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Contact:
Henry Norr <henry@norr.com>
510 520-5760

Demonstrators headed for UC Berkeley law school graduation to demand ouster of torture professor John Yoo

*Protest at Boalt Hall adds to burgeoning movement
demanding firing, disbarment, and prosecution of
former Justice Department aide for war crimes*

Berkeley – Anti-torture activists, torture survivors, students, lawyers, and others outraged over Bush administration torture policies will converge on the May 17 graduation ceremony of Boalt Hall, the law school of the University of California at Berkeley, to demand that John Yoo, professor at the law school and previously the chief architect of the Bush administration's pseudo-legal justifications for torturing and abuse of detainees at Guantánamo and elsewhere, be fired, disbarred, and prosecuted for war crimes.

The demonstration will begin at 8 a.m. when the gates of Berkeley's Hearst Greek Theatre, on Gayley Road at the east end of the UC campus, open for the ceremony. Demonstrators, many clad in Guantánamo-style orange jumpsuits and black hoods, will distribute literature documenting Yoo's record and ask faculty and guests attending the ceremony to pin orange ribbons on their clothing as a symbol of opposition to the brutal policies he facilitated while working for the Bush administration. (Some graduating students are planning their own ribbon campaign.) After the ceremony demonstrators will reconvene at College Ave. and Bancroft Way, outside Boalt Hall, as the graduates, faculty, and guests arrive for a reception.

The demonstration was called by Act Against Torture, a group that has been working for three years to mobilize public opinion in the Bay Area against the U.S. government's policies of torture, indefinite detention, and extraordinary rendition in the "war on terror." CodePink, Global Exchange, World Can't Wait, and many members of the National Lawyers Guild are supporting the action.

The movement to hold Yoo accountable for his work while employed as deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel has taken off in recent weeks, since the declassification of an 81-page legal memo he wrote in 2003 claiming that the President and his agents are above any treaties or laws, including those that prohibit torture, assault, and maiming, in the interrogation of "enemy combatants." Among other developments:

- The National Lawyers Guild and the Center for Constitutional Rights issued calls for Yoo's firing, disbarment, and prosecution for war crimes. The Guild's president, Marjorie Cohn, testified to that effect before the House Judiciary Committee.
- The New York Times, in an April 4 editorial declaring that the memo "makes it startlingly clear how deeply the Bush administration corrupted the law and the role of lawyers to give cover to existing and plainly illegal policies," observed that Yoo "*inexplicably* teaches law at the University of California, Berkeley" (emphasis added).
- Glenn Greenwald, a constitutional lawyer, popular blogger, and bestselling author, last month posted a column at Salon.com entitled "John Yoo's War Crimes," in which he asked "If writing memoranda authorizing torture - actions which then directly lead to the systematic commission of torture - doesn't make one a war criminal in the U.S., what does?"
- Scott Horton, lecturer at Columbia Law School, legal commentator for Harper's Magazine, and former chair of the Committee on International Law of the New York City Bar Association, wrote that "what [Yoo] did raises not merely ethics issues, but actual criminal culpability," and that "a solid basis exists ... under which John Yoo may be charged and brought to trial" under the same legal doctrines the U.S. used when it prosecuted and convicted officials of Hitler's Ministry of Justice at Nuremberg after World War II.
- Philippe Sands, a British attorney, has published an article in Vanity Fair and a book entitled "Torture Team" documenting in detail the role of Yoo, among other administration lawyers, in opening the door to torture at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere.
- Yoo's hometown paper, the Berkeley Daily Planet, published an editorial about him calling on the law school to "clean house," and the weekly East Bay Express this week published a lengthy cover story entitled "The Torture Professor," which lays out a detailed case for his dismissal.

More information: www.actagainsttorture.org