International Relations · GS - II

“Counter-terrorism measures lose their legitimacy when they violate the fundamental prohibition against torture.” Critically examine this proposition in the context of democratic governance and international human rights.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 27/11/2026	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Absolute prohibition of torture, UNCAT, ICCPR, national security, custodial accountability, rule of law, intelligence oversight, human dignity

Model Answer

Governments confronting terrorism face the responsibility of protecting citizens while respecting human dignity and legal obligations. The post-9/11 interrogation programme of the United States illustrates the tensions arising when coercive methods are justified through national security considerations.

Why the prohibition matters

1. **Human dignity:** Torture violates the inherent dignity and physical and psychological integrity of individuals, including persons suspected of terrorism.
2. **International law:** Article 2 of the UN Convention Against Torture prohibits torture without exceptions. Article 7 of the ICCPR provides an associated human rights guarantee.
3. **Reliability of intelligence:** Coercive interrogation can produce false confessions and misleading information, potentially weakening investigations.

4. **Institutional credibility:** Abuse by state agencies damages public trust and undermines the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

Security and accountability

1. **Legal oversight:** Intelligence and security agencies must operate under clearly defined laws and independent supervision.
2. **Transparency:** Classified operations require appropriate parliamentary, judicial or other authorised oversight mechanisms.
3. **Investigation:** Credible allegations of custodial torture must receive impartial investigation, with accountability where violations are established.
4. **Effective alternatives:** Lawful interrogation, evidence-based investigation and international intelligence cooperation can strengthen counter-terrorism capacity.

Conclusion

National security and human rights are not mutually exclusive objectives. A democratic state protects its citizens most credibly when counter-terrorism institutions remain accountable to law and uphold the absolute prohibition of torture.

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