NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress **Massachusetts Seventh District**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2004

CONTACT: Mark Bayer
or Colin McCormick
(202) 225-2836

MARKEY INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO PREVENT THE U.S. FROM TRANSFERRING PRISONERS TO NATIONS KNOWN TO PRACTICE TORTURE

Bill would block extra-judicial transfers to human rights abuser nations

WASHINGTON, DC - Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today introduced legislation to stop an extra-judicial CIA practice of sending terrorism suspects to foreign governments known to engage in torture.

"The prison abuses at Abu Ghraib were a national disgrace and have rightly been the subject of anger and condemnation," said Rep. Markey. "But another torture practice continues to go on without any public attention. Under the name 'extraordinary rendition', the CIA reportedly sends terrorism suspects, sometimes on the flimsiest of evidence, to foreign countries that are known to employ torture in prisoner interrogation. This practice is against all U.S. and international law and is a moral outrage, and it must be stopped."

The practice of extraordinary rendition, the extra-judicial removal of people in U.S. custody both domestically and abroad to foreign governments that are known to use torture, has received little attention because of the degree of secrecy with which it occurs. Attention was drawn to the practice in September 2002 when Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen, was seized while in transit to Canada through JFK airport, and sent to Jordan and later Syria at the request of the CIA. While in Syria, Arar was tortured and held in a dark, 3-by-6-foot cell for nearly a year. He was ultimately released and detailed his story to the media upon his return to Canada.

Although the numbers are classified, outgoing CIA director George Tenet testified to the 9/11 Commission in October 2002 that over 70 people had been subject to rendition before September 11. Human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the ACLU have detailed numerous other cases and are pursuing litigation in some of them. On June 21, the Canadian government launched an investigation into Arar's case.

The Markey bill directs the State Department to compile a list of countries that commonly practice torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during detention and interrogation, and prohibit rendition to any nation on this list, unless the Secretary of State certifies that the nation has made significant progress in human rights. The bill explicitly permits legal, treaty-based extradition, in which suspects have the right to appeal in a U.S. court to block the proposed transfer based on the likelihood that they would be subjected to torture or other inhumane treatment.

Rep. Markey continued, "Extraordinary rendition is outsourcing torture, and it is morally repugnant to allow such a practice to continue. President Bush has asserted that 'the values of this country are such that torture is not a part of our soul and our being.' The legislation I am introducing today is designed to ensure that we not only ban torture conducted by our own forces but we also stop the practice of contracting out torture to other nations. Torture enabled by extraordinary rendition is outrageous and must be stopped," Rep. Markey concluded.

Additional information is available at Rep. Markey's website, http://www.house.gov/markey.

# # #