

**\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\***  
from  
**COALITION FOR AN ETHICAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR AN ETHICAL APA**

**Military Psychologist Invokes Right to Remain Silent at Guantánamo  
Hearing, Refusing to Testify About Abusive Treatment of Detainee**

Psychologists and Human Rights Groups to Rally Saturday Against American  
Psychological Association's Controversial Torture Policy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, August 14, 2008

CONTACTS: Emily Whitfield, (917) 686-4542/emily@emilywhitfield.org  
Stephen Soldz, (617) 935-4246/soldz@bgsp.edu

BOSTON – A military psychologist who recommended isolation torture techniques on a Guantánamo detainee today invoked her right not to incriminate herself, refusing to testify in the case of Mohammad Jawad.

Her testimony was sought by defense attorney Maj. David Frakt in a hearing on his motion to dismiss charges based upon government misconduct in using prolonged isolation, sleep deprivation, and other torture techniques against his client in an attempt to make him more pliable in interrogations. Following a month-long isolation, apparently recommended by the military psychologist, Mr. Jawad – who entered Guantánamo as a teenager -- attempted suicide.

The psychologist's testimony would have marked the first time that a member of the secretive Behavioral Science Consultation Team (known as BSCT or "biscuits") had been called to testify in a detainee hearing. The BSCT program has been highly controversial among psychologists and other health professionals. The psychologist invoked her rights under Article 31 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the military equivalent of the 5th amendment right against self-incrimination/right to remain silent.

"The fact that the BSCT Psychologist now apparently recognizes that her conduct was criminal in nature is very significant," said Maj. Frakt. "We have alleged, based on classified government records that the BSCT psychologist's recommendation led directly to the illegal abuse and inhumane treatment of Mohammad Jawad. This invocation of the right to remain silent seems to confirm that."

"The evidence in this case confirms our worst fears, that military psychologists are working to break down detainee's psyches," said Dr. Stephen Soldz, an expert psychologist who had been called by Maj. Frakt to testify that the BSCT psychologist had violated the professional credo of "Do no harm."

"Today's developments only confirms our view that a full accounting of the shadowy BSCT program is long overdue," he added. Dr. Soldz is a psychoanalyst, psychologist, and faculty member at Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis.

The news comes on the eve of a rally against torture to be held this Saturday outside the Boston Convention Center where the American Psychological Association, the largest group of its kind, is meeting this weekend. The APA has come under increasing fire for its refusal to ban its members' participation in Bush administration coercive interrogations and torture, as the AMA and the American Psychiatric Association have done.

“The continuing silence of the APA on member involvement in torture is telling,” Dr. Soldz said. “No APA leader or official has ever uttered one word critical of actual U.S. abuse, or of the role of psychologists and psychological expertise in that abuse. They continue to stonewall on disciplining any psychologists who participated, despite promises to investigate.”

At Saturday's rally, psychologists speaking out against the policy will be joined by the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, and American Friends Service Committee and hear songs from “Raging Grannies” and local musicians.

The torture issue is of increasing concern to all Americans, APA members say, but of particular importance to psychologists because it violates their primary ethical obligation to “Do no harm.” As has been documented by numerous journalists and official government reports, psychologists helped develop, implement, standardize, and disseminate abusive interrogation techniques that have led to torture.

Ignoring this evidence, the APA has repeatedly claimed that psychologists aiding interrogations keep those interrogations "safe, legal, and ethical." Dr. Soldz said that the actions of the BSCT psychologist in Jawad's case, typical as they appear to be of the BSCT program, show the falsity of APA's claim. Rather, BSCTs use their psychological expertise “to identify weaknesses in detainees that can be exploited to break them down psychologically and render them dependent upon the interrogators,” he said.

In the absence of ethical leadership from the APA, a referendum to remove psychologists from sites in violation of international law has been proposed by members; ballots went out to the membership last week and are due back in mid-September.

In a recent letter in support of the referendum, Bryant Welch, a clinical psychologist, attorney and former long-time APA official, said: “In the eyes of the world psychologists are being seen as aiders and abettors of torture. The damage to the profession grows day by day, and the shamefulness of it reflects on all of us, whether we like it or not.”

In his closing argument delivered today before the military commission in the case of *U.S. v. Jawad*, Maj. Frakt said: “What has this country come to when a licensed psychologist, a senior officer in the U.S. Armed Forces, someone trained in the art of healing broken hearts and mending broken minds, someone with a duty to do no harm, turns her years of training and education to the art of breaking people, to the intentional devastation of a lonely, homesick teenage boy?”

For more information go to:

<http://psychoanalystsopposewar.org/blog/index.php?s=boston+rally>

[www.ethicalapa.com](http://www.ethicalapa.com)

[www.reisnerforpresident.org](http://www.reisnerforpresident.org)