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CIA Torture Prisons in Poland

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The European Court of Human Rights confirmed on February 17 that the Polish government was complicit in the CIA's secretive programme of rendition, detention and interrogation. The Court in Strasbourg rejected a challenge from the Polish government to a landmark ruling from last July, the decision which now makes that original judgement final. Poland did violate the human rights by being a host to CIA secret prisons in violation of the human rights convention.

Poland is the first EU member to be found guilty of complicity in the CIA's secret detention programme and responsible for multiple violations of the detainees' rights.

It means that the Polish government now faces a substantial bill for damages and legal costs. It has to conduct full examination to make precise who among Polish officials was responsible for prisons functioning on Polish soil.

July's judgment said that two current Guantánamo inmates, Anbu Zubaydah and Abd-al-Rahim al-Nashiri were held in a CIA prison in Poland. They had been subject to torture (the both are in Guantanamo now). Poland failed in its duty under European human rights law to protect them or investigate what happened. The Polish government has already agreed to pay compensations to these persons.

Poland does its best to conceal unsavory facts. In September 2014 human rights commissioner Nils Muižnieks called upon Poland to conduct full investigation without delay and publish the results making those who were guilty responsible even if they held top government positions. Polish prosecutors have been investigating the allegations about the CIA jail since March 2008. Zbigniew Siemiątkowski, the former Polish intelligence chief in 2002-2004, is charged with «abuse of office», "unlawfully depriving prisoners of their liberty" and «the use of physical force» against prisoners.

According to Polish media, charges could be brought against Andrzej Derlatka, deputy chief of the intelligence service, responsible for the relations with the US, former Polish President Alexander Kvasnevsky and former Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller, the current leader of Democratic Left Alliance.

Leszek Miller has firmly affirmed many times there were no CIA jails in Poland ever. Now he says something different as the facts keep on piling up. According to him, he was not aware of the prison's existence in Poland. Alexander Kvasnevsky says the same thing.

Dick Marti, the head of the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, says some Europeans knew about the existence of secret CIA jails at least since 2004.

In early December 2014, Aleksander Kwasniewski acknowledged in an interview following the publication of the US Senate report that his country had let the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) run a secret prison. The prison was located in the Stare Kiejkuty intelligence base in northeastern Poland, 170 km from Warsaw. Prisoners suspected of involvement in terrorist activities were transported there to be interrogated with the use of tortures. CIA aircraft landed in Shimanah.

Kwasniewski continues to say the Polish government did not know about it. It's hard to believe. Polish media has been reporting about the local branch of «American GULAG» for ten years. Even ultra-liberal Gazeta Wyborcza admitted the fact in December 2005. It wrote then that the main CIA secret jail in Europe was in Poland.

In 2001 Andrzej Lepper, a former Polish deputy Prime Minister in the cabinet of Yaroslav

Kachinsky (2006-2007) and the leader of the small, populist Self-Defense Party, made accusations on alleged landing of a plane carrying some Taliban in a village called Klewki, not much distant from the CIA's site in Stare Kiejkuty. Journalists asked him what he knew about the secret installations but he refused to elaborate being afraid for his life. In 2011 he was found dead in this office in the heart of Warsaw. The death took place under extremely strange circumstances. The investigation on secret jails has been dragging on for seven years. Perhaps this inefficiency is explained by the fact that there are too many top positioned persons involved. No wonder the investigators work is so slow. Lawyers have insisted to make the legal proceedings closed keeping media out. No matter that, leaks made the information on kidnappings and tortures public domain. It has been revealed that Poles actively cooperated in «enhanced interrogation techniques» to include harsh methods such as dehydration, temperature extremes mixed with threats of death, with a gun or electric drill kept at the prisoner's head.

According to the Washington Post, former agency officials directly involved in the program, such as Jose Rodriguez, the CIA's former deputy director of operations, have said that the harsh techniques produced «dramatic positive results.»

American media reported that Mike Sealy, a senior intelligence officer, was assigned to run the Polish «black site». He was called a «program manager». Polish officials could visit a common area where lunch was served, but they didn't have access to the detainees.

At present Poland is the only country where the secret jails investigation may end up in persecution of state's former top officials. Unfortunately it's not excluded that Americans would prefer Poland to follow the example of other European Union members where the CIA prisons related scandals were let slide to make public forget about it. In Poland the associates of those who may face responsibility try to paint the scandal as advantageous for the ruling cabinet as it is trying to deviate the public attention from burning social problems.