



# Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror

*Mark Danner*

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## **Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror** Mark Danner

*Includes the torture photographs in color and the full texts of the secret administration memos on torture and the investigative reports on the abuses at Abu Ghraib.*

In the spring of 2004, graphic photographs of Iraqi prisoners being tortured by American soldiers in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison flashed around the world, provoking outraged debate. Did they depict the rogue behavior of "a few bad apples"? Or did they in fact reveal that the US government had decided to use brutal tactics in the "war on terror"?

The images are shocking, but they do not tell the whole story. The abuses at Abu Ghraib were not isolated incidents but the result of a chain of deliberate decisions and failures of command. To understand how "Hooded Man" and "Leashed Man" could have happened, Mark Danner turns to the documents that are collected for the first time in this book.

These documents include secret government memos, some never before published, that portray a fierce argument within the Bush administration over whether al-Qaeda and Taliban prisoners were protected by the Geneva Conventions and how far the US could go in interrogating them. There are also official reports on abuses at Abu Ghraib by the International Committee of the Red Cross, by US Army investigators, and by an independent panel chaired by former defense secretary James R. Schlesinger. In sifting this evidence, Danner traces the path by which harsh methods of interrogation approved for suspected terrorists in Afghanistan and Guantanamo "migrated" to Iraq as resistance to the US occupation grew and US casualties mounted.

Yet as Mark Danner writes, the real scandal here is political: it "is not about revelation or disclosure but about the failure, once wrongdoing is disclosed, of politicians, officials, the press, and, ultimately, citizens to act." For once we know the story the photos and documents tell, we are left with the questions they pose for our democratic society: Does fighting a "new kind of war" on terror justify torture? Who will we hold responsible for deciding to pursue such a policy, and what will be the moral and political costs to the country?

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### **Mark Danner**

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