

BERKELEY, California -- Students and staff at the Berkeley School of Law today called on the Justice Department, the Pennsylvania Bar, and the University of California "to conduct full and thorough investigations" of former government lawyers who participated in the drafting of memoranda authorizing torture, including John Yoo, currently a tenured member of the Berkeley Law faculty.

The letter drive was organized by the Boalt Alliance to Abolish Torture (BAAT), a coalition of student groups and individuals. The letters call for investigations into potential violations of professional and ethical duties, as well as possible criminal conduct.

"Abuse by government lawyers cannot be swept under the rug," said Liz Jackson, Co-chair of the Boalt chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, a member of BAAT. "The Berkeley Law community is making a statement that fundamental human rights were violated, and the institutions that have authority over these lawyers have a duty to investigate."

An inquiry by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility has yet to be made public, and both the Pennsylvania Bar Association where John Yoo is registered and the University of California have thus far refused to open ethics investigations.

"Lawyers to the government owe their client an honest appraisal of the law, as informed by statutes, court cases and international treaties and norms-- not a tortured interpretation that the ends justifies the means," said Stephen Rosenbaum, a Berkeley Law lecturer. "I teach a course in civil rights in which one of the take-away points is that actions by government officials--whether voting on a budget or making policy-- demand accountability."

Cat Norris, Communications Coordinator for the Boalt Hall Committee for Human Rights, a member of BAAT, stated that "by calling for investigations and accountability, students are taking a stand for human rights. We have a responsibility to restore U.S. respect for the prohibition against torture, which is a core principle of international human rights law."

The full text of the letters can be found at:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/21821415/DOJ-Sign-on-Letter> (275 signatures); <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21821666/PA-Bar-Sign-On-Letter> (245 signatures); <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21821668/University-Sign-On-Letter> (209 signatures)

The Boalt Alliance to Abolish Torture (BAAT) is a coalition of student groups and individuals at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law whose mission is to restore respect for human rights, civil liberties, and the prohibition against torture.