

AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

June 4, 2009

The Honorable Eric Holder
Office of the Attorney General
Robert F. Kennedy Building
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530-2000

Dear Attorney General Holder:

We are writing on behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) to commend and urge you to maintain your steadfast commitment to protecting the human rights and welfare of detainees in U.S. custody. Paramount among our association's concerns is that no detainee be subjected to the "enhanced" interrogation techniques (including waterboarding) of the Bush administration or to other forms of abuse. APA unequivocally condemns torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which can arise from inappropriate interrogation procedures or conditions of confinement. We urge the Justice Department to establish policies and procedures that fully protect the human rights of detainees and provide for appropriate judicial review of their detentions.

Last summer, our membership voted to adopt a referendum to limit the roles of psychologists in unlawful detention settings. This new policy entitled, "Psychologists and Unlawful Detention Settings with a Focus on National Security," prohibits psychologists from working in detention settings that are in violation of the U.S. Constitution or international law (e.g., the Geneva Conventions and the U.N. Convention Against Torture), unless they are working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party to protect human rights, or providing treatment to military personnel.

Following the recent release of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee report and the Justice Department memos, the public spotlight has focused on disturbing reports of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees during the Bush administration. Regrettably, we have learned that some psychologists were involved in promoting the use of harsh interrogation techniques as part of the "war on terror." As a result of these reports, we have recommitted ourselves as an association to safeguarding the welfare and human rights of individuals detained by the U.S. government.

In these difficult times, we fully recognize the significant challenges faced by your agency and the Obama administration. APA applauds and strongly supports the administration's commitment to protecting the legal rights of detainees and to ensuring that interrogations never involve torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. We also urge

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the administration, in keeping with APA policy, to continue to disallow any testimony resulting from the use of abusive interrogation techniques.

In closing, we implore you and your agency to ensure that the highest ethical standards are being upheld and that detainees are granted all rights guaranteed to them under the U.S. Constitution, the U.N. Convention Against Torture, and the Geneva Conventions.

Sincerely,

James H. Bray, Ph.D.
President

Norman B. Anderson, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer