Countering terrorism with torture: Can it ever be justified?

Routledge introduces a ground-breaking new book exploring the theoretical, moral and political implications of interrogational torture.

Torture is an understandably contentious and divisive issue, but in the context of extracting reliable intelligence in the interest of public safety, could its use ever be warranted? As governments and security services around the globe continue to tackle the challenges of organised terrorism, this book comes at a crucial moment in the debate on rendition and interrogational torture. In this timely and topical book, author Phillip Rumney examines the nature and impact of torture on individuals, institutions and wider society.

In making an argument against the use of torture, the book engages in a wide ranging analysis of the arguments put forward by the proponents and opponents of legalised torture. Rumney investigates the effectiveness of torture in producing meaningful intelligence and examines the use of coercion by state officials in Northern Ireland, Algeria, Israel, and as part of the CIA’s ‘High Value Detainee’ interrogation programme.

As part of an empirical slippery slope argument, the book also discusses the difficulties in drafting a torture statute and controlling the use of interrogational torture, while also considering the problems such a law could create for state officials and wider society. Finally, it evaluates suggestions that debating the legalisation of torture is dangerous and should be avoided.

"The strength of Professor Rumney's valuable book lies not only in the insight of a sharp critical intelligence, but also in his skill at presenting and assessing such empirical information that is relevant to considering the claims about the actual consequences of resorting to torture as a matter of public policy." - Sanford Levinson, W. St. John Garwood and W. St. John Garwood, Jr. Centennial Chair and Professor of Government, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

"This book makes an invaluable and original contribution to a controversial, but important public debate." - Christoph Bluth, Professor of International Relations and Security, University of Bradford, UK

Phillip N.S. Rumney is Professor of criminal justice at Bristol Law School, UWE. He has written a number of articles on the debate over the legalisation of interrogational torture, including a detailed analysis of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of torture as a means of producing accurate and timely intelligence disclosures.