



## ***Psychologists for Social Responsibility*** ***Advancing Peace and Justice for More Than 25 Years***

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### ***For Immediate Release:***

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## **Psychologists for Social Responsibility Urges Independent Torture Commission to Examine Role of Psychologists and APA in Prisoner Abuse**

As an organization dedicated to the ethical application of psychology to promote peace, justice, and human rights, Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) condemns the prominent participation of psychologists in planning and carrying out the systematic abuse of U.S. detainees, as documented by the release of four previously classified Office of Legal Counsel memos and the extensive report of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

“In an era of complex international relations and security needs,” notes Jancis Long, Ph.D., President of PsySR, “it is more important than ever for the human sciences to be the guardians of human rights, professional ethics and universal responsibilities.” PsySR therefore also urges the following:

- For Congress and the White House to create an independent, nonpartisan commission to fully investigate U.S. torture and prisoner abuse under the Bush Administration.
- For this independent commission – or a subgroup of it – to include a special focus on the specific role of psychologists and their subordinates in designing, using, supervising, and justifying torture and other abusive treatment of prisoners.
- For the commission to also determine whether the American Psychological Association – the largest association of psychologists worldwide – knowingly cooperated with the Department of Defense and the CIA in helping to plan, facilitate, provide official justification for, or hide the use of harsh interrogation methods.
- For psychologists who are found to have been involved in the design, implementation, or justification of torture and other prisoner abuse to be subject to losing their professional licenses, and for those for whom evidence exists of violating international or U.S. law to be subject to criminal investigation by an independent prosecutor.
- For the independent commission to review the evidence of whether the SERE program is necessary and effective for its intended training purposes. Given its misapplications by psychologists and others, the commission should also make recommendations to ensure that any future SERE training will explicitly prohibit and prevent either trainers or those receiving the training from diverting SERE techniques to the abuse of prisoners.

As a first step, we encourage our own members, all psychologists, and all advocates of human rights and social justice to sign the petition ([http://actnow-phr.org/campaign/investigate\\_torture](http://actnow-phr.org/campaign/investigate_torture)) organized by Physicians for Human Rights calling for the creation of a commission to investigate U.S. torture and to hold accountable psychologists and other health professionals who violated their primary ethic to “do no harm.”

“Foremost, as a profession we must confront the mindsets and networks – of power, privilege, and influence – by which our own core healing principles were abandoned for purposes that evoke our outrage, our bewilderment, and our shame,” states Roy Eidelson, Ph.D., President-Elect of PsySR. “That will not be easy, but it’s the only way forward.”

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