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Academic Health Center

NEWS RELEASE

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**ONLINE ARCHIVE OF DOCUMENTS ON PRISONERS OF
THE WAR ON TERROR POSTED BY U OF M'S
CENTER FOR BIOETHICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER**
Documents focus on medical operations in prisons

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL (April 24, 2007) -- The University of Minnesota's Center for Bioethics and Human Rights Center have created a comprehensive archive of government documents describing medical operations in U.S. prisoner of war facilities in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The archive, now launched, can be accessed from the home page of the Human Rights Library (www.umn.edu/humanrts) or directly at www1.umn.edu/humanrts/OathBetrayed/index.html

The archive's purpose is to enable scholars, journalists, policymakers and interested citizens to study and understand the medical operations in these prisons. It contains more than 60,000 pages of indexed White House and Defense Department policies, prison medical records, autopsy reports, criminal investigations, sworn witness statements and e-mails involving the Armed Forces and the FBI.

This project was organized by physician-ethicist, Steven Miles, M.D., professor of medicine at the University's Medical School and professor of bioethics at the University's Center for Bioethics. In articles and a book, *Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity, and the War on Terror* (Random House, 2006), he has tried to

answer the question, “Where were the doctors and nurses at Abu Ghraib while the notorious abuses were taking place?”

Web archivist Leah Marks, of the Human Rights Library, built the archive. This is not a dry compendium. Examples of documents available to the public include:

- White House and Defense Department policies and memoranda showing how medical and behavioral clinicians were organized to exploit prisoners’ emotional and physical vulnerabilities for interrogation.
- Death files describing 148 prisoner deaths, including that of a child who died after having untreated tuberculosis.
- Interrogation documents showing how medical personnel cleared prisoners, even with signs of abuse, for interrogations; how the behavioral science consultation teams operated; and, how the FBI objected to harsh Army interrogation techniques. One interrogation document tells how a pregnant prisoner's baby was delivered and sent away to an orphanage or her family so that she could be interrogated.
- Silence files documenting medical personnel who remained silent about abuses, failed to record injuries or “lost” records of prisoners who made allegations of abuse.
- Health documents describing the physical, sanitation and mental care in the prisons.

The comprehensive nature of this archive will facilitate historical research of this prison system. For example, the thousands of pages of medical records are available, and easily searchable, for researchers who want to study prison health care.

The construction of this special archive was supported by a grant from the University of Minnesota's Office of Public Engagement. The Human Rights Center and its Human Rights Library are supported by private gifts and foundation grants. Most, but not all, of these documents were obtained and posted by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The mission of the University of Minnesota’s Center for Bioethics is to advance and disseminate knowledge concerning ethical issues in health care and the life sciences. The Center carries out this mission by conducting original interdisciplinary research, offering educational programs and courses, fostering public discussion and debate through community outreach activities, and assisting in the formulation of public policy

The Human Rights Library <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/> houses more than 25,000 human rights

documents and several hundred human rights treaties and instruments and is available in eight different languages. It has more than 4,000 links and a unique search engine for human rights sites. This resource is accessed by 200,000 scholars, educators, and human rights advocates from more than 150 countries every month. The Human Rights Library is a major initiative of the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center located in the Law School.