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*Freedom Rider
Condi, Torture and Christmas
by Margaret Kimberley*

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After a short drive, I was dragged out of the car, pushed roughly into a building, thrown to the floor, and kicked and beaten on the head, the soles of my feet, and the small of my back. I was left in a small, dirty, cold concrete cell. – Khaled El-Masri describing detention in CIA prison.

Insane American Christians are spending this Christmas season torturing and defending the use of torture.

Condi Rice, church going queen of torture, traveled to Europe where she tried to justify extra judicial kidnappings and secret prisons. She began her visit by scolding uppity Europeans who took exception to the American inquisition. She told them that interrogations and renditions were saving their wimpy, unappreciative lives.

Click [here](#) for printer friendly version of Condi cartoon in PDF format.

It was a bit inconvenient for Dr. Rice when Khaled El-Masri, a German citizen, sued former CIA director George Tenet during her European tour. El-Masri was accused of being a terror suspect upon entering Macedonia. He was flown to a CIA run prison in Afghanistan, where he was denied access to counsel or any contact with the German government. His imprisonment lasted for a total of four months. George Tenet kept him behind bars even after his identity and proof of his innocence in any wrong doing were confirmed.

The [ACLU](#) is representing El-Masri in his lawsuit against Tenet. When El-Masri attempted to attend a press conference in Washington to announce his lawsuit, he was denied entry into the United States. Embarrassing the United States government and trying to attend a press conference all in the same week was just too much for the powers that be.

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Condi's latest European trip was rocky from the start. After meeting with Rice, new German chancellor Angela Merkel stated that Rice had admitted a mistake in the El-Masri case. It isn't clear if Merkel intentionally outed Rice or if she hadn't yet learned the diplomatic art of being a good liar.

As soon as the press conference ended, Rice's flacks went into action. They vehemently denied that Rice had made any such admission – but it was too late. Steven Watts, El-Masri's attorney, had this to say: "We have never heard such a public statement from a head of government. We will add Ms. Merkel's words to our evidence. They support Khaled el-Masri's position".

Rice's visit put Merkel in a tough spot. Merkel's predecessors had promised to cover for Uncle Sam in the El-Masri case and not make too much of a fuss about their tortured citizen. Let us hope that the chancellor's inexperience in diplomatic niceties becomes the rule.

By the end of her trip Rice was forced to back track a bit. She had to claim that the U.S. doesn't torture and will follow the Geneva conventions on treatment of prisoners of war. Of course the Bushmen and women always want the world to know that they will do whatever they feel like doing. She couldn't give assurances that there would be no more El-Masris. "Will there be abuses of policy? That's entirely possible. Just because you're a democracy it doesn't mean that you're perfect."

Dr. Mushroom Cloud just doesn't get it. Respecting international law on human rights isn't asking for perfection. On the contrary, it is asking for a bare minimum in acceptable behavior. Someone who thinks that prohibitions against torture require perfection is a very dangerous person indeed.

Meanwhile, back in the United States, Americans are experiencing not quite torture, but intense emotional and spiritual aggravation from right wingers claiming to defend Jesus. Happy Holiday is now a forbidden greeting. It is Merry Christmas or the El-Masri treatment.

The Christian right has attacked even their icons like Wal-Mart and George and Laura Bush. Their sin was uttering the word "holiday" when they should utter the word "Christmas". Retailers who don't say "Christmas" are browbeaten into connecting crass commercialism with the name of Jesus.

To add curious insult to injury, many conservative mega churches will not hold services on Sunday, December 25th. They know that pews will be empty when Sunday and Christmas inconveniently coincide. If they don't want to go to church, they can stay home and pray for the unknown El-Masris currently in secret detention. That is just a suggestion from one Christian to others.

Christmas is always somewhat torturous. There are familial obligations, the pressure to max out credit cards, or to say "Christmas" instead of "holiday". Watching Condoleezza Rice in action can also bring physical and psychological pain. Her diplomatic ineptitude and love of America's empire don't induce the same sensation as being beaten on the soles of ones feet, but they come close.

It isn't even clear that we will see the last of her when Bush's term ends. There is still a draft Condi movement among conservatives. If anyone could cause them to overcome their reflexive revulsion against black people, it be Condi Rice.

In order to become president, a black candidate would have to be like Condi, denying connections to other black people and their history, and becoming the most blood thirsty of all. We should think twice and then three times about whether it would be good to have a black resident at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Whoever resides there will not be perfect, but some are far less perfect than others.

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