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Trends. Counterterrorist and Human Rights Logic and Illogic

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Human Rights Watch has strongly attacked the recommendation of the United States Commission on Terrorism to lift restrictions on the Central Intelligence Agency to recruit foreign informants who have been involved in serious human rights abuses. The rationale for the attack is that recruitment connotes that "anything goes" in counterterrorism--a perspective mirroring that of the terrorist in achieving political objectives.

However, recruitment is not comparable to murder. Recruiting a murderer to legally prevent or solve other murders is not comparable to murder. And recruiting to legally prevent or solve other murders ipso facto does not condone murder. Nor is recruitment in essence a condoning of murder.

On the other hand, counterterrorism and terrorism may at times be ethically and morally supported dependent on their desired consequences. To categorically reject both as potentially ethical or moral reifies a proscription over that which is merely human and thus dehumanizes. A justice code prevails over social justice.

Moreover, Human Rights Watch suggests that an ends-justify-the-means approach denotes that the ends always justify the means. Most counterterrorists and terrorists by their own actions reject this notion. Instead particular ends may justify particular means given the varying complexities of ends and means. In contrast, Human Rights Watch has opted for a means-justify-the-ends approach--that the collection and transmission of information will be deployed whether successful or unsuccessful. This is its choice, but what categorical imperative requires that it be others'? (See Brunet, A., & Helal, I. S. (1998). Monitoring the prosecution of gender-related crimes in Rwanda: A brief field report. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 4, 393-397; Davenport, C. (1999). Human rights and the democratic proposition. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 43, 92-116; Doise, W., Spini, D., & Clemence, A. (1999). Human rights studied as social representations in a cross-national context. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29, 1-29; Loveman, M. (1998). High-risk collective action: Defending human rights in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina. *American Journal of Sociology*, 104, 477-525; Roth, K. (June 9, 2000). Terrorist logic. *The New York Times*, p. A30.) (Keywords: Abuse, Consequentialism, Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Terrorism.)