



TORTURE ON TELEVISION RISING AND COPIED BY U.S. SOLDIERS

In February, Human Rights First launched the [Primetime Torture Project](#), a campaign designed to respond to reports from interrogators and interrogation instructors that soldiers in the field have imitated interrogation tactics they saw on television. The project's primary goals are to make sure interrogations in the field are conducted legally and to change the way Americans view torture.

Last fall, HRF's David Danzig and Jill Savitt organized a meeting of interrogators and military officers, including the dean of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and the creative staffs of the hit series "24" and "Lost." Their topic: the unintended consequences of the shows' story lines on torture. The meetings were not an attempt to censor the programs, but rather to encourage their writers to depict torture in the way professional interrogators regard it: as an unreliable means of gathering actionable information, and one that is illegal and immoral. The interrogators also provided the shows' writers with ideas for storylines that utilized legal techniques, based on their experiences.

The project's launch coincided with major stories in [The New Yorker](#), the [Los Angeles Times](#), and the Associated Press. Those stories led to interviews with news media from all across America and from around the world. The Primetime Torture campaign and the issues it raises were also widely discussed on blogs all across the political spectrum.

Soon after the project's launch, the executive producer of "24" announced that viewers will be seeing less torture in future episodes of the show. While the timing of the announcement coincided with a great deal of public attention to the issue, the producer said the decision was based on creative concerns – not public pressure. And Keifer Sutherland, who plays the lead in "24," said he would be willing to speak with West Point cadets if it would help them distinguish the fictional successes of his character, Jack Bauer, from the realities they can expect in real world interrogations.

As part of the project, HRF will be producing a 25-minute military training film to educate soldiers not to imitate the techniques they see on TV. HRF will also create a version of the film for a broader audience. The films will be available in the spring of 2007. For more information, please visit www.primetimetorture.org.