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Dr. Sharon Brehm  
President, American Psychological Association  
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Dear Sharon and Members of the Board of Directors:

I am writing with sorrow to resign from the American Psychological Association. I do not do so lightly, because my connections to APA are deep and long. I have been a member since 1980, a fellow since 1986, and a president of two APA divisions and their associated societies, 9 (the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) and 27 (the Society for Community Research and Action). I feel I owe you and my other colleagues an explanation, detailed below. Briefly, I am resigning because the American Psychological Association continues to condone psychologists' work in detention centers that violate international law and because of actions by APA's leadership to discourage dissent from its policies in this matter.

### Condoning Work in Illegal Detention Centers

This summer, the APA Council voted down an amendment stating that the role of psychologists in settings in which detainees are deprived of their human rights should be limited to providing psychological treatment. APA's action effectively condones psychologists' continued participation in interrogations at Guantánamo and in other centers that violate both the Geneva Convention and the U.S. Constitution. The resolution that was approved simply requires that psychologists not plan, design, or assist in the use of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and that they report instances of which they become aware.

I believe that the failure of APA to call for psychologists to leave Guantánamo and CIA black sites lends support and legitimacy to violations of ethics and international law. The American Bar Association has announced that it will stop attempting to find lawyers for detainees at Guantánamo because, according to a report in the New York Times, "it did not want to 'lend support and credibility' to what it called inadequate legal protections for the 340 men held there" (Glaberson, 2007). APA should show similar courage.

In addition, although I appreciate the argument that psychologists "on the inside" are in a position to challenge conditions of prisoners' confinement, and have done so, I think it is equally likely that they will be co-opted. There is strong social psychological evidence of the coercive power of

situational influences, even in the course of quite short-term experiments, and evidence that individuals recruit information and shift attitudes to justify the behavior in which they have engaged. Psychologists are unlikely to be immune to such forces, especially when secrecy requirements prevent them from discussing issues with others who are not subject to the same influences. Under the long-term and open-ended coercive conditions of detention centers, it seems at least as likely that psychologists would become part of the problem as that they would succeed in creating solutions. Indeed, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), as cited in the *New York Times* and denied by the government, has stated that information from detainees' medical records has been used to guide interrogations, and that psychologists are centrally involved in this process:

Doctors and medical personnel conveyed information about prisoners' mental health and vulnerabilities to interrogators, the report said, sometimes directly, but usually through a group called the Behavioral Science Consultation Team, or B.S.C.T. The team, known informally as Biscuit, is composed of psychologists and psychological workers who advise the interrogators, the report said. (Lewis, 2004).

Although APA has passed resolutions unequivocally condemning and prohibiting psychologists' participation in torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, a report of the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (dated August 25, 2006, but released more recently) suggests that psychologists have been centrally involved in practices that the APA has banned. In a section on "development of interrogation policy at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba," the report suggests that psychologists were responsible for reverse engineering torture techniques from the military's Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) program originally intended to train U.S. personnel how to resist breaking down if they were captured and tortured. Especially chilling to me, the report states that "The Army Special Operations Command was examining the role of interrogation support as a 'SERE Psychologist competency area'" (p. 25)

The APA's ban on psychologists' participation in torture is absolute, but the Association explicitly amended its Ethics Code in 2002 to permit psychologists who experience other conflicts between law and ethics to "adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority" (section 1.02). They should first make the conflict known and attempt to resolve it. I believe that "the governing legal authority" at both Guantánamo and CIA black sites, where individuals are held without prospect of release, under shifting legal guidelines, and without the opportunity to challenge their detention in impartial courts, violates international law. By continuing to work in such facilities, psychologists, whatever their intentions, become complicit in their violations of human rights. Given the ICRC evidence that psychologists have misused medical records at Guantánamo to exploit detainees' vulnerabilities in interrogation, I would not advocate an exception for therapeutic treatment.

Note that I make no representation about the guilt or innocence of the detainees. Some may well be guilty of heinous crimes against humanity. Others are probably innocents swept up in error. But all are human beings entitled to the protection of international law.

## Discouraging Dissent

Reasonable people can disagree about appropriate ethical responses to conditions that are widely deemed unethical. I appreciate the debate that went on at the Convention this summer. However, in many other ways, APA's leaders have blocked challenges to psychologists' involvement in detention centers, misrepresented the nature of dissent, and even made *ad hominem* attacks on dissenters.

An early action that minimized challenges was the composition of the APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS). Three of the ten members were active duty military officers, two more worked for Defense Department Agencies, and a sixth consulted with a Defense agency. As noted in a September 19 letter to you by Drs. Steven Reisner, Stephen Soldz, and Brad Olson (Reisner, Soldz & Olson, 2007), as well as an earlier open letter which I co-signed, some of these members were in the chain of command at the places and during the times that abuses have been documented. Some are also credited with protesting unethical actions. Irrespective of their individual actions, their employment constituted a conflict of interest. A committee's criticism of detention centers and psychologists' involvement in them is likely to be muted when a majority of its members are paid salaries or consulting fees by the military or the Department of Defense. Two of the four members with no Defense involvement have now dissociated themselves from the PENS Task Force. Dr. Wessells resigned in January, 2006, "because continuing work with the Task Force tacitly legitimates the wider silence and inaction of the APA on the crucial issues at hand" (Wessells, 2006) and Dr. Arrigo publicly complained about irregularities in Task Force procedures in her remarks at the most recent APA convention, as recorded by Democracy Now (Arrigo, 2007).

Another recent action to minimize challenge occurred this summer at the APA convention, when the Board of Directors initially attempted to prevent APA Council from voting on a resolution limiting psychologists' roles in detention centers ("the moratorium resolution") by presenting its own substitute resolution, which reaffirmed, but also unfortunately weakened last year's resolution condemning torture. Under APA procedures, Council would have had the opportunity to vote on a moratorium resolution only if they first voted down the substitute resolution condemning torture. When advocates pointed out that this substitution violated APA procedures (2006, p. 19: substitute motions cannot "change an affirmative main motion into a negative proposal not to take that action") there was discussion and compromise: A stronger substitute resolution was put forward and passed, and a limit on psychologists' involvement was allowed as an amendment, and voted down. Dr. Linda Woolf (2007) has written articulately and at length about the limitations of the resolution that was passed: "Ultimately," she summarizes, "the 2007 Resolution maintains the status quo and prisoners will continue to experience torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment both as a function of perpetrator behavior and as a function of context" (Woolf, 2007).

An example of the misrepresentation of dissent is the letter you have circulated from Dr. Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter, chair of the PENS Task Force (Moorehead-Slaughter, 2007), commenting on Dr. Arrigo's concerns about the Task Force. Dr. Moorehead-Slaughter spends a considerable

portion of her letter defending against attacks that Dr. Arrigo never made. Someone who read only Dr. Moorehead-Slaughter's reply but not Dr. Arrigo's original criticism of procedural irregularities and conflicts of interest, might think the criticism was misguided. For example, Dr. Moorehead-Slaughter begins with a disclaimer that she has "never worked in any capacity for the CIA, the FBI, or the Department of Defense," a claim that Dr. Arrigo never made, and an extensive defense of her integrity, which Dr. Arrigo never impugned. She goes on to defend the actions and integrity of other members of the Task Force, when Dr. Arrigo's concern was with procedures and conflicts of interest created by members' employment. Dr. Moorehead-Slaughter does go on to address some of Dr. Arrigo's procedural concerns, although in ways that have been disputed by Reisner et al. (2007). She ends by lauding APA's openness as represented in this summer's mini-convention on ethics and interrogation, which I agree was laudable, and by the fact that "The Board of Directors was entirely committed to ensuring that a proposal limiting the roles of APA members in detention facilities would be discussed and debated at the Council of Representatives meeting." As noted above, I do not believe this is true.

More egregious is former president Gerald Koocher's denigration of critics. In his presidential column in the APA's *Monitor on Psychology*, he complained that:

A number of *opportunistic commentators masquerading as scholars* have continued to report on alleged abuses by mental health professionals. However, when solicited in person to provide APA with names and circumstances in support of such claims, no data have been forthcoming from these same critics and no APA members have been linked to unprofessional behaviors (Koocher, 2006, p. 7, emphasis added).

The American Psychological Association's Public Affairs Office (2007), on the other hand, acknowledges that two psychologists have been identified as developers of interrogation tactics, but they are not APA members.

Dr. Koocher has also defamed both Dr. Arrigo and her father in a widely-circulated, open letter to Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! (Koocher, 2007). His allegations were refuted (Reisner, et al., 2007) and since removed from his web site and Goodman's. But even if they had been true, his effort to discredit the messenger, rather than dealing with the substance of the message, has no place in reasoned argument. The substance of Dr. Arrigo's message was that APA-Department of Defense conflicts of interest on the part of six task force members and several unacknowledged participants in the task force meeting compromised the PENS report.

In sum, I have become increasingly troubled with the American Psychological Association's failure to call for a moratorium on psychologists' involvement at Guantánamo and CIA black sites, and am appalled by the actions of its leadership in response to dissent. I hereby resign.

Marybeth Shinn  
Member # 1603-1653

Cc: Members of the Board of Directors, Dr. Moorehead-Slaughter

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