

November 2009

To current American Psychological Association members and those who have recently resigned:

Since 2002, APA Ethical Standard 1.02 has permitted psychologists to violate their ethical code if adhering “to the requirements of the law, regulations, or other governing legal authority.” This standard has become known as the “Nuremberg defense.” Earlier this year, after four years’ study, the Ethics Committee (EC) concluded that Standard 1.02 should not be modified. However, in response to an outpouring of complaints, the EC has now reversed this decision and invited comments on a proposed wording change to Standard 1.02. (http://www.ethicalapa.com/Ethics_Code_102.html)

We commend colleagues who worked tirelessly to bring about the EC’s change of heart but we remain skeptical that real change will follow. Over a year ago, APA members voted for a Referendum banning psychologists from settings where persons are held outside of, or in violation of, either international law or the U.S. Constitution unless they are working directly for the detainees or for an independent third party working to protect human rights. (<http://www.ethicalapa.com/Resources.html>) The Referendum has never been fully enforced; instead, it has been indefinitely delayed by referral to committees unprepared to facilitate its implementation. We are concerned that this failure to follow through on the will of the membership will also be the fate of the recommended changes to Ethical Standard 1.02.

For years APA’s elected and appointed officials have steered the organization in a direction that has brought worldwide condemnation of American psychology. Over the past several years many of us have withheld our dues to protest the APA’s support of U.S. detention and interrogation policies. In the face of evidence that the APA has violated its own By-laws and Rules by collaborating with military and intelligence officials to secure these policies (<http://www.ethicalapa.com/>), we have decided to resign from the organization because we no longer believe that change is possible under current APA management. Without a thorough overhaul of the APA management and an independent investigation into how such policies were made, we fear that the organization that is the official voice of psychologists in the United States will continue to violate its own By-laws by supporting practices and policies that shame and discredit psychologists everywhere.

Although we are resigning from the APA, we affirm our support for colleagues who choose to stay in the organization working to reverse some of these practices, particularly those colleagues who have submitted a Formal Complaint calling for

investigation and redress for the many APA By-laws, Association Rules and Ethics Standards violated by the process by which the PENS Task Force was established. If you have already resigned in protest, or if you plan to resign now, go to <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/aparesignation/signatures.html> select "Petition Text" and scroll down to add your name to the growing roster of psychologists who have chosen to end their association with an organization that discredits our profession. When you add your resignation to the list, the petition site automatically requests a donation from you (this in no way affects your resignation), instead please consider donating your 2010 dues to one of the following organizations that continue to fight for human rights and the highest professional standards:

Physicians for Human Rights. <http://www.physiciansforhumanrights.org/>

American Civil Liberties Union. <http://www.aclu.org/>

Survivors International. <http://www.survivorsintl.org/>

Center for Constitutional Rights. <http://ccrjustice.org/>

Center for Victims of Torture. <http://www.cvt.org/>

Psychologists for Social Responsibility. <http://psysr.org/>

Sincerely

Psychologists for an Ethical APA

<http://www.ethicalapa.com/>