AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

May 12, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) to offer our strong support and encouragement for your efforts to close the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center (GTMO). Since 2009, our governing APA Council of Representatives has adopted a series of policies expressing serious concerns about the abusive treatment of detainees at GTMO, which has become a global symbol of torture. Its continued use further damages our nation's image as a leader in human rights.

Reports of detainee abuse at GTMO have ranged from physical mistreatment to torture in the form of "enhanced" interrogation techniques during the early years of the Global War on Terror. In 2009, APA sent a letter to then President Barack Obama commending his bold Executive Order issued within days of taking office that expressed his intent to "effect the appropriate disposition of individuals currently detained by the Department of Defense at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base (Guantánamo) and promptly to close detention facilities at Guantánamo, consistent with the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States and the interests of justice."

Our APA national security-related policies build upon our longstanding anti-torture policies and commitment to human rights in calling for psychologists not to be engaged in supporting detainee operations at GTMO, where detainees are still subjected to indefinite confinement. Some of the remaining 40 detainees of the nearly 800 detained since 2002, based on their suspected ties with al-Qaida and the Taliban, have yet to be presented with charges and/or have their cases proceed beyond the pre-trial state. It is our understanding that the Department of Defense has not placed military psychologists at GTMO over the past five years. It is past time for the detainees to be removed and relocated as well.

Thank you for your leadership then and now for undertaking efforts to close GTMO. APA strongly supports the interagency process being planned by the National Security Council, in collaboration with the Departments of Defense, State, and Justice, to close the GTMO facility. The United States must once again become a beacon to the world for human rights by promoting justice and safeguarding human welfare for everyone, including detainees in U.S. custody.

Sincerely,

Jennifer F. Kelly

Jennifer F. Kelly, PhD, ABPP
President

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken
Attorney General Merrick B. Garland

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