



Contact: Lisa Cohen, at 310-395-2544

CENTER FOR JUSTICE & ACCOUNTABILITY CALLS ON NEW YORK TO REVOKE GITMO PSYCHOLOGIST'S LICENSE

- Participation in Torture Violates Professional Standards -

New York, NY: July 7, 2010: Today, in what marks the latest step in the national movement against torture, the Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) filed a complaint with the New York State Office of Professions, calling for an investigation of Dr. John Francis Leso for his participation in abusive interrogation and torture, and for revocation of his psychologist's license on that basis. CJA filed this case on behalf of Dr. Steven Reisner, a New York psychologist, teacher, and trauma expert and recent recipient of the Beacon Award by the New York State Psychological Association for his work against torture. The Beacon Award has only been presented six times in NYSPA's history. **“Among the horrors arising from our government's use of torture is the fact that physicians and psychologists played a major role in designing and implementing the techniques,”** says Dr. Reisner.

Dr. Leso, a Major in the U.S. Army, led the first team of mental health professionals tasked with supporting interrogation operations at the U.S. detention camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The complaint alleges that Dr. Leso violated professional standards for New York psychologists when he recommended a series of escalating physically and psychologically abusive interrogation tactics to be used on detainees, personally supervised interrogations where his tactics were used, and actually participated in the application of these tactics. Many of the techniques and conditions that Dr. Leso helped put in place were applied to men and boys held at Guantánamo and eventually to detainees held in U.S. custody in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Neither Dr. Leso nor any other U.S. official involved has ever been held accountable for the cruel treatment of detainees at Guantánamo.

The complainant, Dr. Steven Reisner, is Senior Faculty and Supervisor at the International Trauma Studies Program, in New York City. He also serves on the faculties of the Department of Psychiatry and the Psychoanalytic Institute at the New York University Medical School, and has been Adjunct Professor in the Program in Clinical Psychology at Columbia University, Teachers College. He is licensed to practice psychology by the State of New York.

“If the government isn't going to hold these doctors legally accountable for the torture, at least their fellow health professionals can hold them ethically accountable for violating our time-honored principles,” says Dr. Reisner. **“The public has a right**

to expect that doctors who torture will be sanctioned no less than those who commit fraud or who have sex with their patients.”

The Board of Psychology and the Office of Professions are responsible for licensing and regulating the conduct of New York psychologists. Dr. Leso has never faced a criminal or civil trial for his actions, and he continues to practice psychology under his New York State license. **“The Office of Professions has a responsibility to ensure that psychologists who abuse their position, such as Dr. Leso, are prohibited from practicing,”** says Pamela Merchant, Executive Director of CJA. **“With the initiation of this action, New York can make sure that Dr. Leso doesn’t abuse his position, and the people in his care, in the future.”**

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For additional information about the case, please see CJA’s website: www.cja.org.

CJA is a San Francisco-based human rights organization dedicated to deterring torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world and advancing the rights of survivors to seek truth, justice and redress. CJA uses litigation to hold perpetrators individually accountable for human rights abuses, develop human rights law, and advance the rule of law in countries transitioning from periods of abuse.