

American Psychological Association Resolution

**Moratorium on Psychologist Involvement in Interrogations
at U.S. Detention Centers for Foreign Detainees**

Justification Statement

1. Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this resolution is twofold: 1) To protect individuals from the possible use of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment during interrogations at U.S. detention centers for foreign detainees, and 2) to protect psychologists, both ethically and psychologically, from involvement in such interrogations.

In a letter to Senator John McCain dated September 21, 2006, seven leading health professions including Dr. Gerald Koocher, President, American Psychological Association (APA) identify themselves as “medical and psychological professionals who are deeply committed to our nation’s traditional safeguards against torture and abuse of prisoners and detainees” (see Attachment 1). This proposed resolution and moratorium is designed to further safeguard prisoners and detainees from torture and abuse during interrogations and to safeguard psychologists from either intentional or unintentional involvement in abusive interrogations.

In August of 2006, the APA affirmed its condemnation of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment regardless of time, place, and setting. The 2006 APA Resolution Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (see Attachment 2) updated, clarified, and strengthened APA’s policy in line with APA’s role as a United Nations (UN) non-governmental organization (NGO). Specifically, the 2006 Resolution:

- Reaffirms and renews APA’s condemnation of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment wherever it occurs.
- Affirms the centrality of United Nations and other human rights documents as the basis for APA policy. (The Resolution names and supports without reservation several relevant documents.)
- Defines torture according to the United Nations Convention Against Torture.
- Condemns psychologists’ involvement in torture and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, unequivocally and in all circumstances.
- Clarifies that psychologists do not tolerate such behavior, directly or indirectly, including as bystanders. The resolution is highly specific in stating that, regardless of their roles, psychologists shall not engage in, tolerate, direct, support, advise, or offer training in torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; shall not knowingly provide research, instruments, or knowledge that facilitates these practices.