# The disappeared: Chicago police detain Americans at abuse-laden 'black site' <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/24/chicago-police-detain-americans-black-site>

# Highlight the main idea of the article. Define the vocabulary words on the line. Ask 3 questions of the article. Summarize the article. What is your opinion about this topic?

# The [Chicago](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/chicago) police department operates an off-the-books interrogation compound, rendering Americans unable to be found by family or attorneys while locked inside what lawyers say is the domestic equivalent of a CIA black site. The facility, a nondescript \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ warehouse on Chicago’s west side known as Homan Square, has long been the scene of secretive work by special police units. Interviews with local attorneys and one protester who spent the better part of a day shackled in Homan Square describe operations that deny access to basic constitutional rights. [Alleged police practices at Homan Square](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/24/chicago-homan-square-black-site), according to those familiar with the facility who spoke out to the Guardian after its investigation into Chicago police abuse, include:

* Keeping arrestees out of official booking databases.
* Beating by police, resulting in head wounds.
* Shackling for prolonged periods.
* Denying attorneys access to the “secure” facility.
* Holding people without legal counsel for between 12 and 24 hours, including people as young as 15.

At least one man was found unresponsive in a Homan Square “interview room” and later pronounced dead.  
 Brian Jacob Church, a protester known as one of the “Nato Three”, was held and questioned at Homan Square in 2012 following a police raid. Officers restrained Church for the better part of a day, denying him access to an attorney, before sending him to a nearby police station to be booked and charged.  
 “Homan Square is definitely an unusual place,” Church told the Guardian on Friday. “It brings to mind the interrogation facilities they use in the Middle East. The CIA calls them black sites. It’s a domestic black site. When you go in, no one knows what’s happened to you.”  
 The secretive warehouse is the latest example of Chicago police practices that echo the much-criticized detention abuses of the US war on terrorism. While those abuses impacted people overseas, Homan Square – said to house military-style vehicles, interrogation cells and even a cage – trains its focus on Americans, most often poor, black and brown.  
 Unlike a precinct, no one taken to Homan Square is said to be booked. Witnesses, suspects or other Chicagoans who end up inside do not appear to have a public, searchable record entered into a database indicating where they are, as happens when someone is booked at a precinct. Lawyers and relatives insist there is no way of finding their whereabouts. Those lawyers who have attempted to gain access to Homan Square are most often turned away, even as their clients remain in custody inside.   
 “It’s sort of an open secret among attorneys that regularly make police station visits, this place – if you can’t find a client in the system, odds are they’re there,” said Chicago lawyer Julia Bartmes.  
 Chicago civil-rights attorney Flint Taylor said Homan Square represented a **routinization** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** of a notorious practice in local police work that violates the fifth and sixth amendments of the constitution.  
 “This Homan Square revelation seems to me to be an institutionalization of the practice that dates back more than 40 years,” Taylor said, “of violating a suspect or witness’ rights to a lawyer and not to be physically or otherwise coerced into giving a statement.”  
 Much remains hidden about Homan Square. The Chicago police department did not respond to the Guardian’s questions about the facility. But after the Guardian published this story, the department provided a statement insisting, without specifics, that there is nothing untoward taking place at what it called the “sensitive” location, home to undercover units.   
 “CPD [Chicago police department] abides by all laws, rules and guidelines pertaining to any interviews of suspects or witnesses, at Homan Square or any other CPD facility. If lawyers have a client detained at Homan Square, just like any other facility, they are allowed to speak to and visit them. It also houses CPD’s Evidence Recovered Property Section, where the public is able to claim inventoried property,” the statement said, something numerous attorneys and one Homan Square arrestee have denied.  
 “There are always records of anyone who is arrested by CPD, and this is not any different at Homan Square,” it continued.  
 The Chicago police statement did not address how long into an arrest or detention those records are generated or their availability to the public. A department spokesperson did not respond to a detailed request for clarification.  
 When a Guardian reporter arrived at the warehouse on Friday, a man at the gatehouse outside refused any entrance and would not answer questions. “This is a secure facility. You’re not even supposed to be standing here,” said the man, who refused to give his name.  
 A former Chicago police superintendent and a more recently retired detective, both of whom have been inside Homan Square in the last few years in a post-police capacity, said the police department did not operate out of the warehouse until the late 1990s.  
 But in detailing episodes involving their clients over the past several years, lawyers described mad scrambles that led to the closed doors of Homan Square, a place most had never heard of previously. The facility was even unknown to Rob Warden, the founder of Northwestern University Law School’s Center on Wrongful Convictions, until the Guardian informed him of the allegations of clients who vanish into inherently **coercive** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** police custody.  
 “They just disappear,” said Anthony Hill, a criminal defense attorney, “until they show up at a district for charging or are just released back out on the street.  
 ‘They were held incommunicado for much longer than I think should be permitted in this country – anywhere – but particularly given the strong constitutional rights afforded to people who are being charged with crimes,” said Sarah Gelsomino, the lawyer for Brian Jacob Church. Photograph: Phil Batta/Guardian   
 Jacob Church learned about Homan Square the hard way. On [May 16 2012](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/terror-indictments-for-chicago-nato-protesters-brian-church-jared-chase-brent-vincent-betterly/), he and 11 others were taken there after police infiltrated their protest against the Nato summit. Church says officers cuffed him to a bench for an estimated 17 hours, **intermittently** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** interrogating him without reading his Miranda rights to remain silent. It would take another three hours – and an unusual lawyer visit through a wire cage – before he was finally charged with terrorism-related offenses at the nearby 11th district station, where he was made to sign papers, fingerprinted and photographed.  
 In preparation for the Nato protest, Church, who is from Florida, had written a phone number for the National Lawyers Guild on his arm as a precautionary measure. Once taken to Homan Square, Church asked explicitly to call his lawyers, and said he was denied.  
 “Essentially, I wasn’t allowed to make any contact with anybody,” Church told the Guardian, in contradiction of a police guidance on permitting phone calls and legal counsel to arrestees.  
 Church’s left wrist was cuffed to a bar behind a bench in windowless cinderblock cell, with his ankles cuffed together. He remained in those restraints for about 17 hours.  
 “I had essentially figured, ‘All right, well, they disappeared us and so we’re probably never going to see the light of day again,’” Church said.  
 Brian Jacob Church, Jared Chase and Brent Vincent Betterly, known as the ‘Nato Three’. Photograph: AP/Cook County sheriff's office   
 Though the raid attracted major media attention, a team of attorneys could not find Church through 12 hours of “active searching”, Sarah Gelsomino, Church’s lawyer, recalled. No booking record existed. Only after she and others made a “major stink” with contacts in the offices of the corporation counsel and Mayor Rahm Emanuel did they even learn about Homan Square.  
 They sent another attorney to the facility, where he ultimately gained entry, and talked to Church through a floor-to-ceiling chain-link metal cage. Finally, hours later, police took Church and his two co-defendants to a nearby police station for booking.   
 After serving two and a half years in prison, Church is currently on parole after he and his co-defendants were found [not guilty in 2014 of terrorism-related offenses](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-04-25/news/chi-sentencing-today-for-nato-3-prosecutors-seeking-14year-terms-20140425_1_nato-3-prison-terms-judge-thaddeus-wilson) but guilty of lesser charges of possessing an **incendiary** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** device and the misdemeanor of “mob action”.  
 It’s almost like they throw a black bag over your head and make you disappear for a day or two  
 The access that Nato Three attorneys received to Homan Square was an exception to the rule, even if Jacob Church’s experience there was not.  
 Three attorneys interviewed by the Guardian report being personally turned away from Homan Square between 2009 and 2013 without being allowed access to their clients. Two more lawyers who hadn’t been physically denied described it as a place where police withheld information about their clients’ whereabouts. Church was the only person who had been detained at the facility who agreed to talk with the Guardian: their lawyers say others fear police retaliation.  
 One man in January 2013 had his name changed in the Chicago central bookings database and then taken to Homan Square without a record of his transfer being kept, according to Eliza Solowiej of Chicago’s First Defense Legal Aid. (The man, the Guardian understands, wishes to be anonymous; his current attorney declined to confirm Solowiej’s account.) She found out where he was after he was taken to the hospital with a head injury.   
 “He said that the officers caused his head injuries in an interrogation room at Homan Square. I had been looking for him for six to eight hours, and every department member I talked to said they had never heard of him,” Solowiej said. “He sent me a phone pic of his head injuries because I had seen him in a police station right before he was transferred to Homan Square without any.”  
 Bartmes, another Chicago attorney, said that in September 2013 she got a call from a mother worried that her 15-year-old son had been picked up by police before dawn. A sympathetic sergeant followed up with the mother to say her son was being questioned at Homan Square in connection to a shooting and would be released soon. When hours passed, Bartmes traveled to Homan Square, only to be refused entry for nearly an hour.  
 An officer told her, “Well, you can’t just stand here taking notes, this is a secure facility, there are undercover officers, and you’re making people very nervous,” Bartmes recalled. Told to leave, she said she would return in an hour if the boy was not released. He was home, and not charged, after “12, maybe 13” hours in custody.   
 On February 2, 2013, John Hubbard was taken to Homan Square. Hubbard never walked out. The Chicago Tribune reported that the 44-year old was found “[unresponsive inside an interview room](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-02-04/news/chi-man-in-custody-found-unresponsive-dies-20130202_1_bronzeville-neighborhood-police-custody-homan-square-neighborhood)”, and pronounced dead. After publication, the Cook County medical examiner told the Guardian that the cause of death was determined to be heroin intoxication.   
 Homan Square is hardly concerned exclusively with terrorism. Several special units operate outside of it, including the anti-gang and anti-drug forces. If police “want money, guns, drugs”, or information on the flow of any of them onto Chicago’s streets, “they bring them there and use it as a place of interrogation off the books,” Hill said.  
 ‘The real danger in allowing practices like Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib is the fact that they always creep into other aspects,’ criminologist Tracy Siska told the Guardian. Photograph: Chandler West/Guardian   
 A former Chicago detective and current private investigator, Bill Dorsch, said he had not heard of the police abuses described by Church and lawyers for other suspects who had been taken to Homan Square. He has been permitted access to the facility to visit one of its main features, an evidence locker for the police department. (“I just showed my retirement star and passed through,” Dorsch said.)  
 Transferring detainees through police custody to deny them access to legal counsel, would be “a career-ender,” Dorsch said. “To move just for the purpose of hiding them, I can’t see that happening,” he told the Guardian.  
 Richard Brzeczek, Chicago’s police superintendent from 1980 to 1983, who also said he had no first-hand knowledge of abuses at Homan Square, said it was “never justified” to deny access to attorneys.  
 “Homan Square should be on the same list as every other facility where you can call central booking and say: ‘Can you tell me if this person is in custody and where,’” Brzeczek said.  
 “If you’re going to be doing this, then you have to include Homan Square on the list of facilities that prisoners are taken into and a record made. It can’t be an exempt facility.”  
 Indeed, Chicago police guidelines appear to ban the sorts of practices Church and the lawyers said occur at Homan Square.  
 A directive titled “[Processing Persons Under Department Control](about:blank)” instructs that “investigation or interrogation of an arrestee will not delay the booking process,” and arrestees must be allowed “a reasonable number of telephone calls” to attorneys swiftly “after their arrival at the first place of custody.” Another directive, “[Arrestee and In-Custody Communications](http://directives.chicagopolice.org/lt2014/data/a7a56e4b-12ccbe26-df812-ccbf-527447d507470630.html),” says police supervisors must “allow visitation by attorneys.”  
 Attorney Scott Finger said that the Chicago police tightened the latter directive in 2012 after quiet complaints from lawyers about their lack of access to Homan Square. Without those changes, Church’s attorneys might not have gained entry at all. But that tightening – about a week before Church’s arrest – did not prevent Church’s prolonged detention without a lawyer, nor the later cases where lawyers were unable to enter.  
 The combination of holding clients for long periods, while concealing their whereabouts and denying access to a lawyer, struck legal experts as a throwback to the worst excesses of Chicago police abuse, with a post-9/11 feel to it.  
 On a smaller scale, Homan Square is “**analogous** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** to the CIA’s black sites,” said Andrea Lyon, a former Chicago public defender and current dean of Valparaiso University Law School. When she practiced law in Chicago in the 1980s and 1990s, she said, “police used the term ‘shadow site’” to refer to the quasi-disappearances now in place at Homan Square.  
 I’ve never known any kind of organized, secret place where they go and hold somebody before booking for hours and hours.  
 *James Trainum, former detective, Washington DC*   
 “Back when I first started working on torture cases and started representing criminal defendants in the early 1970s, my clients often told me they’d been taken from one police station to another before ending up at Area 2 where they were tortured,” said Taylor, the civil-rights lawyer most associated with pursuing the notoriously abusive Area 2 police commander Jon Burge. “And in that way the police prevent their family and lawyers from seeing them until they could coerce, through torture or other means, confessions from them.”  
 Police often have off-site facilities to have private conversations with their informants. But a retired Washington DC homicide detective, James Trainum, could not think of another circumstance nationwide where police held people incommunicado for extended periods.  
 “I’ve never known any kind of organized, secret place where they go and just hold somebody before booking for hours and hours and hours. That scares the hell out of me that that even exists or might exist,” said Trainum, who now studies national policing issues, to include interrogations, for the Innocence Project and the Constitution Project.  
 Regardless of departmental regulations, police frequently deny or elide access to lawyers even at regular police precincts, said Solowiej of First Defense Legal Aid. But she said the outright denial was exacerbated at Chicago’s secretive interrogation and holding facility: “It’s very, very rare for anyone to experience their constitutional rights in Chicago police custody, and even more so at Homan Square,” Solowiej said.  
 Church said that one of his more striking memories of Homan Square was the “big, big vehicles” police had inside the complex that “look like very large MRAPs that they use in the Middle East.”  
 Cook County, home of Chicago, has received some 1,700 pieces of military equipment from a much-criticized Pentagon program transferring military gear to local police. It includes a Humvee, according to a [local ABC News report](http://abc7chicago.com/news/widespread-militarization-of-illinois-police-forces-uncovered-by-i-team/259740/).  
 Tracy Siska, a criminologist and civil-rights activist with the Chicago Justice Project, said that Homan Square, [as well as the unrelated case of ex-Guantánamo interrogator and retired Chicago detective Richard Zuley](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/feb/18/guantanamo-torture-chicago-police-brutality), showed the lines blurring between domestic law enforcement and overseas military operations.  
 “The real danger in allowing practices like Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib is the fact that they always creep into other aspects,” Siska said.  
 “They creep into domestic law enforcement, either with weaponry like with the militarization of police, or interrogation practices. That’s how we ended up with a black site in Chicago.”