

ALEX ADAMS

HOW TO JUSTIFY TORTURE

INSIDE THE TICKING BOMB SCENARIO

"As passionate as it is rigorous... Anyone sickened by the global re-emergence of torture as a 'tool of justice' will find resources for resistance here."
Bob Brecher, *University of Brighton*



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If there was a bomb hidden somewhere in a major city, and you had the person responsible in your custody, would you torture them to get the information needed to stop the bomb exploding, preventing a devastating terrorist attack and saving thousands of lives?

This is the ticking bomb scenario — a thought experiment designed to demonstrate that torture can be justified.

In *How to Justify Torture*, Alex Adams examines the ticking bomb scenario in depth, looking at the ways it is narrated in films, novels, and TV shows, from *Batman Begins* and *Dirty Harry* to French military thrillers and home invasion narratives. By critiquing its argument step by step, this book reminds us that, despite what the ticking bomb scenario will have us believe, torture can never be justified.

Contents:

Introduction: Torture and the Texture of Common Sense

One: Utility: Torture as Objective Technology

Two: Virtue: Dark Heroism from *Dirty Harry* to *Daredevil*

Three: Protectivity: Torture as Parental Responsibility

Conclusion: Anatomy of a Ticking Bomb

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"A must-read book for anyone interested in how the authoritarian turn since 9/11 has been legitimised in popular culture."

– *Peter Morey, University of Birmingham*

"A timely, thoroughly compelling critique."

– *Sam Thomas, Durham University*

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