

The Ill-Treatment & Torture (ITT) Data Collection Project

Specific Allegation Data User's Guide

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28 November 2011

Version 2.1

This project has received support from the National Science Foundation (NSF); the Department of Political Science at Florida State University, the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts at the University of California at Merced, and the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Jillienne Haglund has served ITT as Research Assistant extraordinaire.

1 Executive Summary

The Executive Summary provides “at a glance” information about the ITT Specific Allegation (SA) data. Please refer to the Table of Contents below for more detailed information about using the ITT Specific Allegation data.

- Concept: Amnesty International (AI) allegations of government torture and/or ill-treatment at the *event* level of analysis.
- Spatial Domain: All sovereign countries with a population > one million in 1995.
- Temporal Domain: 1995-2005.
- Units of Observation: AI Torture Allegation.
- How is ITT SA data different from the Hathaway & CIRI torture data?
 - The unit of observation in the ITT SA data is the torture allegation or event.
 - ITT explicitly assumes that the actual level of torture is unobservable and thus focuses on what can be measured reliably and validly: AI’s allegations of state torture and ill-treatment.
 - Turning to source documents, ITT performed content analysis on all AI publications from 1995 to 2005 whereas Hathaway and CIRI code only Annual Reports.
- With apologies to Teen Talk Barbie[®], the ITT SA data are events data, and “Events data are hard.”¹ Because the SA data record a variety of characteristics of one or more detainees’ “torture experience” (defined below), users who wish to merge the SA data with other data sets will have to make decisions about how to aggregate, collate, or reshape the data for such purposes. We offer no generic advice on how to do so: the appropriate steps are highly project specific.
- For more information, refer to the Table of Contents below and visit the ITT [Specific Allegation](#) Data FAQ at the ITT Data Page.

¹For example, please see the following: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/21/business/company-news-mattel-says-it-erred-teen-talk-barbie-turns-silent-on-math.html>.

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2 Introduction

This User’s Guide describes data produced by the Ill-Treatment and Torture (ITT) data collection project using the Specific Allegation (SA) as the unit of observation. The ITT project also produces data that use the country-year as the unit of observation. Those data are described in a separate User’s Guide available on the ITT Data Page.

The ITT project reports information on allegations of ill-treatment and torture made by Amnesty International (AI) from 1995 to 2005. The text source for this project includes AI *Annual Reports*, press releases, and Action Alerts ([Amnesty International, 2006](#)). Unlike other data collection projects focusing on government torture, ITT is conceptually interested in the allegations of torture leveled by one International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO): Amnesty International. An allegation is an English sentence (or set of sentences) that makes the claim that a given state has violated the human right to the integrity of the person delineated in the United Nations’ Convention Against Torture (CAT).

This User’s Guide unfolds as follows. We define detainment and torture and then identify the spatial-temporal domain of the data. The next section describes the key variables in the ITT SA data. In the final section we briefly identify the country-identification variables included in the data so that researchers can readily merge ITT SA data with other data sets.

2.1 Specific Allegation (SA) Unit of Analysis

The ITT SA data record the published allegations of ill treatment and torture events made by Amnesty International. State torture occurs when the perpetrator is an agent of the state, the victim is a person under the state’s control, and the alleged abuse meets the definition of torture in the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT). The population at risk to torture is those people detained by the state. That is, the ITT project codes allegations of torture leveled at the state, or in those instances where AI specifically states that a group is acting at the state’s behest, a non-state actor working as an agent of the state.

In comparison to the ITT Country Year (CY) data ([Conrad and Moore, 2011](#)), the SA data include only allegations advanced by AI that are precise claims about abuse in a specific place that is smaller than the country itself or that occurred during a limited period of time less than the year. For example, if AI alleges that the state tortured a (group of) victim(s) by name, that allegation is coded in the SA data. Similarly, if AI reports that torture was prevalent in a single prison or that military torture occurred only during the three weeks following an election, those allegations are also coded in the SA data. Conversely, general allegations of abuse targeted at a government over the course of an entire year are coded in the ITT CY data rather than the SA data.

AI has a reputation for only making allegations after having carefully vetted them (see, for example, the discussion in [Clark, 2001](#)). Indeed, if AI later learns that a published allegation was false, the organization publishes a retraction (and we do not include those allegations in our data). Nevertheless, this does not mean that AI's allegations are a record of states' violations of the CAT. This is so for two reasons. First, AI's allegations are necessarily an undercount of any state's violations of the CAT. By their very nature, violations of the CAT are generally hidden from public view. Indeed, many (in some countries, most?) instances are likely hidden from superiors: the state itself does not have a complete catalog of all of its employees' violations of the CAT. Second, AI is a strategic organization that must balance two goals often in tension with one another: (1) accurate reporting so as to maintain their hard won credibility, and (2) the need to raise donations of cash and volunteer labor. Interest in the impact of these cross-pressuring incentives upon the activities of INGOs is growing (e.g., [Berkovitch and Gordon, 2008](#); [Lake and Wong, 2009](#); [Gourevitch and Lake, 2011](#); [Hill, Moore and Mukherjee, 2012](#)), and it is important to recognize that these incentives lead INGOs like AI to invest their effort where they expect it to be most effective. As a consequence, AI is unlikely to report allegations with equal probability across all countries. In other words, AI's allegations are not what statisticians would call an **unbiased undercount** of states' violations of the CAT. Instead, both AI's access to information as well as AI's assessment of where it is most likely to mobilize its members to bring pressure to bear make a difference. As such, users who wish to use the ITT data to study the performance of states (rather than to study NGO naming and shaming processes) will need to include in their analyses consideration of the strategic process that influences AI's publication of allegations.

2.1.1 Definition of Detainment

The ITT project codes only allegations of state torture, and thus victims must be alleged to have been under the control of an agent of the state (e.g., police officer, soldier, prison official, or someone AI alleges to be operating on behalf of the government).² Individuals are considered to be under state control when either 1) the state (or its agent) takes custody of a person, or 2) when the state (or its agent) targets an individual or group and deprives them of their liberty for a period of time. Alleged state torture can *only* occur after the state takes someone into its custody.

2.1.2 Definition of Torture

We adopt the definition of torture set forth in the UN Convention against Torture (CAT):

²By agent of the state we mean an official in the state's employ, or someone who has been designated by such an agent to act on the state's behalf.

torture means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

Our project distinguishes among three types of torture that fall under this definition: ill-treatment, scarring torture, and clean/stealth torture.

2.2 Spatial-Temporal Domain

The ITT project coded data on all sovereign countries with a population of at least one million in 1995. We coded all AI publications that made allegations about circumstances in those countries during the years 1995-2005, inclusive.³ AI publishes Annual Reports, topical and regional Reports, Press Releases, and Action Alerts. ITT included all four types of documents in its content analysis. Note that a sovereign country is one in which the state is able to exercise a minimal level of sovereignty. We code states' use of torture, not the use by non-state actors. As such, we exclude allegations of torture that occur during country-years in which no state was able to exercise a minimal level of sovereignty over the territory recognized by the international system.

Users interested in replicating the data collection, or otherwise working with the files as originally coded, will be able to do so: in the future the ITT project will post all such files on the project's website. Among other information, those files will contain hyperlinks to the reports from which the allegation was coded.

3 Description of Key Variables

In this section, we describe the key variables included in the ITT SA data: Year Begin, Year End, Location, Order of Magnitude (OoM), Number of Victims, Victim Type (VT), Expectation of Torture, Ill-Treatment, Unknown Torture, Scarring Torture, Stealth Torture,

³For additional detail on how our coders identified reports, please consult our Coding Rules ([Conrad and Moore, 2010b](#), pp. 14-16).

Torture Death, Agency of Control (AoC), Formal Complaint, Investigation, Investigation Outcome, Location of Adjudication, Outcome of Adjudication, Trans-Border Torture, Destination, Level of Certainty (LoC), and Restricted Access (Rstrctaccess).

3.1 Year Begin & Year End

AI typically records the year in which the alleged torture began (and ended). Instances in which AI did not comment on the year in which alleged torture began or ended are coded as missing values.

3.2 Location

Location is a mutually exclusive variable that indicates whether or not the alleged torture occurred on national territory. When an allegation occurs outside national territory, coders were instructed to code the ISO3 numeric code of the location, if given.

- 0 = Within National Territory
- 1 = Elsewhere⁴
- 2 = Sovereign Territory Abroad

3.3 Order of Magnitude (OoM)

Order of Magnitude is an ordinal, mutually exclusive indicator that records whether an alleged tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, or millions of people were victimized in a given allegation.⁵ It is coded according to the following scale:

- 0 = None
- 1 = 1 - 9
- 2 = 10 - 99

⁴Allegations occurring in airspace or seaspace are coded “1” and assigned an ISO3 numeric code of 000.

⁵Please refer to [Conrad and Moore \(2010a\)](#) for information on key words that show up frequently in AI reports and how they are coded with regard to OoM.

- 3 = 100 - 999
- 4 = 1,000 - 9,999
- 5 = 10,000 - 99,999
- 6 = 100,000 - 999,999
- 7 => 999,999
- -9 = Not Zero

3.4 Number of Victims

When AI documents provide information on the precise number of victims tortured in a given allegation, we recorded the integer value of the number of victims. When a specific number is not reported, this variable is coded with a value of -9.

3.5 Victim Type (VT)

The ITT project produced a typology to code the target victimization as reported in AI's documents. Our typology distinguishes among the economic, social and/or political groups that AI's allegation suggests the victim is a member. It is influenced by Rejali's (2007) tripartite typology of the state's motive for ill treatment and torture: criminal investigation, national security interrogation, and social control. We added a fourth type—state agent (as defined above)—as we encountered it in several documents and did not feel that it fit well in any of the other three categories. If a friend/family member of a detainee is tortured in an effort to hurt the detainee, absent other information we code the victim type based on the identity of the original detainee.

Like those for Agency of Control, values on VT are not mutually exclusive. The reason is that victims often exhibit more than one identity. For example, a theft suspect in Brazil who is a street child fits both the Criminal and the Marginalized Individual types.

Coders were instructed to code VT only when AI explicitly identified the type of victim in a given allegation. Many AI allegations do not provide sufficient information to permit coders to assign a value across these four types, so we also have an "Unstated" value, which reflects that AI did not report sufficiently detailed information about the type of victim. Including the "Unknown" value, we distinguish among five victim types:

- Unstated
- Criminal⁶
- Dissident⁷
- Marginalized Individual⁸
- State Agent⁹
- Prisoner of War

3.6 Expectation of Torture

AI sometimes issues statements of “official concern” that a person is at grave *risk* to torture or ill-treatment rather than alleging that they were tortured with certainty. Other reports indicate that AI *believes* torture occurred in the past, but cannot be certain about the allegation. Researchers can use this variable to distinguish between AI allegations that are “certain” and AI allegations where the NGO describes an incident in less certain terms. We code Expectation of Torture as follows:¹⁰

- 0 = No/Not Noted
- 1 = Yes

⁶One believed to have contravened statute, excluding crimes that are considered threats to national security. We do not code Victim Type as Criminal in instances where a victim has broken a law that is in opposition to the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Absent other information, we consider Prison Populations (pre- and post-sentence) to be Criminals. Asylum seekers being deported were coded both as Marginalized Individuals and Criminals.

⁷One believed to be a threat to the state or be willing to engage in illegal activity to challenge policy. Note that we consider Prisoners of Conscience, Human Rights Defenders, and Protestors to be Dissidents unless otherwise noted in the report. We also consider individuals who AI notes have been disappeared as Dissidents. Terrorists were coded as both Criminals and Dissidents. Guerrillas were coded as Dissidents only. In countries where AI notes that the government persecutes the news media, we code members of the press as Dissidents.

⁸Member of a marginalized group. We assign a victim as a member of a marginalized group if he/she is tortured by the state for the purpose of social control (i.e., humiliation or other punishment to establish that [1] her/his behavior was inappropriate and [2] that the state can abuse her/him with impunity), rather than for the collection of information. We consider Immigrants to be Marginalized Individuals, except in the case of Illegal Immigrants, who are both Marginalized Individuals and Criminals.

⁹Victim Type is only coded as State Official when a state agent is abused by other agents of his/her home country (e.g., member of the military or sitting judge).

¹⁰If Expectation of Torture is coded “1,” there always an accompanying ill-treatment or torture (unknown, scarring, stealth, death) variable coded “1” in the SA data.

3.7 Ill-treatment

In addition to proscribing torture the CAT also requires that states “...shall undertake to prevent in any territory under its jurisdiction other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment which do not amount to torture as defined in article I, when such acts are committed by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity” (Article 16). We distinguish this treatment from torture and code a variable if AI alleges that a country is engaged in “cruel,” “inhuman,” or “degrading” behavior against individuals under their control. Note that this variable can be coded “1” in conjunction with the torture variables described below; abuses are not mutually exclusive.

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes

3.8 Unstated Torture

Unstated Torture is coded to specify allegations in which we know that torture occurred, but we have no information about its type. It is coded “1” in two situations: First, Unstated Torture is coded in situations when AI makes broad claims that torture has occurred, but gives no further details. Second, AI often makes an allegation like the following: “Victims were subjected to torture, including rape.” Note that this variable can be coded “1” in conjunction with ill-treatment and the torture variables described below; abuses are not mutually exclusive.

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes

3.9 Scarring Torture

We distinguish between two broad types of torture: scarring torture and stealth torture (Rejali, 2007). These two classes differ with respect to whether or not they leave marks on the human body. Scarring torture includes (but is not limited to) burning, beating, cutting, whipping, boiling, sexual abuse (to include rape), abuse using animals (e.g., allowing dog bites), maiming, and disfiguring. Note that this variable can be coded “1” in conjunction with ill-treatment and the torture variables described below; abuses are not mutually exclusive.

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes

3.10 Stealth Torture

“Stealth” or “clean” torture techniques are distinguished from scarring techniques because they do not mark the body (Rejali, 2007).¹¹ Note that this variable can be coded “1” in conjunction with ill-treatment and the torture variables described above; abuses are not mutually exclusive.

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes

3.11 Torture Death

AI sometimes comments that victims were tortured to death or driven to suicide. We code victims as having been tortured to death or driven to suicide only if AI explicitly mentions or strongly insinuates that this is the case. Deaths in disputed circumstances are not coded unless torture is explicitly mentioned.

- 0 = No
- 1 = Yes
- 2 = Suicide

3.12 Agency of Control (AoC)

Agency of Control (AoC) indicates the domestic institution and/or agent(s) that is responsible for a given allegation of torture. As noted above, ITT codes allegations in which an individual detained by the state is victimized. We define a state agent as “someone in the state’s employ or someone who is directed by a person in the state’s employ to act on behalf of the state” (Conrad and Moore, 2010a, p. 10). Coders were instructed to choose values

¹¹Refer to Conrad and Moore (2010a) and Rejali (2007) for lists of clean techniques.

on Agency of Control based on the official role of the agent, rather than the role he/she is acting in. For example, police officers working temporarily as prison guards are coded as police on AoC.

Values on AoC are not mutually exclusive; this is so because AI sometimes alleges that a detainee or prisoner is abused by more than one government agency. Sometimes this occurs because personnel from more than one agency are present at the same location and time, but in other instances this occurs because a person is abused first by the agency that conducted an arrest, later by an agency that conducted interrogation, and perhaps even later by the agency that held the person in prison.

Coders were instructed to code AoC only when AI explicitly identified the agency responsible for an abuse. AI often made allegations without identifying a specific agency.¹² Our coders assigned a value of “Unstated” when this occurred. Including the “Unstated” value, we distinguish among six state agencies that might control detainees.

- Unstated
- Police¹³
- Prison¹⁴
- Military¹⁵
- Intelligence¹⁶
- Immigration Detention¹⁷
- Paramilitary¹⁸

¹²AI’s allegations most frequently fail to identify an AoC in their *Annual Reports*.

¹³Coders were instructed to code Police (and not Prison) for allegations conducted by police officer, but occurring in holding cells.

¹⁴Coders were instructed to code Prison (and not Police) for allegations in which the victim was abused in pre-trial detention.

¹⁵Absent other information, coders were instructed to code gendarmes and military police as Military.

¹⁶Coders were instructed to code only civilian intelligence services as Intelligence and to code military intelligence services as Military.

¹⁷Immigration detention centers include immigration and border control agents of the state.

¹⁸Allegations regarding paramilitary groups are only coded if AI indicates within an individual document that a group has at least the tacit approval of the state government. Coders were instructed to code Militias as Paramilitary units, but only if AI explicitly indicates that the group has at least the tacit approval of the state government.

3.13 Formal Complaint

AI sometimes comments on whether allegations of torture were formally reported to the State (or another State) by either the victim or by NGOs and like-groups. We include a variable for whether there was a formal report filed on behalf of an alleged torture victim(s). formal complaints.

- -1 = No
- 0 = Unstated
- 1 = Yes

3.14 Investigation

AI sometimes comments on whether allegations of torture were investigated by state authorities. We include a variable for whether there was a report of an Investigation of the alleged torture.

- -1 = No
- 0 = Unstated
- 1 = Yes

3.15 Investigation Outcome

We code whether an Adjudication/Mediation procedure, administrative sanction, or a termination of employment (e.g., of a prison guard) followed the Investigation(s). If Investigation of Torturers = 1, Outcome of Investigation is coded according to the following scale.

- -1 = None
- 0 = Unstated
- 1 = Adjudication/Mediation
- 2 = Administrative Sanction (e.g., employment probation; not to include Dismissal from Employment)

- 3 = Dismissal from Employment
- 4 = Legislation/Institution Creation

3.16 Location of Adjudication

This variable indicates whether Adjudication or Mediation proceedings took place domestically or internationally. We only code Location of Adjudication as Domestic if the court is tried in the same country where the allegation occurred. In the event that an allegation is tried in a domestic court in a country other than the country where the violation was committed (e.g., a Spanish court tries a Chilean violation), it is coded as Location of Adjudication International. If Outcome of Investigation = 1, Location of Adjudication/Mediation is coded “1” on each of the following applicable locations of the Adjudication.

- International Court
- Domestic Court

3.17 Outcome of Adjudication

This variable indicates the outcome of a given Adjudication/Mediation of a torture allegation. If Outcome of Investigation = 1, this variable is coded according to the following nominal, mutually exclusive scale.

- 0 = Unstated
- 1 = Pardon (Accused found guilty, but executive excuses crime)
- 2 = Conviction or Plea (Accused found guilty or pleads guilty)
- 3 = Acquittal (Case dismissed for lack of evidence or accused found Not Guilty)
- 4 = Compensation (Victim provided with [monetary] compensation)
- 5 = Pending

3.18 Trans-Border Torture

Article 3 of the CAT requires that no state expel, return, refoul, or extradite a person to another state where that individual is likely to be in danger of being tortured. Although we define refolement as the expulsion of persons who are recognized as refugees according to the definition in Article 1 of the [UN Convention on the Status of Refugees](#), we do not require these individuals to have formally applied for refugee status or asylum. We do not code the expectation of refolement of extradition; refolement or extradition must have already occurred to be coded in our data.

- 0 = No
- 1 = Refoulment
- 2 = Extradition/Rendition

3.18.1 Destination

When a State is accused of Trans-Border torture, it is typically because that State sent an individual or group of individuals to another State where they are likely to be tortured. This variable indicates the State to which those individuals have been sent.

- 1 = Country of Origin
- 2 = Other
- -9 = Unspecified

3.18.2 Destination ISO

This variable records the ISO code of the destination country to which the victim was sent. It is only coded when Destination has a value of 1 or 2.

3.19 Level of Certainty (LoC)

ITT coders assigned a “certainty” value to several variables in the SA data. We use three levels of certainty: A [The information is written down in the report; $p = 1$], B [The coder is

fairly certain of this information based on context; $p > 0.8$], and C [The coder is less certain about this information based on context; $p > 0.5$. We code “certainty” values because we want the information available to researchers who may want to adjust their estimation procedures accordingly (see [Stemler and Tsai, 2008](#)). These variables were motivated by the grade that the Penn World Tables project ([Heston, Summers and Aten, 2006](#)) assigns to some of its variables.

3.20 Restricted Access

Restricted access (`Rstrctaccess`) is a binary variable assigned a value of one if AI published a statement that it, or another INGO, had difficulty gaining access to detainees in that country *during the first year of an allegation*. At a minimum, we recommend using this variable as a control in any statistical analyses that use AoC or LoT as a dependent variable. Although it is coded at the CY level of analysis, we include it in the SA data as well. `Rstrctaccess` is coded as follows:

- 0 = No INGO Comment on Lack of Access in First Year of Allegation
- 1 = INGO Comment on Lack of Access in First Year of Allegation

4 Merging ITT with other Data

The ITT SA data are available on the ITT project website in Stata data and .csv (ASCII) format. To facilitate the use of ITT data with other datasets we have included three country identifier variables.

- `cowccode`
- `iso3alpha`
- `iso3numeric`

The `cowccode` variable is a revised version of the Correlates of War (<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>) Country Codes.¹⁹ We have made a minor revision to those codes: the COW value of 666 is changed to 665.

¹⁹As of this writing the official COW Country Codes are available here: <http://www.correlatesofwar.org/COWStatelist.xls>.

The second identifier, `iso3alpha` is the three letter code assigned to each country by the International Standardization Agency. Those values are listed here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_3166-1_alpha-3.

The third identifier, `iso3numeric` is the three number code assigned to each country by the International Standardization Agency. Those values are listed here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ISO_3166-1_numeric.

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