

**PHR**

**Physicians for  
Human Rights**

**A. Frank Donaghue**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Leonard S. Rubenstein, JD**  
President

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Robert S. Lawrence, MD**  
Chair

**Frank Davidoff, MD**  
Vice Chair

**Deborah Ascheim, MD**  
Columbia University

**Holly G. Atkinson, MD**  
Immediate Past Chair

**Marion J. Bergman, MD, MPA**  
Miracle Corners of the World Inc.

**Donald Berwick, MD, MPP**  
Institute for Healthcare Improvement

**Greg C. Carr**  
Carr Foundation

**Felton Earls, MD**  
Harvard Medical School

**Carola Eisenberg, MD**  
Harvard Medical School

**H. Jack Geiger, MD, MSc**  
City University of New York  
Medical School

**Justice Richard J. Goldstone**  
Justice of the South African  
Constitutional Court, Retired

**Ali Khan**  
Medical College of Virginia

**Joel Lamstein**  
President, John Snow, Inc. (JSI)  
President, World Education, Inc.

**Jennifer Leaning, MD, MS**  
Harvard School of Public Health

**Burton J. Lee, MD**  
Indian River County, FL  
Commissioner of Health

**Allan G. Rosenfield, MD**  
Mailman School of Public Health

**Vin Ryan**  
Schooner Capital Corporation

**Anne Stetson, JD, MIA**  
Lighthouse Consulting

**Gerald E. Thomson, MD**  
Professor of Medicine Emeritus  
Columbia University

**Ronald Waldman, MD, MPH**  
Columbia University

**20** years of advancing health, dignity and justice

Alan Kazdin, PhD, President  
Norman Anderson, PhD, CEO and Vice President  
American Psychological Association  
750 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-4242

August 14, 2008

Dear Drs. Kazdin and Anderson:

As the American Psychological Association (APA) gathers this week in Boston for its annual convention, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) urges the organization to publicly condemn the roles psychologists played in a regime of torture by the United States and to initiate an investigation into the structure and policies that facilitated their participation.

Revelations from Congressional hearings, government investigations official documents, media, human rights organizations, and accounts by detainees and former detainees continue to amplify the record of the very disturbing and central role some psychologists have played in designing, implementing or overseeing torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees in the custody of the US military and CIA.

The emerging information is alarming because it shows not only the involvement of individual psychologists in abusive CIA and military interrogations, but an institutionalized program of psychological torture supervised by teams of CIA psychologists and the Pentagon's Behavioral Science Consultation Teams (BSCT), staffed predominantly by psychologists.

To date, the APA has been muted about these revelations. It has twice passed resolutions reaffirming its opposition to torture and ill treatment but the Association has never explicitly condemned the operations and policies authorizing such abuses, nor concluded its ethics investigations of psychologists who have engaged in such conduct.

One recent revelation came from the release in late 2007 of the Camp Delta Guantanamo Standard Operating Procedure, issued in 2003, a year before the Abu Ghraib scandal broke. At the time, we now know, severe psychological abuse, including the routine use of isolation for detainees, sleep deprivation through the infamous "frequent flyer" program, sensory deprivation, inducement of fear, and other tactics, was at the heart of a systematic regime aimed at breaking down detainees. The instructions from the document speak of a "behavior management plan" that included keeping detainees in isolation for their first thirty days and that was designed "to enhance and exploit the disorientation and disorganization felt by a new arrived detainee in the interrogation process." Additionally, according to recent hearings by the Senate Armed Services Committee, Psychologists were centrally involved in the design and implementation of brutal interrogation techniques derived from the SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape) program.

Another recently-released document from 2006 discusses the role of the Behavioral Science Consultation Team. It reveals the role of psychologists in quite chilling fashion. It notes that the environment in which detainees are held affects the ability of interrogators to gain information, and notes that

BSCs can assist in ensuring that everything that a detainee sees, hears, and experiences is a part of the overall interrogation plan. The purpose of this consultation is to optimize the conditions and maximize the interventions that elicit accurate and reliable information.

In 2003, the International Committee of the Red Cross reported that the environmental conditions under which detainees were held at Guantanamo were "tantamount to torture" and the 2006 documents confirm that psychologists were critical in establishing these conditions.

PHR does not believe APA statements following these and other revelations have been either sufficient or appropriate. It is past time for the APA to explicitly and categorically reject the use of psychologists and psychology to perpetrate a widespread, command-ordered program of torture and abuse. General statements opposing torture fail to fully address the reality of what psychologists have done. Therefore, we urge the APA to take the following six steps:

1. Acknowledge that psychologists were deeply and structurally involved in a system of detainee mistreatment that amounts to torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Such an acknowledgement can indicate that APA doesn't yet know all the facts and all the names of participants, and that not every military psychologist violated ethical standards, but nevertheless will recognize that psychologists did participate in abuse of detainees and indeed were expected to through their roles in BSCTs.
2. Condemn such behavior as violations of ethical standards of the APA and of the entire profession.
3. Demand that Congress and the White House form an independent and transparent commission to investigate the role of military and intelligence psychologists in torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment against detainees in US custody. Such a commission should have subpoena power and full access to classified material related to this matter.
4. Appoint a blue-ribbon, independent panel of APA and non-APA members, to review the role of psychologists in torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment based on information available on the public record.
5. Initiate disciplinary processes against any APA member who is alleged to have participated in torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.
6. Reform APA ethical rules. PHR believes three major changes are necessary:
  - a. Standard 1.02 must be rewritten to clarify that following "legal orders" is not permissible if they are in conflict with ethical duties.
  - b. Prohibit psychologists from participating in the interrogation of individual detainees, including assessing individuals for interrogation, advising interrogators, or monitoring interrogations.
  - c. Rescind the statute of limitations in APA bylaws on timeframe for bringing ethics charges against APA members.

We would be pleased to discuss these matters with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Leonard S. Rubenstein  
President