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New Report Confirms Health Professionals Violated Core Ethics

NEW YORK - Physicians for Human Rights today called for a federal criminal probe into the American Psychological Association's (APA) role in the U.S. torture program following the release of a damning new report that confirms the APA colluded with the Bush administration to enable psychologists to design, implement, and defend a program of torture. In light of the 542-page independent report first reported by The New York Times, PHR again called for a full investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice.

"The corruption of a health professional organization at this level is an extraordinary betrayal of both ethics and the law, and demands an investigation and appropriate prosecutions," said Donna McKay, PHR's executive director. "Rather than uphold the principle of 'do no harm,' APA leadership subverted its own ethics policies and sabotaged all efforts at enforcement."

The APA commissioned an independent review by David Hoffman, a former federal prosecutor, in November 2014 after detailed allegations of complicity emerged in New York Times reporter James Risen's book, "Pay Any Price: Greed, Power, and Endless War." The book documented secret coordination between APA and U.S. officials to support the spurious legal and ethical justification for the Bush administration's torture program, which relied on health professional monitoring of abusive interrogations to claim that they were "safe, effective, and legal."

Hoffman's report, based on extensive interviews and review of internal emails and documents, found overwhelming evidence of criminal activity by APA staff and officials, including:

- Colluding with the U.S. Department of Defense, the CIA, and other elements of the Bush administration to enable psychologists to design, implement, and defend the post-9/11 torture program;

- Allowing military and intelligence personnel to write APA ethics policies regulating their own conduct to ensure they were "covered" for their roles in the torture program;

- Engaging in a coordinated campaign to cover up the collusion and blocking attempts to oppose these policies within the APA; and

- Obstructing and manipulating ethics investigations into psychologists involved in the torture program.

PHR said the new report confirms findings from a decade of PHR investigations into the illegal and unethical participation of health professionals in the U.S. torture program. Since 2005, PHR has campaigned for the reform of APA policies and governance, and has repeatedly called for a federal investigation into the role of psychologists and other health professionals in this

program.

"As mental health professionals, our first obligation must be to our patients," said Dr. Kerry Sulkowicz, psychiatrist and vice chair of the PHR board of directors. "The APA's collusion with the government's national security apparatus is one of the greatest scandals in U.S. medical history. Immediate action must be taken to restore health professional ethics and to ensure this never happens again."

PHR said that the disturbing new revelations require full investigation by law enforcement into potential criminal wrongdoing by APA staff and officials. PHR called for a federal commission into the role that the APA, individual psychologists, and other health professionals played in the torture program, with full subpoena powers and the authority to refer individuals for criminal investigation and prosecution. PHR said that all APA staff involved in the ethics scandal should have their employment terminated, that all APA members involved should be banned from governance positions, and that all those implicated should face state ethics charges. In addition, PHR echoed calls for the APA to initiate an independent analysis of the internal structures and processes that led to collusion, and to adopt policies prohibiting psychologist involvement in interrogations and other activities that are inconsistent with the profession's "do no harm" ethic.

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