

Investigate and prosecute Bush officials and lawyers

National Lawyers Guild and other human rights groups issue open letter to Eric Holder

By [Prof. Marjorie Cohn](#)

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New York—Seventeen human rights and civil rights organizations and 45 prominent lawyers and civic leaders have sent a [letter to Attorney General Eric Holder](#) last week urging him to appoint a special independent prosecutor to investigate and prosecute Bush officials and lawyers involved in setting illegal interrogation policies.

Holder had expanded the mandate of Justice Department lawyer John Durham to include a preliminary investigation but limited Durham's focus to a handful of interrogators who exceeded the limits set by the "torture memos."

The groups and individuals stressed that the special prosecutor should come from outside the Department of Justice and not limit the investigation to low-level operatives, but "should investigate and prosecute all those who ordered, approved, justified, abetted or carried out the torture and abuse."

The letter cites "political pressure" which has "led to [Holder's] office taking too narrow an approach to the investigation. "

Signatories of the letter include the National Lawyers Guild, Center for Constitutional Rights, U.S. Human Rights Network, and Psychologists for Social Responsibility, as well as prominent torture survivor Sister Dianna Ortiz. Also signing is the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, the American Association of Jurists and many other international bar associations. They urge Holder to "hold firm against any attempts by former Vice President Dick Cheney, the CIA directors, and the media to silence those who demand that the United States hold accountable those who have committed and authorized torture."

Both the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Geneva Conventions "expressly require the United States to either extradite or initiate prosecution of persons who are reasonably accused," the letter says, adding "this is a legal obligation."

"Whether actionable intelligence was gained is not the issue," the letter in conclusion reminds the Attorney General, and says that he cannot "pick and choose those laws you will enforce."

Founded in 1937, the National Lawyers Guild is the oldest and largest public interest/human rights bar organization in the United States. Its headquarters are in New York, and it has chapters in every state.

Contact: Marjorie Cohn, President, marjorie@tjisl.edu

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