

Appeal for International Support from U.S. Psychologists: Condemn Psychologist Participation in Bush Regime Detainee Abuse

Colleagues, all of you are aware of the outrages perpetrated against detainees by the United States government during the last seven years of the so-called "Global War on terror." Many of you are also aware that psychologists have played key roles in these abuses, including developing, implementing, standardizing, and training for the U.S. program of "enhanced interrogations," or torture. As treatment personnel, psychologists, like other health providers, have participating in other aspects of detention, such as patching up the victims of torture or playing roles in detainee "behavior modification plans" at Guantanamo and, possibly, at other detention sites. These psychologist activities take place in detention facilities outside of the legal protections of international and U.S. law. Further, these activities violate the fundamental ethical precepts of psychology, indeed of all health professions, to "do no harm."

The American Psychological Association (APA), the largest organization of mental health professionals in the world, remains complicit in Bush regime abuses. While the Association has adopted several resolutions against psychologist participation in torture, these resolutions lack any implementation mechanism and pose no obstacle against psychologist participation in U.S. torture and detainee abuse. Despite several ethics complaints having been filed, the APA has failed to discipline psychologists for whom evidence exists suggesting participation in detainee abuse. Rather, like the Bush administration, the APA claims to be against torture, but never sees it.

We are among those who are fighting APA policy abetting detainee abuse. We ask our friends and colleagues in other countries to aid our struggle to change this policy, thus providing another rebuke to the abusive U.S. detention policies and practices. If we fail to act, U.S. practices will become the norm for other countries, posing an enormous setback for human rights around the world. Further, the profession of psychology will suffer ethical damage from which it may not recover.

We are asking colleagues in other countries – whether psychologists, other health professionals, human rights advocates, or simply concerned citizens – to write Open Letters to the President of the American Psychological Association protesting APA policies. Please request that APA adopt policies:

- Which state that APA members may not work in settings where persons are held outside of, or in violation of, either International Law (e.g., the UN Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions) or the US Constitution (where appropriate), unless they are working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party working to protect human rights. [This language is taken from a referendum being proposed by concerned APA members. See: <http://ethicalapa.org/referendumtext.html>]
- APA take steps to revise its ethics code to remove a clause allowing the following of unethical laws or orders, the so-called clause 1.02 of the ethics code.
- Which place "do no harm" at the center of ethical psychologist practice.

Further, please call for the APA to take steps, in conjunction with other health professions, to initiate a Truth Commission to investigate the roles of psychologists and other health professionals in torture and other U.S. detention abuses and to make recommendations for policy and structural changes to reduce the likelihood of future collaboration with abusive government actions.

Please remind the APA there is no right way to do a wrong thing!

Send letters to:

President Alan Kazdin, Ph.D.
American Psychological Association
750 First Street, NE,
Washington, DC 20002-4242
president@apa.org

Please also send copies to of letters to us at:

CoalitionEP@gmail.com

For further information, see:

*Analysis of the American Psychological Association's
Frequently Asked Questions Regarding APA's Policies and Positions on the Use of Torture or
Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment During Interrogations*
by the *Coalition for an Ethical Psychology*
Available as a pdf at: <http://tinyurl.com/ys3fjy>

See also: <http://ethicalapa.org/>

Thank you,

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for the Psychologists for Social Responsibility End Torture Action Committee
<http://psysr.org/about/committees/endtorture/>