



**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Gradye M. Parsons  
Stated Clerk

April 23, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
District of Columbia 20500

Dear President Obama:

I urge you to work with Congress to establish a non-partisan Commission of Inquiry that is tasked with reviewing interrogation policies and practices in the years after September 11, 2001.

The Executive Order to Ensure Legal Interrogations that you have issued is an important step in preventing the use of torture against individuals in the custody of the United States in the future. Equally important steps are those which lead to an understanding of what happened, how it happened, and who was accountable. If those responsible are not held accountable, nothing beyond wishful thinking and admonitions exists to compel future leaders to resist the temptation to torture in times of fear or threat.

In 2006, the 217th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) called Congress to “convene an investigative body with the independence, stature, and broad investigative powers of the September 11th Commission to inquire into whether any official or officer of the United States government bears direct or command responsibility for having ordered or participated in violations of law in the mistreatment of persons detained by the government of the United States at Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib Prison, or elsewhere, or in transporting persons into detention in nations with known records of brutality and torture; to publish its findings and, if appropriate, to recommend the appointment of a special prosecutor if one has not been previously appointed.”

If the United States does not forthrightly address the concerns and doubts about the way we treat other human beings under our charge, we lose the moral ground on which we stand to speak to other parties about their treatment of other persons, including our own citizens. The God who made us all is the one to whom we are all answerable for how we treat each of God’s children.

I encourage you to exercise the leadership necessary to erase what many feel is a blot on our integrity as a nation and as a leader for democracy, humanitarian concerns, and human rights.

Yours in Christ,

Gradye Parsons  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Enclosure: Resolution on Torture from the 217th General Assembly (2006)  
Cc: Senator Harry Reid, Representative Nancy Pelosi, Attorney General Eric Holder