

Public Law 102-256  
102d Congress

An Act

To carry out obligations of the United States under the United Nations Charter and other international agreements pertaining to the protection of human rights by establishing a civil action for recovery of damages from an individual who engages in torture or extrajudicial killing.

Mar. 12, 1992  
[H.R. 2092]

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

Torture Victim  
Protection Act  
of 1991.  
28 USC 1350  
note.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991".

SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVIL ACTION.

28 USC 1350  
note.

(a) **LIABILITY.**—An individual who, under actual or apparent authority, or color of law, of any foreign nation—

(1) subjects an individual to torture shall, in a civil action, be liable for damages to that individual; or

(2) subjects an individual to extrajudicial killing shall, in a civil action, be liable for damages to the individual's legal representative, or to any person who may be a claimant in an action for wrongful death.

(b) **EXHAUSTION OF REMEDIES.**—A court shall decline to hear a claim under this section if the claimant has not exhausted adequate and available remedies in the place in which the conduct giving rise to the claim occurred.

(c) **STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.**—No action shall be maintained under this section unless it is commenced within 10 years after the cause of action arose.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

28 USC 1350  
note.

(a) **EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING.**—For the purposes of this Act, the term "extrajudicial killing" means a deliberated killing not authorized by a previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples. Such term, however, does not include any such killing that, under international law, is lawfully carried out under the authority of a foreign nation.

(b) **TORTURE.**—For the purposes of this Act—

(1) the term "torture" means any act, directed against an individual in the offender's custody or physical control, by which severe pain or suffering (other than pain or suffering arising only from or inherent in, or incidental to, lawful sanctions), whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on that individual for such purposes as obtaining from that individual or a third person information or a confession, punishing that individual for an act that individual or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, intimidating or coercing that individual or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind; and

(2) mental pain or suffering refers to prolonged mental harm caused by or resulting from—

(A) the intentional infliction or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering;

(B) the administration or application, or threatened administration or application, of mind altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or the personality;

(C) the threat of imminent death; or

(D) the threat that another individual will imminently be subjected to death, severe physical pain or suffering, or the administration or application of mind altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or personality.

Approved March 12, 1992.

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**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 2092 (S. 313):**

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 102-367, Pt. 1 (Comm. on the Judiciary).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 102-249 accompanying S. 313 (Comm. on the Judiciary).

**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:**

Vol. 137 (1991): Nov. 25, considered and passed House.

Vol. 138 (1992): Mar. 3, considered and passed Senate.

**WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS**, Vol. 28 (1992):

Mar. 12, Presidential statement.