

ERIC HOLDER: WELL, MAYBE JUST A LITTLE FORCED NUDITY AND SOLITARY CONFINEMENT...

Eric Holder has written a letter to Russian Minister of Justice Alexander Valdimirovich Konovalov. In it, he claims to address the issues Edward Snowden raised in his application for asylum to Russia (I'm not sure he accurately represents the claim – in other asylum applications Snowden made a clear case he was charged with a political crime, which Holder doesn't mention at all).

The letter assures Konovalov that the charges currently charged don't carry the death penalty and the government wouldn't seek the death penalty if he were charged with such crimes.

But it also offers this guarantee that Snowden won't be tortured:

Second, Mr. Snowden will not be tortured. Torture is unlawful in the United States.

That's it! The guy whose DOJ reviewed but chose not to charge a bunch of CIA torturers (and those who obstructed investigations into that torture) says torture is illegal here and therefore Snowden wouldn't be tortured.

Assuming, of course, you believe the forced nudity and solitary confinement Bradley Manning was illegally (per the judge in his case) subjected to doesn't amount to torture. I'm sure Vladimir Putin would agree, but much of the civilized world does not.

In other curious assurances, Holder promises that Snowden would have the right to counsel.

Any questioning of Mr. Snowden could be conducted only with his consent: his participation would be entirely voluntary, and his legal counsel would be present should he wish it.

I guess Holder ought to tell Dzhokhar Tsarnaev about this return to the good old days, because he asked for a lawyer several times under questioning before he got one.

These assurances are all very nice. But more and more, such assurances are easily disproven by our recent history. Again, I don't think Vlad Putin gives a great shit about all that. But ultimately this increasingly shoddy recent history will hurt such claims in the international realm.