

# ***THERE'S NO DEBATING TORTURE!***

## **UCI Students and Faculty Say NO to the War Crimes of U.S. Imperialism**

It is no accident that as the U.S. gears up for more military offensives in Iraq and for an expansion of its profit war in the Middle East (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia) UCI students and faculty are treated to a visit from the infamous John C. Yoo. The Bush administration and its counterpart hawks in the Democratic Party need, now more than ever, to convince students, soldiers, and workers of the "morality" of their imperialist wars. Since they can't fight their profit wars without us, they have to win workers and students to their logic and convince us to die for their profits. Schools and universities, along with the mass media, are the primary places where this struggle takes place.

Sending such apologists of imperialism and its war crimes as John Yoo to campuses around the U.S. is one way the ruling elite attempts to convince us to support their imperialist goals. Part of the Chancellor's Distinguished Fellows lecture series – the same lecture series that brought us the co-author of the Patriot Act, Viet Dinh, on January 11<sup>th</sup> – John Yoo's lecture at UCI is one more attempt to try to win students, soldiers, and workers to support the most racist, repressive, inhumane, and exploitative practices of U.S. imperialism. He is guilty of aiding and abetting in the war crimes that have been committed and continue to be committed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay, and his presence on our campus must be challenged!

But who exactly is John Yoo, and why should we protest his presence on our campus? Well, have you heard these arguments before: the ineffectiveness of the Geneva Conventions to the current crises in Afghanistan and Iraq, the necessity of rethinking international legal and humanitarian standards when it comes to "terrorist" prisoners, the imperative to reassess our policies and practices with respect to interrogation methods and detention in light of the "unique" circumstances of the so-called "war on terror." Sound familiar? It should, for a host of official government memos and interrogation policy directives written since 9/11 have put forth a similar logic. These "torture documents," as they have come to be known, attempt to justify, and provide the legal rationale for, the circumventing of international and U.S. Federal laws in order to protect U.S. military and administrative personnel from criminal prosecution for torture and war crimes.

While serving as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Counsel from 2001-03, Professor John Yoo of UC Berkeley took the lead in formulating and, in many cases, actually drafting the arguments and claims that many believe paved the way for the torture of Iraqi prisoners, a large number of which are civilians, in Abu Ghraib. In fact, Yoo is seen as "the principal intellectual author" of this series of torture documents that aimed to "increase flexibility for harsh interrogation [and] reduce the risk that Americans could be prosecuted for torture or war crimes" (Hajjar, *The Nation*, 2/7/05). As an open letter against Yoo's visit to UCI that was signed by over 360 students, faculty members, and citizens from the community concludes, "Yoo is thus directly implicated in the drafting of policies that include the illegal detention, torture, death and other mistreatment of innumerable prisoners, perhaps the majority of them civilians, in Iraq, Afghanistan and US and in allied-run detention facilities across the globe" (<http://www.petitiononline.com/yoo2705/petition.html>).

Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, an international research and advocacy group, says that the "memos reflect an environment created at the top of the Bush administration that facilitated, if not encouraged, the use of abusive interrogation techniques that led to the abuses at Abu Ghraib" (qtd. in Mangan, *CHE*, 1/21/05). Similarly, Joshua L. Dratel, co-editor of *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib* (Cambridge University Press), which reproduces many of these scandalous memos, writes in his introduction to the collection that Yoo and others (like Alberto Gonzales) directly linked to the torture scandal "should neither be confirmed for judicial appointments nor offered teaching positions. [ . . . ] Why would we want people who instituted torture as national policy to train and educate college and university students any more than we would want the Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels to teach political science?"

Dratel's comparison is more than appropriate, for what we have witnessed in the United States within the last decade is the steady ascendancy of fascist policies and practices at the highest levels of the government – from the Patriot Act and Homeland Security to anti-immigration legislation and the fomenting of racism and national chauvinism. This trend, however, cannot be credited to the exceptionally hawkish and reactionary nature of a single administration (e.g. Bush II), but rather proves to be systemic and bipartisan.

The “war of aggression” launched against Iraq in March 2003, which was illegal under international law, enjoys support from both Republicans and Democrats. Let's not forget that Democrats – just like Republicans – supported the sanctions against Iraq which ultimately caused the death of over 500,000 Iraqis (mostly children), supported the bombing of “no fly zones” during Clinton's presidency, supported Operation Desert Fox in 1998, support the proliferation of military bases across the globe, supported the invasion of Afghanistan, supported the creation of the fascist Department of Homeland Security and the Patriot Act, and supported Bush's \$425 billion defense budget for next year while our schools and hospitals get fiscally gutted. And where, one might wonder, has been the outcry against Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay from the Democrats?

The problem is that *both* Republican and Democratic politicians have the same interests when it comes to Iraq. Initially depicted as another step in the “war on terror,” the real motivations behind the Iraq war are today quite evident: oil profits and the checking of possible international competitors. Challenged by the economic rise of such imperialist rivals as China and the E.U., the U.S. ruling elite have chosen to use its military superiority while it still has it, and target the central resource with which it can undermine the economic and military viability of its rivals – oil. The goal of the U.S. ruling classes is for U.S. oil companies, with the help of the U.S.'s overwhelming military power, to control the oil in Iraq, which has the second largest oil reserves in the world. They are willing to sacrifice the lives of thousands of Iraqi's and U.S. soldiers to control this crucial economic resource and to keep their imperialist competitors – China, Russia, France, Germany – from controlling one drop of it. And the U.S. is now planning future wars in the Middle East to secure its direct control of all the major oil reserves in the region, from Iran to Syria to Saudi Arabia.

In reality, there is no such thing as a “war on terror.” “War on terror” is simply the name given to the opportunistic use of international sentiment about the 9/11 tragedies as a cover for the imperialist agenda of this country's ruling classes. For this, over 100,000 Iraqis and over 1,400 U.S. soldiers have died – and continue to die! We must remember that the enormous costs, both economic and human, of imperialist wars are always paid by workers, soldiers, and students. Cuts in education, cuts in healthcare, tuition hikes, loss of jobs, cuts in wages, cuts in health benefits for workers, the closing of hospitals, racist attacks on immigrants and people of color – these are the realities we all must face under imperialism. It is our mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, that are being sent to die in Iraq for an unjust cause. Placed in a highly traumatic situation, many are ordered by their superiors on a daily basis to carry out murder for the profits of companies like Exxon-Mobil and Halliburton. Innocent Iraqi civilians die by the hundreds, and the monstrous crime of torture becomes accepted policy. Under such circumstances, what does it really mean to “Support the troops”? We all must champion soldiers, like the nineteen Reservists in the 343<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Company, that resist and rebel against the dictates of U.S. imperialism.

The cruelty, inhumanity, and lack of concern which the U.S. government has shown in the pursuit of the geopolitical and economic objectives of the ruling elite in this country are, with every passing day and every new death in Iraq, becoming more and more evident to students, workers, and soldiers. But fascism has always accompanied imperialism, and the U.S. – like Britain, Germany, Japan, and France before it – boasts a long, long history of both. Sixty years after Auschwitz, it remains essential, now more than ever, that we fight at every turn Yoo and other fascist apologists of U.S. imperialism's heinous crimes.

**FIGHT BACK! SAY NO TO JOHN YOO ON OUR CAMPUS!  
SAY NO TO U.S. IMPERIALISM AND ITS WAR CRIMES!**

***STUDENTS FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE***

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