

Australian Psychological Society Statement against psychologist involvement in torture and other inhuman treatment

During 2014 the APS Ethics Committee reviewed the APS Declaration on Torture, which had been approved by the Board on 24 September 2007. The committee decided to broaden the declaration to more effectively encompass the types of work that involve psychologists in contemporary practice settings. In December 2014, after discussion at several preceding meetings, a new draft Statement against psychologist involvement in torture and other inhuman treatment was distributed to APS Member Groups for comment and feedback.

After an extensive consultation period was provided for members to lodge feedback, several submissions were received. The feedback was incorporated by the Ethics Committee and at the Board meeting on 28 September 2015, the Statement below was approved by the APS Board of Directors.

Australian Psychological Society Statement against psychologist involvement in torture and other inhuman treatment

At the 2007 APS Annual General Meeting a declaration on torture was passed declaring the APS's unequivocal condemnation of the use of torture or other inhuman or degrading procedures in all situations.

The following resolution, which was passed by the APS Board of Directors on 28 September 2015, expands on that previous declaration by outlining the type of conduct expected by *psychologists* in accordance with the core ethical principle of respect, and acts as a counterpoint against other forces and influences that can result in inhuman treatment and torture.

The Australian Psychological Society, as a member of the International Union of Psychological Science, fully endorses the United Nations Declaration and Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987).

The Australian Psychological Society regards all forms of torture, as defined in Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration and Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987) and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols (2012), as breaches of the APS *Code of Ethics* (2007) General Principle A: Respect for the rights and dignity of people and peoples.

Statement

1. *Psychologists* comply with the APS *Code of Ethics* (2007), which includes a core ethical principle of respect for the rights and dignity of people and peoples.
2. *Psychologists* engage in conduct which promotes equity and the protection of people's human rights, legal rights, and moral rights.
3. *Psychologists* work respectfully with all clients irrespective of age, religion, sexuality, ethnicity, gender or disability.

4. *Psychologists* do not condone or participate in the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures under any circumstances, including during war or armed conflict, or in policing duties, or in prisons, or in civil strife.
5. *Psychologists* do not collude with, facilitate, support or advise on the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. They do not provide any premises, instruments, substances, knowledge or skills that might assist others to implement such practices or treatment, nor do they diminish the capacity of the victim to resist such treatment.
6. *Psychologists* do not participate in any manner (active or passive) nor are present during any procedure in which torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is used or threatened.

Psychologist means any APS member irrespective of his or her psychologist registration status.

References

- International Committee of the Red Cross. (2012). *Summary of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their additional protocols*. Geneva: Author.
- United Nations. (1987). *Declaration and convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment*. New York: Author.

For further information providing a context to the previous APS declaration, and a summary of the controversy surrounding some of the APA's policies and positions on torture and treatment of detainees, go to:

www.groups.psychology.org.au/pfp/resources/torture/