

Coalition Files Disciplinary Complaints Against Twelve Bush Administration Lawyers Who Advocated Torture

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Broad Coalition Of Groups Files Disciplinary Complaints Against Twelve Bush Administration Lawyers Who Advocated Torture Of Detainees

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On Monday, May 18, 2009, a broad coalition of organizations dedicated to accountable government, and representing over one million members, filed disciplinary complaints with state bar licensing boards against twelve attorneys who advocated the torture of detainees during the Bush Administration. These detailed complaints with over 500 pages of supporting exhibits have been filed against John Yoo, Jay Bybee, Stephen Bradbury, Alberto Gonzales, John Ashcroft, Michael Chertoff, Alice Fisher, William Haynes II, Douglas Feith, Michael Mukasey, Timothy Flanigan, and David Addington. The complaints, filed with the state bars in the District of Columbia, New York, California, Texas and Pennsylvania, seek disciplinary action and disbarment. Copies of the complaints and exhibits are available at www.disbartorturelawyers.com.

The individually tailored complaints allege that the named attorneys violated the rules of professional responsibility by advocating torture, which is illegal under both United States and international law. Specifically, the Geneva Convention, UN Convention Against Torture, the Eighth Amendment, the Army Field Manual and the United States Criminal Code against torture and war crimes all prohibit torture of detainees. The memos written and supported by these attorneys advocating torture have now been repudiated by the Department of Justice, the White House, the Department of Defense and other experts in the field. The recently released Senate and Red Cross reports on detainee treatment provide uncontroverted evidence that the torture techniques advocated by the attorneys were used on human beings over an extended period of time.

In testimony at a Senate hearing on Wednesday, Former State Department counselor Philip Zelikow told a committee panel that Bush administration officials engaged in a 'collective failure' on detention and interrogation of suspected terrorists. He called the torture memos "unsound" because "the lawyers involved ... did not welcome peer review and indeed would shut down challenges even inside the government." Another witness testified that the legal policy constituted "an ethical train wreck" because it violated constitutional, statutory and international law.

Kevin Zeese, the attorney for the coalition who signed the complaints, said, "It is time to hold these lawyers accountable for violating their legal oath. Just as the bar would suspend an attorney who advised a police officer to torture and brutalize a detained immigrant or criminal defendant, the bar must suspend these attorneys for advocating and causing the torture of war detainees. The disciplinary boards that hear these complaints must act or they will be seen as complicit in the use of torture. This is an important step toward the ultimate accountability of criminal prosecution."

The coalition expects these twelve complaints to be followed with others after the involvement of additional attorneys is confirmed.

The campaign website is at <http://www.disbartorturelawyers.com>

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