

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

October 6, 2008

The Honorable Patrick V. Leahy
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Specter:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing to inform you of a significant change in our association's policy that limits the roles of psychologists in certain unlawful detention settings where the human rights of detainees are being been violated, such as has occurred at the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and at so-called CIA black sites around the world. This new policy, which pertains to detention settings that operate outside of, or in violation of, international law or the U.S. Constitution, was voted on by APA members and is in the process of being implemented.

The effect of this new policy is to ***prohibit psychologists from any involvement in interrogations or any other operational procedures at detention sites that are in violation of the U.S. Constitution or international law*** (e.g., the Geneva Conventions and the U.N. Convention Against Torture). In such unlawful detention settings, persons are deprived of basic human rights and legal protections, including the right to independent judicial review of their detention. The roles of psychologists at such sites would now be limited to working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party working to protect human rights, or to providing treatment to military personnel.

For the past 20 years, APA policy has unequivocally condemned torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, which can arise from interrogation procedures or conditions of confinement. Unlike our previous policies, which had expressed grave concerns about settings where persons are deprived of human rights and had offered support to psychologists who refused to work in such settings, APA's new policy now prohibits psychologists from working in such settings, save for the exceptions cited above. To be clear, our policy limits psychologists to working directly for the persons being detained or for an independent third party working to protect human rights unless they are offering therapeutic services to other military personnel.

There have been many reports, from credible sources, of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of persons held in detention sites operated by the Department of Defense and CIA. Therefore, the American Psychological Association strongly calls on

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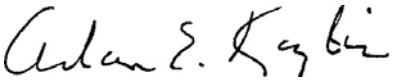
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you to help safeguard the physical and psychological welfare and human rights of persons held at these detention sites and to investigate their treatment to ensure that the highest ethical standards are being upheld.

We further call on you to pursue the development, enactment, and oversight of federal policy to ensure the independent judicial review of these detentions and to afford the persons being detained all rights guaranteed to them under the Geneva Conventions and the U.N. Convention Against Torture.

Best wishes,



Alan E. Kazdin, Ph.D., ABPP
President