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Curran Joins Campaign to Ban Torture

10.16.2008 | Culture and Society, President

UD President Daniel J. Curran is the first president of a U.S. Catholic university to sign a national petition calling for the president to reject cruelty and torture.

"As a Catholic, Marianist university, we affirm the statement of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that the use of torture must be rejected as fundamentally incompatible with the dignity of the human person and ultimately counterproductive in combatting terrorism," Curran said.

The petition is the Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment from the Center for the Victims of Torture. The center is mounting a nationwide effort as part of its "Campaign to Ban Torture: American Voices for American Values."

Curran and Cincinnati Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk signed the petition at an American Voices for American Values event Oct. 13 in the Kennedy Union ballroom.

Four former high-ranking CIA, defense department and military officials — Peter Mansoor, Carl Ford, William H. Taft IV and Donald Gregg — also participated. They explained why they believe the president should issue a presidential executive order that unequivocally rejects torture and cruelty to prisoners.

Ford was a U.S. assistant secretary of state, and Taft was a legal adviser to the U.S. State Department under President George W. Bush. Gregg was a national security adviser under Vice President George H.W. Bush. Mansoor was a key adviser to Gen. David Petraeus, who was commander of the multinational forces in the Iraq, and was actively involved in the development of the "surge strategy."

UD's human rights studies program hosted the event in partnership with the Minneapolis-based Center for the Victims of Torture. The center, along with Evangelicals for Human Rights and the National Religious Campaign against Torture, is building bipartisan support for the declaration around the country to preserve U.S. ideals and regain U.S. moral leadership in the world. The center enlisted Mark Ensalaco, director of UD's human rights studies program, to promote the declaration in Ohio.

Ensalaco's human rights work issues dates back 20 years. In 1988, he was awarded a Fulbright-Hays fellowship to conduct doctoral research at the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogota, Colombia. Since 1991, he has been engaged in the pursuit of justice for Chile's disappeared under Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. He wrote *Chile under Pinochet: Recovering the Truth* that examined Pinochet's dictatorship and early efforts to recover the truth about Pinochet's human rights violations. Ensalaco currently is working on a sequel, *The Mark of Cain: The Prosecution of Pinochet and the Search for the Disappeared*. The book is a behind-the-scenes account of the investigation, impeachment and indictment of Pinochet.