



# HELSINKI COMMISSION BRIEFING

---

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**Testimony :: Hon. Alcee L. Hastings**

**Chairman - Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to the Helsinki Commission's briefing with representatives for Physicians for Human Rights.

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I know that raising human rights issues is a two-way street. As Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov once observed, the Helsinki Final Act only has meaning if it is observed fully by all parties: I quote, "No country should evade a discussion of its own domestic problems, nor should a country ignore violations in other participating states." The point of the Helsinki Final Act is mutual observation, not mutual evasion.

When we raise issues with other countries, we'd like to believe our concerns are being taken seriously. Conversely, I believe we need to look seriously at the concerns raised with us.

In recent years, there is nothing that has drawn more attention and criticism in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly than our treatment of detainees. And our detention policies have been pretty hard to explain or defend.

The fact is, it is not always easy or pleasant to hold a mirror up and look at one's own practices. But that is what we're going to do at today's briefing.

A few weeks ago, Physicians for Human Rights issued a report entitled "Broken Laws, Broken Lives." In it, they document the medical evidence of torture by U.S. personnel. Today, we will hear from representatives from that organization on the findings in their report.

I expect that our witnesses today will describe the medical and psychological impact of this torture on the individuals whose cases were investigated by PHR. But I would like to note briefly that there is a different kind of impact on display this week.

As many people here may know, this week, in Guantánamo Bay, the United States opened its first war crimes trial since World War II. In the trial of a man alleged to be Osama bin Laden's driver, the military judge overseeing the case found it necessary to exclude from evidence several statements of the defendant because they were obtained under what the judge deemed "highly coercive" conditions. Another one of the government's efforts to bring a defendant before a military tribunal has been put indefinitely on hold, reportedly because the evidence in

the case cannot be disentangled from the impermissible methods that were used to extract it.

With that so noted, I would like to welcome our witnesses: Leonard Rubenstein is President of Physicians for Human Rights, and he is joined by Dr. Allen Keller, Advisor to Physicians for Human Rights and Director of the Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture. Their bios are available here, but I would like to note that Dr. Keller served as a Public Member on the U.S. Delegation to the OSCE in 1998. Dr. Keller, we are grateful for that public service. Finally, we also have with us Dr. Scott Allen, also an Advisor to PHR who worked on this report. Welcome to you all.