



# Which Government Agencies Torture? Introducing the Ill-Treatment and Torture (ITT) Data



Courtenay R. Conrad (UC, Merced) & Will H. Moore (Florida State University)

Existing quantitative research on torture incidence provide conceptual and operational opportunities for improvement. Conceptually, these projects seek to measure the incidence of government torture, a concept that is unknowable because states face incentives to hide such activity. The ITT Project instead measures torture *allegations* made by Amnesty International (AI), which are directly observable. Operationally, existing measures use ordinal scales that measure the relative number of alleged cases of torture in a given country in a given year (e.g., Cingranelli and Richards 2004, Hathaway 2002). Although foundational to the empirical study of government respect for human rights, these data do not allow researchers to account for the fact that government torture is heterogenous; it can be perpetrated by multiple government agents against a variety of victims for a myriad of reasons. By moving away from the country-year as the unit of observation, the ITT Project is able to code more detailed data on state torture incidence than has previously been available across time and space.<sup>1</sup>

## Some Research Questions

Many interesting research questions that cannot be explored using existing data on state torture incidence can be pursued using ITT data.

For example . . .

- Do the “usual suspect” covariates differ in their effects on government torture incidence depending on which state agent perpetrates the abuse?
- Is government torture against certain victims more likely to be perpetrated by specific agents of the state?
- What domestic and/or international institutions best stop/prevent torture by police/military/immigration?
- Does the conventional quantitative wisdom about government torture incidence stand up to scrutiny after accounting for AI (lack of) access?

## ITT's Country-Year-Agency Variables

- Level of Torture (*replication of Hathaway, 2002*)
  - 1=Infrequent
  - 2=Often
  - 3=Frequent
  - 4=Widespread
  - 5=Systematic
  - $P_o$ :<sup>2</sup> 0.761
- Agency of Control (AoC):

- 0=Unknown
- 1=Police
- 2=Prison
- 3=Military
- 4=Immigration Detention
- 5=Civilian Intelligence
- 6=Paramilitary
- $P_o$ : 0.918

- Victim Type
  - 0=Unknown
  - 1=Criminal
  - 2=Dissident
  - 3=Marginalized Individual
  - 4=State Agent
  - $P_o$ : 0.739

- Lack of Access
  - 0=AI did not comment on Lack of Access
  - 1=AI noted a Lack of Access
  - $P_o$ : 0.919

## Country-Year-Agency Data Releases

In late 2010 and early 2011, we plan to release four datasets on government torture incidence (i.e., Level of Torture) for countries with populations over one million from 1995 to 2005. The four datasets will vary in both their unit of observation and whether or not they provide information on AI's reported lack of access in a given country-year (i.e., Lack of Access):

- Country-year-agency (CYA)
- Country-year-agency including information on Lack of Access (CYAoCAxs)
- Country-year-agency-victim-type (CYAVT)
- Country-year-agency-victim-type including information on Lack of Access (CYVTAxs)

## Future Data Release: Torture Allegation “Event” Data

The ITT Data Collection Project also codes additional data, to be released beginning in fall 2011, where the unit of observation is the *torture event*. The distinction between the units of observation described above and our event data involves the breadth of a torture allegation's spatial-temporal domain.

- Country-year-agency allegations are allegations about the general use of (a) torture (technique) across a given country throughout a given year by a given government agency.
- Specific allegations are coded from reports that describe events occurring in a limited (number of) place(s) or for a specific period of time (less than one year).

Our event data includes additional variables to enrich the quantitative study of torture, including variables that allow researchers to distinguish between 1) allegations of ill-treatment, scarring torture, and stealth torture, 2) situations in which AI *expects* abuse to occur and situations in which AI has *evidence* that abuse has occurred; 3) allegations that have been investigated and/or adjudicated by the state or an international body, and 4) allegations of trans-border and domestic torture.

<sup>1</sup>This project has received support from the National Science Foundation (SES #0921397), the Department of Political Science at FSU, and the School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts at UC Merced.

<sup>2</sup>Proportion of Overall Agreement,  $P_o = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^K \sum_{j=1}^{k-1} n_{jk}(n_{jk}-1)}{\sum_{k=1}^K n_k(n_k-1)}$