



March 6, 2006

Ambassador Spogli
United States Embassy
via Vittorio Veneto 119/A
Rome, Italy 00187

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We are inviting you to a Speak Out on Wednesday, March 8th, at 4 pm on via Veneto across from our Embassy, calling for an end to war and the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq. This protest is in response to an international appeal by CodePink, Cindy Sheehan, and other women's and peace/justice groups throughout the world, on this year's International Women's Day. We will continue to demand an end to the abuses carried out by our military and directed by our government. We are saying, "Not in our name" are these acts of torture, rape, other human rights violations, extraordinary rendition, secret prisons and civilian massacres occurring.

Following is an article that will be handed out on the 8th; its focus is on the use of torture.

Everyone has heard about the "bad apples": they were - according to the official version - some low ranking soldiers in the Abu Ghraib prison who, left on their own, thought up ways of "abusing" Iraqi prisoners and then took pictures "to send home".

But it's time to expose this lie: those "bad apples" come from a tree with rotting roots that stands in Washington DC. It's time to uproot the tree so that it will never again be able to offer us its ghastly produce.

The photos leaked at that time were a minority of the photos taken – those considered "less damning" - though the reaction of all civilized people in the world was horror at what they saw. And we now know that they were not "tourist snapshots for the folks back home", but were staged and set up at the direction of civilian contract interrogators for use in future interrogations (as former Brig. General Karpinski, responsible for running Abu Ghraib in 2003 told Democracy Now last October).

The other photos, not yet seen in US media, have been described by the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, as "blatantly sadistic, cruel and inhumane" and for this reason he has refused a judge's order to release them; i.e. to let the world see them. As he said in August 2005 "We're talking about rape and murder here."

This arrogant and arbitrary refusal to conform to the order of a US court is prompted of course by Rumsfeld's fear of being held accountable for the torture he is hiding. But sitting beside the accused should also be Vice President Dick Cheney.

Both Cheney and Rumsfeld have campaigned untiringly for torture, and used every ounce of their power and leverage in Congress to silence the voice of anyone trying to ban "cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment" of prisoners

in US custody (as written in John McCain's amendment to a Defense Department bill allocating \$440 billion to "defense"). The Vice President of the United States used constant pressure to exempt the CIA from the ban on torture in this amendment.

They have also initiated the policy of hiring private corporations specializing in "interrogation techniques and personnel", or the "outsourcing" of torture to private contract interrogators. (One of the corporations present at Abu Ghraib, Titan International, is reported to have annual "sales" of 2 billion dollars.)

For these corporations "confessions" from tortured prisoners are seen as an aid to obtaining further lucrative contracts, and their interrogators are employees whose job security depends on their "production". Such private contractors are convenient for the government because they are potentially free from military regulations and accountability and scrutiny. No private contractors operating at Abu Graib have yet been punished.

Rumsfeld and Cheney - together with their mouthpiece, Bush - need the legal authorization of torture (declared illegal by the Geneva Conventions, which the United States has signed, and by the US army field manual drafted to comply with the Conventions) to cover their backs should a future international court condemn them.

In fact, a shadow has already fallen across their path. In March 2005 the American Civil Liberties Union filed suit against Rumsfeld as responsible for torture and abuse of prisoners and has called for a finding that Rumsfeld violated the Constitution and Geneva Conventions on prisoner treatment. And there is a rising surge of condemnation for the Rumsfeld-Cheney directives to permit torture: the former chief of staff to the Secretary of State Colin Powell, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, has denounced the existence of a trail of memos and directives for torture "from the vice president's office through the secretary of defense, down to the commanders in the field".

The facts laid out above are why we are Speaking Out to "Stop Torture."

Sincerely,

U.S. Citizens for Peace & Justice, Rome