

Resolution Regarding Extended Solitary Confinement and Torture

(adopted by the NCA Legislative Assembly, November 2010; revised 2013; reaffirmed 2018)

Whereas, the National Communication Association has as its purpose the promotion of the study, criticism, research, teaching, and application of the artistic, humanistic, and scientific principles of communication;

Whereas, the use of solitary confinement and torture are fundamentally associated with communication and the way that communication contributes to or detracts from the health and richness of the human condition;

Whereas, extended solitary confinement and torture violate the fundamental ethical standards of communication long identified by our discipline, relying instead on violence, distortion, falsification, emotion, ad hominem attacks, appeals to hatred, intolerance, bigotry, fear, deception, and claims to expertise that aim to degrade, isolate, confuse, frighten, humiliate, and disrupt one's social and environmental attachments, to instill a feeling of futility, and to terrorize individuals;

Whereas, the involuntary severing of the humane connection between an individual and other persons, a key element in both extended solitary confinement and torture, is not humane in that it disrupts the self concept and, as the symbolic interactionist and social constructivist traditions of our discipline demonstrate, thereby profoundly damages the very processes that lie at the roots of human characteristics such as personal responsibility, praise, blame, guilt, trust, hope, and reverence for life;

Whereas, extended solitary confinement is commonly used for punitive purposes and in a manner more severe than any required for defensible administrative purposes;

Whereas, extended solitary confinement and torture often result in symptoms of distress analogous to those of psychological illnesses such as schizophrenia, extreme paranoia, delirium, and catatonia;

Whereas, those who have suffered from extended solitary confinement or torture are susceptible to serious difficulties in forming, reforming, and maintaining interpersonal relationships during captivity and when released; and

Whereas, extended solitary confinement and torture involve "cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment," which is outlawed by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10 December 1948), the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (9 December 1975), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Convention Against Torture (1966; in effect 1976), the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (10 December 1984), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (18 December 2002);

Now therefore be it Resolved, that the National Communication Association condemns any use of torture or of extended solitary confinement.