



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

May 17, 2004

Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As the new president of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to follow up on a letter that my predecessor, past ACP president Munsey S. Wheby, MD, FACP, sent to you on October 24, 2003, asking that you investigate the accuracy of allegations pending at that time that prisoners and detainees, who were being held under U.S. supervision or who had been transferred by U.S. authorities to the custody of allied governments, were being subjected to abusive interrogations and mistreatment in violation of international law and physicians' professional code of ethics. To date, ACP has not received a response to Dr. Wheby's letter. News reports about U.S. personnel mistreating prisoners in Iraq compel us to once again request that you take all necessary steps to investigate and ensure that all those held under U.S. supervision in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan, or other detention centers, will be treated humanely and will not be transferred to the custody of allied governments alleged to routinely mistreat those held under their supervision.

As the nation's largest medical specialty society, representing over 115,000 doctors of internal medicine, medical students and other health care professionals, the ACP has well-established policy stressing the physician obligation to speak out against torture and other abuses of human rights. Our *Ethics Manual* and position papers condemn interrogation techniques that inflict physical or psychological harm as a means of obtaining information, and we have endorsed the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The documented mistreatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison and elsewhere violates both international law and the spirit and scope of ACP policy.

We are encouraged by your May 10 call for "a full accounting for the cruel and disgraceful abuse of Iraqi detainees." We agree with your view that "the conduct that has come to light is an insult to the Iraqi people, and an affront to the most basic standards of morality and decency" . . . and that "one basic difference between democracies and dictatorships is that free countries confront such abuses openly and directly."

However, we respectfully request that a full accounting must go beyond the specific alleged abuses in Iraq. Recent press coverage, together with military investigative reports and Congressional testimony, suggest that the problem may go beyond the specific alleged abuses in Abu Ghraib. Consistent with the recommendations made in our October 24 letter, we request that you order a formal review of U.S. interrogation practices in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, other U.S.-controlled prisons and prisons controlled by allied governments to which the



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U.S. transfers prisoners for interrogation, and take all other necessary actions to assure that interrogation policies and procedures in such facilities are fully consistent with the principles of human rights and international law.

As an organization representing physicians and medical students, we have a professional obligation to advocate for the health and human rights of all persons. We condemn both the mistreatment of prisoners and detainees as well as the withholding of medical treatment or pain medication, regardless of motivation, from anyone suffering serious illness or injury. Such actions are in direct conflict with the physician's oath to "First do no harm." We are deeply concerned for physicians placed in the untenable position of caring for those who have been mistreated. Whether they must passively accept the inhumane actions of others or are called upon to actively participate, the pressure to compromise their professional ethics is the same.

Respectfully,

Charles K. Francis, MD, FACP, FACC

President, American College of Physicians