

#602 Foot tortures and the implication of Forensic Podiatry in cases of Human Rights violations

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Abstract

The aim of this presentation is to give an overview of the history of foot torture from Middle Ages to the present times, demonstrating its forensic importance on current criminal investigations, mainly the ones related to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Feet are unique structures in human body because they present the highest number of sensory nerve terminations per square centimeter. Just in one foot we can find 200 nociceptors, 25 baroreceptors, 12 terminations sensitivity to cold, 2 terminations sensitivity to heat, 1 metre of blood vessels, 4 meters motor nerve fibers, 15 sebaceous glands and 100 sweat glands. Foot places one quarter bones of the body. Thus, injuries in the foot are extremely painful. As the Bible describes, Jesus was condemned to death nailing his alive body to a wooden cross, one of them on his both feet.

The Spanish Inquisition or the Holy Office was an institution created by the Catholic monarchs Fernando II and Isabel I to maintain Catholicism in the Kingdom of Spain in 1478. This was abolished during the regency of María Cristina de Borbón and Fernando VII in 1834. During the Inquisition times, different tortures were performed in the feet of the non-believers. Several torture instruments were developed just for that purpose: feet burnt at bonfire, shackled ankles like the torture of Cuauhtémoc, the breaker wheel "Catherine Wheel" or breaking limbs, the shin, dismemberment by horses, Strappardo or "*Garrucha*", the iron boot, the hiker, the "*Turca*", and more gadgets to hurt. Many of them have been conserved in museums and castles, as part of historical exhibitions.

From ancient to current times, different asiatic cultures have adopted the habit of wearing shoes that inhibit the normal development of the foot, "lotus feet" or "feet crescent" being another kind of long-term form of torture.

Modern times introduce new forms of torture, such as the application of dry cement to the feet and throwing the person to the water by mafias and terrorist groups. More sophisticated ways of torture are applied in war crimes, like the use of electrocution or chemical acids on the foot, leading to get a confession from the tortured. Nowadays Arab countries apply traditional punishments methods towards the same objective.

Therefore, the identification and study of this kind of tortures on feet by forensic podiatrists can play an important role towards the prosecution of criminals, helping to pursue justice for the victims.

#Forensic Podiatry #Human Rights #Terrorist groups #Foot tortures
