respond to the issues raised in the film (see below). Refer attendees to www.ghostsofabughraib.org to stay informed and involved. Thank people for coming and remind them to share their contact information on the sign-up sheet.

TAKE ACTION!

Keep the momentum going after your screening. Visit www.ghostsofabughraib.org to get involved in ongoing efforts to stop torture. We have allied with organizations that are supporting anti-torture initiatives. Together we can make a difference.

Below are key actions you and your audience can take to help stop torture:

1. **Contact Your Elected Officials.** Let your Congressperson and Senator know that you are following the issue of torture closely and you expect them to work to uphold justice and human dignity with adherence with the Constitution and the Geneva Conventions. Express your outrage over the Military Commissions Act and ask them to vote to repeal it. Ask them to support the Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007 (See the **LEGISLATION BACKGROUND** on page 5 for more information).

Making phone calls and sending letters or postcards to your legislator's district or DC office is more effective than email. You can call the U.S. Capitol operator at 202-224-3121 and ask to be transferred to your Senators' and Representative's office.

You can also organize a group to meet with your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators or their staff to discuss the issue of torture and accountability. All have state offices outside Washington DC and many will meet and respond to their constituents. Act on this right for your voice to be heard!



For talking points, fact sheets and legislative updates, visit www.ghostsofabughraib.org/action.htm

2. **Use Your Vote to Support a Presidential Candidate Who Will Stand Against Torture!**
Visit Human Rights First's Elect to End Torture '08 website at www.endtorture08.org for current news and information about where the candidates stand.
3. **Write a Letter to the Editors of Local Newspapers.** A sample letter to the editor is included in Addendum C of this guide. It is also available online at www.ghostsofabughraib.org/action.htm
4. **Call Into Radio Shows** when they are discussing issues related to U.S. foreign policy, the "war on terror", or torture.
5. **Share the Emmy Award winning HBO Documentary *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* With Others.** You can order the DVD online at www.ghostsofabughraib.org/screeninghq or contact Molly Murphy at mmurphy@workingfilms.org, call 910-342-9000.
6. **Visit www.ghostsofabughraib.org** to get involved in efforts to stop torture, and for frequently updated information, news, and actions.

REPORT BACK

We are keenly interested in hearing from you. Only our collective efforts and voices will force this and future administrations to stop U.S. sponsored torture. A brief online report form is available at www.ghostsofabughraib.org/reportback. Also please send any endorsement pages or newspaper clippings to Molly Murphy at Working Films, 602 South Fifth Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28401 or mmurphy@workingfilms.org.



ADDENDUM A

LEGISLATION BACKGROUND AND TALKING POINTS**The Military Commissions Act**

On September 17, 2006, the Military Commissions Act of 2006 (MCA) was signed into law. This Act redefines criminal liability under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which places an absolute prohibition on inhumane treatment of detainees during an armed conflict.

The MCA undermines the Constitution and rejects core American values by:

- **Eliminating Checks and Balances.** The MCA grants unprecedented and unchecked authority to the Executive Branch to label whoever they choose as “unlawful enemy combatants.” This broad range of people includes U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents inside the United States. Under the MCA, the president has the power to define what is and what is not torture and abuse.
- **Eliminating Due Process.** Habeas corpus is the constitutionally protected freedom that allows you from being thrown in prison illegally, with no trial, and no end in sight. The MCA denies the right of habeas corpus to detainees and allows our government to hold prisoners in the “war on terror” without charge indefinitely.
- **Eliminating Accountability for Past Abuse.** The MCA narrows the scope of the War Crimes Act and seeks to eliminate accountability for past violations of the law. Government officials who authorized or ordered illegal acts of torture and abuse before the end of 2005 receive retroactive immunity for their crimes.
- **Permitting Coerced Evidence.** If detainees ever receive a trial, the MCA permits convictions based on evidence that was literally beaten out of a witness or obtained through abuse by either the federal government or by other countries.
- **Permitting Classified Evidence Against the Accused.** The MCA allows classified evidence to be introduced, even if the accused has not had the opportunity to review and challenge the “sources, methods, or activities” by which the government acquired the evidence.
- **Restricting Exculpatory Evidence.** Exculpatory evidence is that which is favorable to the defendant in a criminal trial and holds the potential to prove his or her innocence. The MCA allows prosecutors to restrict full disclosure of exculpatory evidence to the accused.

The Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007

The Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007 (H.R. 1415 and S.576) will repair much of the Military Commission Act’s damage to the Constitution and American values. It bans the use of torture and abuse and makes clear that the federal government, and government officials at all levels, must comply with the Geneva Conventions.



ADDENDUM B

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The following pages include scripts you can print on handouts for your audience members to sign and send to elected officials or use as talking points in face-to-face meetings.

Urge Your Senators to Fix the Military Commissions Act

Just before the 2004 election, Congress passed the Military Commissions Act, which gives the President the power to decide by himself who is and who is not an enemy of our country, and to eliminate habeas corpus and due process rights for detainees. As a result, people lost the Constitution's protections against being imprisoned unlawfully.

The Military Commissions Act takes away the fundamental due process right of habeas corpus, which is protected by the Constitution. Without the habeas corpus protection against unlawful imprisonment, people are being held for years without ever being charged.

Take action to restore habeas corpus protections and due process for detainees in federal custody at Guantanamo and around the world.

Sample letter and call script:

As your constituent, I strongly urge you to cosponsor [S. 576/HR 1415] the Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007, which has been introduced to fix the problems with the Military Commissions Act.

It's time to fix the Military Commissions Act (MCA). The MCA removes the Constitution's right to habeas corpus for persons the president designates unlawful enemy combatants. It allows the President to define who is and who is not an enemy of our country, and then takes away due process protections. It also undermines the Geneva Conventions as America's law on what we do during war.

[S. 576/HR 1415] repairs the MCA's damage to our Constitution and American values. It restores the due process right of habeas corpus to detainees being held indefinitely at Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere. It makes sure that an "enemy" of this nation is defined as a person actually fighting our country. It bans the use of torture and abuse and makes clear that the federal government must comply with the Geneva Conventions. The bill also ensures that we don't have one set of rules for privates and sergeants and another set for top government officials.

I've read that nearly 400 men have been held indefinitely and without charge at Guantanamo Bay for as long as five years. The government has already released over 300. The government even admits that approximately 100 of the current prisoners shouldn't be there, and that no more than a few dozen will ever be charged.

The Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007 would limit the designation of "enemy combatant" to those actually fighting our country; not innocent people snatched from streets far from any battlefield. For those detainees being held at Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere, the bill restores the Constitution's habeas corpus protection of having a court decide whether a person is being imprisoned unlawfully.

It is time for Congress to restore due process, defend the Constitution, and protect what makes us Americans. Again, I urge you to support the Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007.

I am following this issue closely and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[City, State ZIP]



End Torture Now - Demand Oversight from Congress

Lacking clarity from the Executive Branch on how to treat detainees, U.S. interrogators in the field are actually torturing prisoners. At the root of the problem is the Bush administration's interrogation policy, which has secretly authorized torture and cruel treatment—conduct that is prohibited under our law. We need congressional oversight, and we need it now!

Until all U.S. personnel are properly constrained by clear guidelines, illegal abuse will likely continue. By holding hearings, Congress can step in and clean up U.S. policy. Demand oversight from your members of Congress today!

Sample letter and call script:

I am writing/calling to urge you to call for oversight hearings in the Intelligence, Judiciary, and Armed Services committees regarding the Bush administration's interrogation policies. We need an investigation into how the administration is enforcing laws against torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

To begin with, the Bush administration's secret detention and interrogation program operated by the CIA is in violation of basic tenets of U.S. law. Until this program is brought within the confines of the law, there is the possibility that torture is happening in America's name.

I am asking you to make sure the absolute ban on torture and cruel treatment is enforced. Please make sure the Intelligence, Judiciary, and Armed Services committees hold hearings to ensure all U.S. personnel are complying with the legal prohibitions on torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

The essence of a democracy is open government and justice for all. The values that make this country great do not countenance abuses in the dark without accountability. I thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

*Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[City, State ZIP]*



ADDENDUM C

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Below is a sample Letter to the Editor you can submit as is, or edit, to raise public awareness of the issue of U.S. sponsored torture.

[Name of editor]

[Name of paper]

[Street address]

[City, State, ZIP]

[Date]

Dear Editor,

The documentary, Ghosts of Abu Ghraib, serves as yet another reminder of the human rights violations committed by the U.S. government in the name of the "war on terror." It is time for these atrocities to end and violators to be held accountable. As U.S. citizens, we need to call on our representatives to pass legislation that will terminate torture and ill-treatment.

It is imperative that Congress pass the Constitution Act of 2007 to ensure that the rights of people taken under U.S. custody in the "war on terror" are respected. Without it, the legal loopholes created by the Military Commissions Act will continue to allow unfair detention and abuse of innocent individuals. It is our responsibility as people of conscience to speak out against human rights violations carried out by our own government and ensure that our tax dollars do not continue to fund torture and ill-treatment.

A full Congressional investigation into past and current abuses is absolutely necessary to bring those responsible to justice. Our nation is said to be the "brightest beacon of freedom and opportunity in the world." It is time for our actions to match our ideals.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Affiliation]

Daytime phone, not for publication, just for verification of authorship



ADDENDUM D

SOME POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THE SCREENING:

1. The Administration claimed that what happened at Abu Ghraib was the work of “nine bad apples”, but *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* suggests that military intelligence and the Bush administration had a lot more to do with the torture incidents that occurred. What is your view after watching the film? How do you think the victims at Abu Ghraib were affected by the torture and abuse they experienced at the prison?
2. How do you think U.S. soldiers who participated in and witnessed the torture and abuse at Abu Ghraib were affected by the experience? Do you have a better understanding after watching film of why they committed these acts?
3. What responsibility do we as U.S. citizens have regarding the atrocities that took place at Abu Ghraib and other U.S. detention facilities? What can we do now?
4. Has enough been done to address the causes of what happened at Abu Ghraib and to hold accountable those who are responsible? What is the best way to ensure that abuses including those that occurred Abu Ghraib never happen again?
5. The U.S. Army Field Manual prohibits “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment,” but a July 2007 Executive Order allows the CIA to continue to use undefined and undisclosed “alternative interrogation techniques”. Do you think that all U.S. agencies, including the CIA, should be prohibited from using abusive interrogation techniques which the rest of the world calls torture? Why or why not?



FLYER TEMPLATE

A blank flyer is available at www.ghostsofabughraib.org/flyer.pdf. Download the flyer and enter in your event information. The flyer should include the name of your organization or group (along with any co-hosts); the specific details of your event, such as the date, time, and location; a short description of the film; and an email address and phone number for people to find out more information and R.S.V.P. their attendance if necessary. Below is an example.

HBO DOCUMENTARY FILMS™ PRESENTS

GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB

A FILM BY RORY KENNEDY

(NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION OR GROUP) PRESENTS

GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB

A film by Rory Kennedy

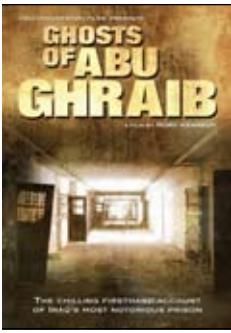
(Day, Date, Time) at (Location, Address)

Rory Kennedy's Emmy Award winning HBO documentary *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* is a groundbreaking examination of the psychological and political context in which torture and humiliation occurred at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. (Name of Your Organization or Group) will be holding a screening and discussion of *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* as part of a national campaign with the film aimed at ending U.S. policies and directives that sanction torture.

JOIN US ON (DAY, DATE, TIME) AT (LOCATION) FOR THIS POWERFUL EVENT!

For more information, contact **(Contact Person)** at **(Phone Number)** or **(Email Address)**

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GHOSTS OF ABU GHRAIB TAKE ACTION! HANDOUT

GHOSTSOFABUGHRAIB.ORG

KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING!

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