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For the abolition of torture

**JUNE**

**“Let us pray that the international community may commit itself concretely to abolish torture, guaranteeing support to victims and their families”**



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## PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO POLAND  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXXI WORLD YOUTH DAY  
GREETINGS TO THE FAITHFUL  
FROM THE WINDOW OF THE ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE<sup>7</sup>  
Francis  
29 July 2016

[...] Such pain, such cruelty! Is it possible that we men, created in the image and likeness of God, are capable of such things? These things *were* done. I don't want to make you sad, but I must speak the truth. Cruelty did not end at Auschwitz, at Birkenau: today too, people are tortured; many prisoners are tortured at once, to make them speak... It is terrible! Today there are men and women in overcrowded prisons; they live – I'm sorry – like animals. Today there is this cruelty. We say: yes, we saw the cruelty of seventy years ago, how people were put to death by being shot, or hanged, or with gas. But today in many places in the world, where there is war, the same thing is happening.

Jesus came into this reality to carry it on his shoulders. And he asks us to pray. Let us pray for all the Jesuses today in the world: the hungry, the thirsty, the doubtful, the sick, those who are alone, those who feel the weight of many doubts and crimes. They suffer so much... Let us pray for the many children who are sick, who are innocent, who carry a child's cross. And let us pray for the many men and women being tortured today in various countries of the world; for the prisoners all piled together, as if they were animals. What I am saying to you is a little sad, but it is the truth. But it is also true that Jesus carried all these things upon himself. Our sin too.

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<sup>7</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160729\\_polonia-arcivescovado.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/july/documents/papa-francesco_20160729_polonia-arcivescovado.html)

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All of us here are sinners, all of us bear the weight of our sins. I don't know if anyone believes he is free of sin... If anyone thinks he is not a sinner, let him raise his hand... We are all sinners. But he loves us, he loves us! And so let us – as sinners, but as sons of God, sons of our Father – let us all together offer a prayer for these people who suffer so many terrible things today in the world, so much evil. And when there are tears, the child looks for its mother; we too, sinners, we are children, we look for our Mother, so let us pray all together, each in his own language.

#### ADDRESS TO THE DELEGATES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PENAL LAW<sup>8</sup>

Francis

23 October 2014

##### *Regarding torture and other measures, and cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments*

The adjective “cruel”; under these headings that I have mentioned, there is always that root: the human capacity for cruelty. This is a passion, a real vice! One form of torture is the one sometimes applied through confinement in high security prisons. With the pretext of offering greater security to society or special treatment for certain categories of prisoners, its main characteristic is none other than external isolation. As shown by studies carried out by various human rights organizations, the lack of sensory stimuli, the total impossibility of communication and the lack of contact with other human beings induce mental and physical suffering such as paranoia, anxiety, depression, weight loss, and significantly increase the suicidal tendency.

This phenomenon, a characteristic of high security prisons, also occurs in other types of penitentiaries, along with other forms of physical and mental torture, the practice of which has spread. Today torture is not inflicted only as a means of obtaining a specific objective, such as a confession or information — practices which are characteristic of national security doctrine — but is a genuine surplus of pain added to the actual suffering of imprisonment. In this way, torture occurs not only in clandestine detention centres or in modern day concentration camps, but also in prisons, institutes for juveniles, psychiatric hospitals, police stations and other centres and institutions of detention and punishment. The very theory of criminal justice has great responsibility in this sphere, by the fact of having permitted, in certain cases, the legitimization of torture on certain grounds, opening the way to further and more extensive abuses.

Many States are also responsible for having committed or tolerated kidnapping within their territories, including that of citizens of their respective countries, or of having authorized the use of their air space for illegal transportation toward detention centres where torture takes place. These abuses can only be stopped with the firm commitment of the international community to recognize the primacy of the *pro homine* principle, meaning the dignity of the human person above every thing else.

##### ➤ 26 June 2023 - International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

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<sup>8</sup> See full message:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141023\\_associazione-internazionale-diritto-penale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141023_associazione-internazionale-diritto-penale.html)

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