



National Religious Campaign Against Torture

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American Psychological Association
750 First St. NE
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Members of the Board of Directors and Council of Representatives:

I write to you to express the U.S. faith community's serious concerns regarding NBI 35B and NBI 13D. As a community, throughout our history, we have been appalled by any mistreatment and torture of detainees in U.S. custody. We were deeply troubled when we first learned that psychologists had participated in the U.S. torture program. Because of this, we publically applauded the steps the American Psychological Association (APA) took to dissociate your profession from both torture and from detention environments, like the one at Guantanamo, that systemically deny prisoners their rights. Adopting NBI 35B and NBI 13D would suggest that those steps are being reversed.

As you know, Guantanamo is not only an internationally recognized symbol of torture, it is also a place that continues to deny detainees the right to a trial. Further, the current President has publicly stated his support for torture and his opposition to releasing detainees from Guantanamo even if the government itself determines there is no longer any security-related reason to hold them there. In such a context, military and other government psychologists cannot be seen as acting wholly independently of the government's interests – a fact that undermines the very basis of effective, ethical treatment.

Psychologists are widely known to have participated in the torture of detainees – two psychologists have been described as the architects of the CIA's torture program and the Hoffman report describes how the Department of Defense influenced APA policy on detainee issues. The Hoffman report stands as a credit to the Association's willingness to confront the ways in which it enabled torture and mistreatment. Removing the report from the Association's website would be viewed by many as an attempt to cover-up past mistakes and might be understood as suggesting a willingness to once again allow psychologists to participate in torture.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture is a faith-based interfaith network of over 330 religious organizations that was founded in response to the torture at Abu Ghraib prison. As a community, people of faith believe that the God-granted dignity of all human beings ought to preclude any organization or individual from condoning, or appearing to condone torture. At its best, your profession has led the way in defending that dignity. We hope that you will remember that history and these concerns as you consider NBI 35B and NBI 13D.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Stief".

Rev. Ron Stief
Executive Director