



June 25, 2009

Dear President Obama,

We are writing to you as military service veterans to urge that you release all of the new photos depicting torture and abuse inside U.S. prisons operated in Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba, and other locations.

We appreciate the fact the pictures are especially inflammatory, as were the previously released photos that have been used as recruiting tools by people and organizations who would harm our people and our service members.

However, Iraqis themselves, as indicated in the following quote in a McClatchy News article from May 15, 2009, understand that it is the misguided U.S. foreign policy of starting pre-emptive and unilateral wars based on misleading information, and then occupying other nations is what will continue to cause more violent attacks upon our service members.

"Harith al Obaidi, the head of the largest Sunni Muslim bloc in Iraq's parliament and the deputy chairman of the Committee on Human Rights, stated 'The people who want to express their opinions through violence are already trying their best to do so,' Obaidi said. 'Showing them a few pictures wouldn't make them any more able to do it.' Keeping the pictures secret will only bolster suspicions that the American government is trying to suppress evidence of more widespread abuse, he said."

Mr. President, we veterans call upon you to release the pictures and documents related to torture and abuse of enemy prisoners of war (formerly and improperly called "enemy combatants" and "terrorists" by the prior administration).

We also implore you to consider the interests of the people of Iraq subjected to torture and abuse, as these inhumane and illegal policies fueled the insurgency that caused so many casualties and challenges for U.S. forces deployed and redeployed to Iraq for more than six years.

The people of Iraq and Afghanistan need assistance to rebuild their countries. The civilians have seen their loved ones literally torn to pieces by bombs and burned in explosions. More than half the wounded are children who will live the rest of their lives with injuries, amputations and pain. Virtually every family in Iraq has had someone killed or wounded in this war. People in every city and village have listened to first-hand accounts of the terrible conditions in the prisons run by our military.

In addition to the extraordinarily high dangers related to combat, our service members face unimaginable psychological traumas due to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Therefore, we urge you to prepare for the mental and emotional effects of anxiety, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among our service members who witnessed or participated in torture and abuse of prisoners under orders of the previous administration. We ask you to increase the number of mental healthcare workers within the military and the

Department of Veterans Affairs so that service members and veterans impacted by these pictures can receive prompt and high-quality care.

Finally, Mr. President, the torture photos and documents are already being leaked. It makes much more sense to release the photos promptly. Americans can handle the truth when the government levels with us.

You promised us transparency, and we expect you to deliver. Knowing the truth and demanding justice for the perpetrators of torture – from the top down – is the best way to make sure this behavior is not repeated again.

It is imperative that the people of our nation look squarely into the heart of darkness to know what was done in our name under orders from the prior administration. It is impossible to be the country we claim to be if we do not face this controversy head on and reveal our mistakes. The release of all the photos and documents are essential to this process of learning the facts and healing a deeply troubled nation. All of the relevant information should also be given immediately to a special prosecutor to investigate and hold accountable those who would order torture, abuse, and rendition – all of which are very serious war crimes.

We want to work with you in the best interests of service members, our veterans, and our foreign policy. We await your reply.

Most Sincerely,



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