

If Bush Pardons Himself or His Subordinates

Attorneys, Scholars, Activist Groups Call for Impeachment

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, October 21, 2008

Ross Associates 21 October 2008

Region: [USA](#)

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The Steering Committee of the Justice Robert Jackson Conference On Prosecution of High Level War Criminals plans to demand the immediate impeachment of George W. Bush if he issues any last minute pardons covering himself or any of his subordinates. The president can be impeached and convicted even after leaving office.

The Steering Committee has released the following statement:

The presidential pardon power must not be distorted to include the power to self-pardon the president, or to pardon any staff or contractors of the executive branch, including the vice president, for crimes authorized by the president. The unconstitutionality of self pardons is discussed at length in "Pardon Me? The Constitutional Case Against Presidential Self-Pardons," by Brian C. Kalt in the Yale Law Journal, December 1, 1996: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/797310>

A self pardon by the President for himself or those who carried out his illegal orders to commit war crimes, said the Steering Committee of the Robert Jackson Conference, would make a mockery of the rule of law. It would, in fact, largely put an end to the rule of law. It is frankly inconceivable, said the Steering Committee, that the framers, who sought the rule of law instead of kingly tyranny, could have intended this.

The Steering Committee noted that Bush's commutation of the sentence of Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who helped carry out Bush's plans, suggests the possibility of an attempted self pardon by Bush in the future. Also, the famed journalist Stuart Taylor has suggested a self pardon covering war crimes committed by Bush and his colleagues. A self pardon covering Bush and/or his subordinates, however, would require an immediate impeachment and conviction of the culprits in order to disqualify them from holding any U.S. office in the future and to avoid setting an awful precedent for future presidents to pardon their own crimes and those of subordinates.

Groups and individuals wishing to add their name to this statement can do so at <http://convictbushcheney.org> # (Background release on Steering Committee follows)

Massachusetts law school Dean Lawrence Velvel will chair a Steering Committee to pursue the prosecution for war crimes of President Bush and culpable high-ranking aides after they leave office Jan. 20th.

The Steering Committee was organized following a conference of leading legal authorities and scholars from the U.S. and abroad convened by Velvel on Sept. 13-14 in Andover, Mass., titled "The Justice Robert Jackson Conference On Planning For The Prosecution of High Level American War Criminals."

"If Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and others are not prosecuted," Velvel said, "the future could be threatened by additional examples of Executive lawlessness by leaders who need fear no personal consequences for their actions, including more illegal wars such as Iraq."

Besides Velvel, members of the Steering Committee include:

Ben Davis, a law Professor at the University of Toledo College of Law, where he teaches Public International Law and International Business Transactions. He is the author of numerous articles on international and related domestic law.

Marjorie Cohn, a law Professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, Calif., and President of the National Lawyers Guild.

Chris Pyle, a Professor at Mount Holyoke College, where he teaches Constitutional law, Civil Liberties, Rights of Privacy, American Politics and American Political Thought, and is the author of many books and articles.

Elaine Scarry, the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and the General Theory of Value at Harvard University, and winner of the Truman Capote Award for Literary Criticism.

Peter Weiss, vice president of the Center For Constitutional Rights, of New York City, which was recently involved with war crimes complaints filed in Germany and Japan against former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and others.

David Swanson, author, activist and founder of AfterDowningStreet.org/CensureBush.org coalition, of Charlottesville, Va.

Kristina Borjesson, an award-winning print and broadcast journalist for more than twenty years and editor of two recent books on the media.

Colleen Costello, Staff Attorney of Human Rights, USA, of Washington, D.C., and coordinator of its efforts involving torture by the American government.

Valeria Gheorghiu, attorney for Workers' Rights Law Center.

Andy Worthington, a British historian and journalist and author of books dealing with human rights violations.

Initial actions considered by the Steering Committee, Velvel said, are as follows:

- # Seeking prosecutions of high level officials, including George Bush, for the crimes they committed.
- # Seeking disbarment of lawyers who were complicitous in facilitating torture.
- # Seeking termination from faculty positions of high officials who were complicitous in torture.
- # Issuing a recent statement saying any attempt by Bush to pardon himself and aides for war crimes prior to leaving office will result in efforts to obtain impeachment even after they leave office.
- # Convening a major conference on the state secret and executive privilege doctrines, which have been pushed to record levels during the Bush administration.
- # Designation of an Information Repository Coordinator to gather in one place all available information involving the Bush Administration's war crimes.
- # Possible impeachment of 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Jay Bybee for co-authoring the infamous "torture memo."

Further information and to arrange interviews with Dean Velvel, contact Sherwood Ross, Sherwood Ross Associates, Suite 403, 102 S.W. 6th Avenue, Miami, FL 33130; . E-mail sherwoodr1@yahoo.com.

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