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From The Times

October 23, 2009

Musicians demand end to music torture on Guantánamo detainees

Tim Reid in Washington

18 COMMENTS RECOMMEND? (3)

A coalition of musicians including Pearl Jam and R. E. M. backed a formal demand yesterday to be told if their songs had been used to torture detainees in Guantánamo Bay and Iraq.



A song by Barney the Purple Dinosaur was allegedly used by torturers

There have been many allegations by former prisoners that they were blasted with excruciatingly loud music for months on end — a tactic that is banned under the UN Convention Against Torture but not yet from the US Army Field Manual.

The musicians spoke out as a freedom of information request was lodged by the US campaign group No More Guantánamos, a legal move backed by the British human rights group Reprieve, which has been campaigning against "music torture" for more than a year.

According to evidence gained by human rights organisations, the list of music used included songs ranging from the death metal band Decide's F*** Your God to the song most frequently blasted at inmates, I Love You by Barney the Purple Dinosaur, the children's TV character. Former detainees have said that the tactic was one of the worst and most painful used against them.

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Thomas Blanton, the executive director of the National Security Archive, a freedom of information organisation helping the musicians, said: "At Guantánamo the US Government turned a jukebox into an instrument of torture. The musicians and the public have the right to know how an expression of popular culture was transformed into an interrogation technique."

Tom Morello, guitarist with the band Rage Against the Machine — whose song Killing in the Name of was also used — said: "The fact that music I helped create was used as a tactic against humanity sickens me."

The musicians' campaign comes as the Obama Administration has been forced to concede that the President's pledge to shut Guantánamo by January will fail. His bold promise to close the prison within a year of coming to office has run into myriad political and logistical problems, including fierce opposition at home to the transportation of detainees to US prisons and a reluctance by Western allies to receive many of the remaining inmates. Congress is refusing to fund the closure of the facility, which still holds about 220 prisoners.

After the September 11 attacks and the War on Terror it appears that the use of loud music first became common inside Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, scene of the infamous inmate abuse

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a favourite among US guards at Camp Cropper in Iraq. One Iraqi talked of being taken to an unidentified location and blasted with music in a building referred to as "the disco".

Last year the retired Lieutenant-Colonel Dan Kuehl, of the US Air Force, who teaches psychological operations to the US military, invoked the Old Testament use of loud music. "Joshua's army used horns to strike fear into the hearts of the people of Jericho," he told the *St Petersburg Times* in Florida. "His men might not have been able to break down literal walls with their trumpets but the noise eroded the enemy's courage."

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Alexis Taylor wrote:

What a hilarious article. Just send my colleague Manu in to sing to them, they would confess within minutes. I shouldn't laugh really, torture is not very funny.

October 23, 2009 2:50 PM BST

RECOMMEND?

Taz Preston wrote:

Not torture? Imagine being locked up in a dark room with music (any music) blasting out of a stereo at a much higher volume than your ears can naturally tolerate and stay there for... say 24 hours. Try it and let us know what you think tomorrow..

October 23, 2009 11:10 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (5)

Dave Dave wrote:

Come on, we have to draw the line somewhere. Playing bad music is not torture; I have to endure it every day at work when my cow-orkers put the radio on. It may be uncomfortable and annoying, but it's not genuinely painful or torturous.

October 23, 2009 10:07 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (1)

Taz Preston wrote:

Sorry to be a party pooper, but I guess you wouldn't find it very funny if somebody close to you was tortured in this way for months on end to confess to something he/she may not have done?

October 23, 2009 9:30 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (5)

Philip Braine wrote:

Clearly this sort of torture doesn't even have the worst form of justification, that it might extract some useful information. It's done solely because the torturers get off on it.

October 23, 2009 9:04 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (2)

Ken Moore wrote:

I guess that some people prefer the silent treatment. Also, what happens to them after they confess...get sent to a library for relief?

October 23, 2009 7:23 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (3)

Robert James wrote:

Let's end the torture globally and just have Pearl Jam and REM's so-called music banned worldwide.

Then continue the salvation of mankind and ban anything that's classified as (c)RAP music.

October 23, 2009 6:15 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (8)

Jeff Jackson wrote:

Barnie as torture? now THAT'S creative.

October 23, 2009 6:04 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (6)

hung goh wrote:

The people who thought up such methods of torture are psychos and sadists. They are badly in need of medical treatment.

October 23, 2009 4:15 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (8)

John Anthony wrote:

They'll be demanding their copyright PPL payments from Guantanamo next.

October 23, 2009 4:15 AM BST

RECOMMEND? (9)

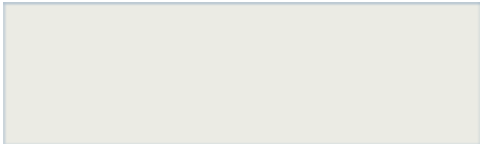
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