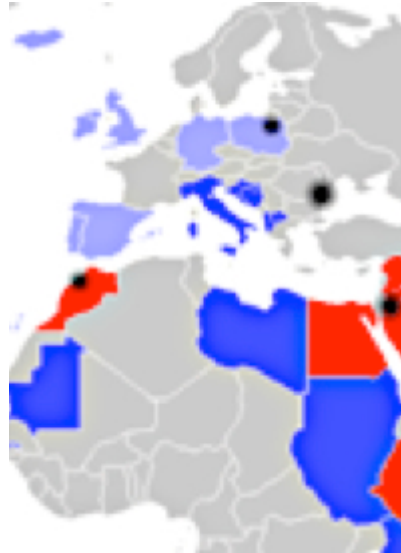




Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on March 30, 2012

Amnesty Int'l. Calls on EU to Reveal Role in CIA Rendition Program

On Tuesday, prisoner advocacy group Amnesty International suggested that the countries of the European Union cease participating in the Central Intelligence Agency's "extraordinary rendition" program. "Extraordinary rendition" refers to the CIA's capture of "enemy combatants" and their subsequent transfer to one of the so-called "black site" secret prisons for questioning, where the detainees were often reportedly subjected to inhuman tactics to elicit responses from them.



"Black sites" is the name given to the officially unconfirmed network of secret prisons located throughout the world used by the CIA to imprison and interrogate individuals suspected of committing or conspiring to commit terrorist activities.

These facilities are built outside the jurisdiction of the U.S. government and thus are not subject to American laws against torture.

At a [hearing held](#) by the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs, representatives from Amnesty International encouraged EU member states to reveal the depth of their role in the capture and incarceration of CIA prisoners and then to employ every effort to disassociate themselves from the legally suspect activities altogether.

The reported purpose of the hearings is to establish a framework for understanding a report that will be issued by the European Parliament purported to contain details of the continent's contribution to the rendition program. The investigation has lasted five years.

Speaking before the committee, Amnesty International's expert on counter-terrorism and human rights, Julia Hall, asked:

How can the EU, which portrays itself as a human rights standard-bearer, presume to tell other governments, notably those involved in the Arab Spring, how important human rights are when it steadfastly refuses to investigate its own alleged complicity in torture and disappearance?

As reported by [The New American](#), last December two human rights advocacy groups issued a joint preliminary report denouncing the governments of Europe for giving aid to the CIA and for facilitating the apprehension, incarceration, and torture that defined the now infamous rendition program.

The two organizations, Reprieve (a multinational group focusing on providing legal aid to those facing the death penalty) and Access Info Europe (an entity that seeks to obtain information to aid in the protection of civil liberties), released their findings as part of a larger investigation into the requests



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made in 28 countries to provide information relating to their participation in the “extraordinary rendition” program.

According to the Associated Press,

The groups said only seven (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, and the United States) of 28 countries had supplied the requested information. Five countries (Estonia, UK, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic) said they no longer had the data, three refused to release it (Canada, Portugal, and Sweden) and 13 others had not replied more than 10 weeks after the requests were made.

Swedish media related the alleged role played by that nation in the rendition program:

One incident when a CIA plane touched down on Swedish soil, receiving significant attention in Swedish media, was the flight transporting Egyptians Mohammad Alzery and Ahmed Agiza from the Bromma airport in Stockholm to Egypt in 2001, where they later were tortured in prison.

Sweden has previously been slammed by human rights organizations about its part in the incident.

The actions of the Swedish security service Säpo has [sic] been criticized but the highest authority belonged to Sweden’s foreign minister at the time, Anna Lindh.

In addition to the three countries that flatly denied the requests for information, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL), the civil organization that coordinates and plans air traffic control for all of Europe, also rebuffed the requests for details regarding traffic of aircraft involved in rendition transportation.

In a story covering the release of the report, Reprieve investigator Crofton Black was quoted as saying that Eurocontrol’s refusal to provide the requested data was “a shocking indictment of European complacency.” Concluding that “while the US will gladly release over 27,000 records, Europe’s air traffic manager Eurocontrol won’t even release one. It’s equally unacceptable that countries such as Austria, France, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Spain simply ignore requests for data relating to serious rights abuses.”

The 13 countries that have yet failed to make any acknowledgement of the requests for information were reprimanded in the report for “covering up the serious violations of the human rights of those who were the victims of extraordinary rendition.”

The report called out the governments of the uncooperative European nations for their lack of transparency and the resulting impact on basic human rights.

The organizations behind the study pleaded with “all European countries[‘] governments to take urgent steps to publish all the information that they hold about renditions flights, including flight data and related documents, and to make this available in a reusable open data format to the civil society organisations working to map out the full extent of renditions.”



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Access to such information, they insist, is a “fundamental right in itself, as has been recognised by the European Court of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Committee. It is also an instrumental right, essential for the protection of other human rights. Information concerning grave infringements of human rights should never be withheld from the public.”

Many of the flights in question merely passed through European air space or used airports on the continent for layovers between other destinations around the world.

However, credible stories have been published claiming that several of the CIA’s black site holding facilities are actually physically located on the soil of some of the European nations mentioned in the report.

For example, suspicions surfaced in 2005 that Romania was hosting a secret prison run by the CIA. Despite convincing proof of the facility’s location, denials were issued by all who were believed to have knowledge of its existence.

Despite the denials, however, the story began to unfold in 2007 after an investigation by the Council of Europe called out Romania for having permitted a prison to have been operated in its territory. Again, denial followed denial, from Washington and Bucharest.

In fact, the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister stated at the time of the council’s investigation, “No public official or other person acting in an official capacity has been involved in the unacknowledged deprivation of any individual, or transport of any individual while so deprived of their liberty.”

The Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe released a document in 2006 that sparked the wider inquiry. In the report issued by the Legal Affairs Committee, 14 nations in Europe were accused of collaborating with the CIA by either permitting the prisons to be run in their countries or aiding in the facilitating of “extraordinary rendition” flights.

Regardless of the crimes with which the detainees were charged by the CIA, there exists the basic right of habeas corpus and a hearing on the merit of the charges before an impartial judge.

The justification cited by the government of the United States for its refusal to extend these most basic of legal protections to those suspected of being “enemy combatants” will surely be employed at another time to justify the same treatment of American citizens who may someday be indefinitely detained in secret prisons under the applicable provisions of the [National Defense Authorization Act signed into law](#) last New Year’s Eve by President Barack Obama.

Maps: CIA black sites in Europe and North Africa (above) and throughout the world (below).

Key:

Black: The U.S. and suspected CIA “black sites.”

Dark Blue: Extraordinary renditions allegedly have been carried out from these countries.

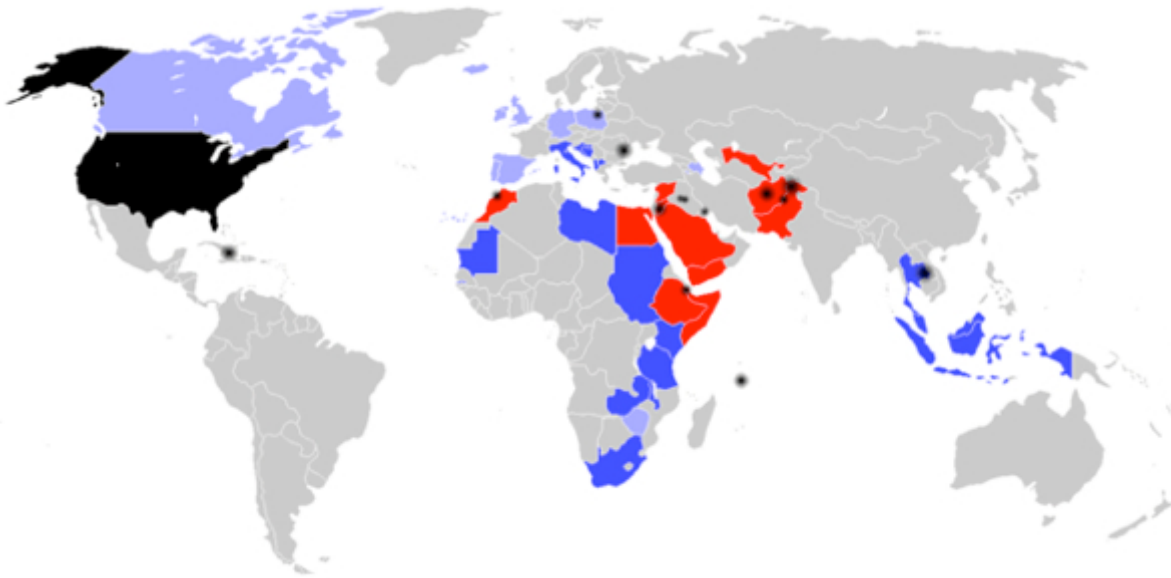
Light Blue: Detainees have allegedly been transported through these countries.

Red: Detainees have allegedly arrived in these countries.

Sources: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch



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