



12 December 2014 – The United States government’s reluctance to work with international authorities on the issue of accountability for human rights violations has made it easier for other nations to shirk their responsibilities, said Juan E. Méndez, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture.

Mr. Méndez’s warning comes after the long-awaited release of the findings, conclusions and executive summary of the US Senate Intelligence Committee [report on CIA interrogations practices](#), which concludes that US high officials have promoted, encouraged and allowed the use of torture after 9/11.

The Special Rapporteur stressed that this should be "a first step in the direction of fulfilling other US obligations under [Convention against Torture \(CAT\)](#), namely to combat impunity and ensure accountability, by investigating and prosecuting those responsible."

A bad example set by the United States

The serious abuses detailed in the report constitute basic violations of international human rights law. The [Senate’s report](#) concludes that US high officials have promoted, encouraged and allowed the use of torture but reveals also that the CIA’s use of so-called [enhanced interrogation techniques](#) was 'not an effective means of acquiring intelligence or gaining cooperation from detainees' and that the justifications for the use of such methods rested on 'inaccurate claims of their effectiveness'.

Mr. Méndez underscored that, "as a nation that has publicly affirmed its belief that respect for truth advances respect for the rule of law, and as a nation that frequently calls for transparency and accountability in other countries, the United States must rise to meet the standards it has set both for itself and for others."

Regaining the moral high ground

According to the UN expert, the bad example set by the United States on the use of torture has been a big drawback in the fight against such practices in many other countries.

"I travel to parts of the world in my capacity of United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and I can attest to the fact that many states either implicitly or explicitly tell you: 'Why look at us? If the US tortures, why can’t we do it?'"

"We have lost a little bit of the moral high ground, but it can be regained and it should be regained."