

U.S. Citizens' Signing Statement

on the Military Commissions Act of 2006

This morning the president signed into law the Military Commissions Act of 2006. This law overrides a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, authorizes the President to define what torture is, who constitutes an "unlawful combatant", and who can be detained indefinitely with no recourse to the courts. This law - which he pressed congress to pass - challenges his oath to uphold the constitution and drastically damages American and internationally recognized civil liberties. Once it is signed, our constitution, though not yet dead will certainly be dying.

Today, we reject this threat to our constitution.

WE REJECT the fact that the Act subjects legal residents of the United States, as well as foreign citizens living in their own countries, to summary arrest and indefinite detention with no hope of appeal.

WE REJECT that the Act gives the President the power to apply the label of "enemy combatant" to anyone he wants.

WE REJECT that the Act repudiates a half-century of international precedent by allowing the President to decide on his own what abusive interrogation methods he considers permissible and that his decision can stay secret.

WE REJECT that detainees in U.S. military prisons lose the basic right to challenge their imprisonment and that they can be held forever, with no access to a lawyer or to the courts.

WE REJECT that the courts have no power to review any aspect of this new system, except verdicts by military tribunals and that the act limits appeals and bars legal actions based on the Geneva Conventions.

WE REJECT that coerced evidence—evidence obtained through torture—is now permissible.

WE REJECT that the definition of torture is unacceptably narrow and that the bill effectively eliminates the idea of rape as torture.

Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions hold dear. It degrades everyone involved -- policy-makers, perpetrators and victims. It contradicts our nation's most cherished ideals. Any policies that permit torture and inhumane treatment are shocking and morally intolerable. We reject the Military Commissions Act of 2006.

October 17, 2006