

APA Ethics Committee Statement*

No Defense to Torture under the APA Ethics Code

June 2009

There is no defense to torture under the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2002).

The APA Ethics Committee will not accept any defense to torture in its adjudication of ethics complaints.

Torture in any form, at any time, in any place, and for any reason, is unethical for psychologists and wholly inconsistent with membership in the American Psychological Association.

No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, legal compulsion or organizational demand, may be invoked as a justification for torture.

* The Ethics Committee's review and response to the Council of Representatives' New Business Item related to Ethical Standards 1.02 and 1.03 will be available prior to Council's August 2009 meeting in Toronto.

Addendum to Ethics Committee June 2009 Statement

The Ethics Committee considers the prohibition against torture to encompass the specific techniques prohibited by the Council of Representatives Resolution below. The Committee finds this prohibition consistent with President Obama's January 22, 2009 executive order, "Ensuring Lawful Interrogations."

**Amendment to the Reaffirmation of the American Psychological Association
Position Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or
Punishment and Its Application to Individuals Defined in the United States Code as
"Enemy Combatants"**

Resolution Adopted by APA on
February 22, 2008

BE IT RESOLVED that this unequivocal condemnation includes all techniques considered torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Geneva Conventions; the Principles of Medical Ethics Relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, Particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners; or the World Medical Association Declaration of Tokyo. An absolute prohibition against the following techniques therefore arises from, is understood in the context of, and is interpreted according to these texts: mock executions; water-boarding or any other form of simulated drowning or suffocation; sexual humiliation; rape; cultural or religious humiliation; exploitation of fears, phobias or psychopathology; induced hypothermia; the use of psychotropic drugs or mind-altering substances; hooding; forced nakedness; stress positions; the use of dogs to threaten or intimidate; physical assault including slapping or shaking; exposure to extreme heat or cold; threats of harm or death; isolation; sensory deprivation and over-stimulation; sleep deprivation; or the threatened use of any of the above techniques to an individual or to members of an individual's family. Psychologists are absolutely prohibited from knowingly planning, designing, participating in or assisting in the use of all condemned techniques at any time and may not enlist others to employ these techniques in order to circumvent this resolution's prohibition.