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BERKELEY -- Protesters gathered at the opening of classes Monday to protest the school's continued employment of John Yoo, a UC Berkeley professor who gave legal sanction to the Bush administration's views on torture.

Between 70 and 80 people gathered near the Boalt Hall School of Law around noon and, after a series of speakers discussed torture from a number of perspectives, dipped their hands in red paint and marched into a classroom where they believed Yoo to be teaching this semester, organizer Linda Jacobs said.

Yoo was not in the classroom, so the group continued on to the dean's office and demanded to speak with him, Jacobs said. Police at the scene declared the group an unlawful assembly, at which point the protesters walked back outside, Jacobs said.

"There was a very heavy police presence, but no arrests," Jacobs said.

Speakers throughout the demonstration discussed historical and legal issues relating to torture, and one second-year law student "talked about shame of being a Boalt Hall student while a war criminal is teaching Constitutional Law," Jacobs said.

The Boalt Hall School of Law class schedule lists courses, such as constitutional law, to be taught by John Yoo. The protesters challenged Yoo's presence on campus because of legal memos he wrote that were instrumental in the development of military and CIA interrogation techniques that some consider to be torture.

Yoo has said that the Bush administration did not authorize torture and that he did not consider waterboarding torture.

In February, the Department of Justice completed and released its investigative report, clearing Yoo and the Bush administration's Office of Legal Counsel of any professional wrongdoing, which Berkeley Law Dean Christopher Edley said underscored the importance of the school's discretion in not firing Yoo.

"Any effort to discipline a faculty member for their outside activities creates dangers that ideological or political agendas may be advanced under the vague banner of 'morality,'" Edley said. "I hope these new developments will end the arguments about faculty sanctions, but we should and will continue to argue about what is right or wrong, legal or illegal in combating terrorism."

The organizers have several events planned throughout the semester, Jacobs said, including a Berkeley Says No To Torture Week beginning Oct. 10 and the screening of a WikiLeaks video of U.S. soldiers killing people, which organizers hope to do Friday night near Shattuck Avenue and Allston Way after dark.

For further reports, please check these links:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/16/AR2010081603551.html>
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2010/08/16/state/n113816D93.DTL>
<http://www.berkeleyside.com/2010/08/16/protests-greet-john-yoo-on-first-day-of-classes/>
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