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West Hollywood City Councilmember John Duran joined entertainment industry representatives and activists last week at West Hollywood City Hall in a rally to urge President Barack Obama to release images showing U.S. military personnel's alleged abuse of detainees in detention facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq under the George W. Bush administration.

The World Can't Wait, a grassroots group of activists, also staged a rally at an Obama fundraiser on Wednesday at the Beverly Hilton Hotel to demand the release of the torture photos and the prosecution of war criminals. Obama decided in recent weeks to try to block the court-ordered release of photographs showing U.S. soldiers torturing prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and other facilities. He had earlier indicated that he wanted the photos released, but changed his mind because he felt the release could put soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan in danger, and could create anti-American sentiment throughout the world.

"President Obama must do what is right for our country's future and shed light on the last eight years of the Bush administrations half-truths, abuse of power and human rights both abroad and here at home," Duran said. "We will never be able to put this behind us if the truth is not fully revealed and if we don't atone

for the way our country behaved.”

In a May 21 speech at the National Archives, Obama said his decision to block the release of the photos is a matter of national security. That speech reads, in part:  
“I recently opposed the release of certain photographs that were taken of detainees by U.S. personnel between 2002 and 2004. Individuals who violated standards of behavior in these photos have been investigated and they have been held accountable. There was and is no debate as to whether what is reflected in those photos is wrong. Nothing has been concealed to absolve perpetrators of crimes. However, it was my judgment - informed by my national security team - that releasing these photos would inflame anti-American opinion and allow our enemies to paint U.S. troops with a broad, damning, and inaccurate brush, thereby endangering them in theaters of war.”

A call to California Congresswoman, Jane Harman (D), Chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence & Terrorism Risk Assessment, was not returned. In a statement, Harman called Obama’s May 21 speech on national security “the best speech of Obama’s presidency.”

Debra Sweet, head of the Los Angeles Chapter of World Can’t Wait, said the release of the photos would be an important move in Obama’s goal of creating more transparency in Washington. tr  
“People speaking out is absolutely

essential,” Sweet said. “This abuse of detainees is systematic and widespread. Almost one hundred detainees that we can document have died in detention, not to mention the abuse that was heaped on their humanity.”

Screenwriter Paul Haggis expressed disbelief that torture mandated by the U.S. government is a topic of conversation. “I became an American, so proudly, in 2000...if you had told me then that I would be standing in front of you wearing a button that says ‘no torture’, I’d tell you you were lying,” Haggis said.

Actor John Heard said the only humane act is to release the photos and let people see the cruelty and abuses sustained by detainees.

Another actor, Mark Ruffalo, called for a “bright light to be shed into the very dark corners of Abu Ghraib, CIA secret sites, Guantanamo Bay, and Lord knows how many other hideous and dark places where bold-faced torture was carried out...each day that we try to move away from these crimes, the more burdened by them we become.”

Human Rights Watch likewise released a statement in recent weeks calling for the release of the photographs. “We understand President Obama’s concern about protecting U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the real danger comes not from the knowledge

that abuse happened but the sense that those responsible for planning and authorizing it haven't been held accountable," said Stacy Sullivan, counterterrorism adviser at Human Rights Watch.

The 2,000 photos were originally scheduled to be released by May 28, but the Obama Administration will likely halt that release indefinitely.

*For additional photos, please [click here](#).*