



## PsySSA Statement on the APA and its Exposed Complicity in Torture and Human Rights Violations

## Position Statement

The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) has been increasingly concerned with the American Psychological Association's (APA) stance on human rights violations associated with detainees arrested in the USA's "war on terror". Suspicions of such violations and unethical practice surfaced several years ago, and it is worrisome that it has taken this long for these to be brought into the open and acknowledged. Professional bodies such as PsySSA and the APA have a duty of care and protection of the public first and its members thereafter.

PsySSA has raised these concerns with the APA over the last decade. The response, almost always, was that those APA members and other concerned psychologists who publicly opposed the APA stance were overstating the position, even making misleading and unreasonable demands. PsySSA was perturbed by the manner in which the APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security handled these grave matters, with many of our leaders being signatories to the petition to rescind their controversial report, viewing it as legitimising unethical conduct.

The damning Hoffman Report has now vindicated all those opposing the complicitous approach adopted by the erstwhile APA leadership in not acting in a timely manner to deal decisively with the ethical transgressions and human rights violations committed by some of its members.

It is therefore time to review this unacceptable and shameful saga that has caused untold human suffering and that has been such a divisive force in Psychology in the USA and abroad, so that Psychology, anywhere in the world, should not again become the handmaiden of militarists and politicians. There are significant lessons here for professional bodies if they are to uphold their ethical duty to address public concerns and alarms raised by psychologists, peer organisations and human rights advocates.

PsySSA is encouraged by the manner in which APA Past President Nadine Kaslow and President Elect Susan McDaniel are responding to this matter, and watches with interest what sanctions will follow for those found liable for this shame. It is important that the general public and psychologists around the world see that those responsible face consequences, so that human rights violations never besmirch the integrity of the discipline of Psychology.

Despite the continued attempts to diminish the gravity of psychologist's involvement in torture, all of us should state boldly: "Never again, not in the name of Psychology!"

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