

April 30, 2014

Wayne LaPierre  
National Rifle Association of America  
11250 Waples Mill Road  
Fairfax, VA 22030

Mr. LaPierre:

Religious leaders from many faiths are uniting in a call to the National Rifle Association to denounce torture and to apologize to the U.S. Muslim and Christian communities for statements made by Sarah Palin at the NRA's Annual Meeting in Indianapolis over the weekend. Referring to those whom she declares have "information on plots to carry out jihad," Ms. Palin said, "If I were in charge, they would know that waterboarding is how we'd baptize terrorists."

For Christians, baptism is a profoundly holy act. It is in stark contrast to the abhorrent act of waterboarding. Equating baptism to an act of torture like waterboarding is sacrilegious – and particularly surprising coming from a person who prides herself on her Christian faith.

Furthermore, her statements play into a false narrative that somehow the conflict between the United States and the terrorist cells is a conflict between Christianity and Islam, or Islam and "the West". These narratives do a severe disservice by incorrectly painting all Muslims with a brush of violent extremism. It completely ignores the many Muslims, Christians and people of other faiths who have weathered these conflicts and have been resisting violence and are working to strengthen their home countries. They have been partners with the United States in challenging the power and ideologies of violence and terrorism.

Ms. Palin's words are an unacceptable conflation of church and state that represents the worst of what is possible when political conflicts are expressed in theological terms. It is both immoral and factually inaccurate to equate any faith tradition, Muslim or otherwise, with terrorism.

Further, the National Rifle Association has no business letting comments of speakers who condone torture go unchallenged. It is one thing to protect the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment. It is quite another to support torture. Waterboarding is torture.

While faith leaders and people of good will across the United States are working diligently to ensure that torture never again stains the U.S. Constitution as it did in the aftermath of 9/11, the NRA can ill afford to stand on the wrong side of history by condoning torture.

We ask that the NRA apologize by issuing a statement distancing itself from these comments made at their convention, and join us in dialogue on how we can work together to combat the ignorance and religious zealotry such statements represent.

Signed,

Rev. Ron Stief  
Executive Director, National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Rev. Ed Bacon  
Rector, All Saints Church Pasadena, CA

Jennifer Butler  
Executive Director, Faith in Public Life

Patrick Carolan  
Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network

Patricia Chappell  
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Rev. Richard Cizik  
Executive Director, New Evangelical Partnership

Marge Clark, BVM  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

Dr. David P. Gushee  
Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics and  
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Rev. Fritz Gutwein  
Associate Director, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship

Nathan Hosler  
Coordinator, Office of Public Witness, Church of the Brethren

Rabbi Jill Jacobs  
Executive Director, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Eli McCarthy  
Director of Justice and Peace, Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson  
Director, Office of Public Witness, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Chett Pritchett  
Executive Director, Methodist Federation for Social Action

Michael Sherrard  
Executive Director, Faithful America

Sandy Sorensen  
Director, Washington Office, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

The Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr.  
President, Disciples Justice Action Network

Russell M. Testa  
Director, Holy Name Province Franciscan (OFM) Office for JPIC

Scott Wright  
Director, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach