

# Presbytery of the James

## SYNOD OF THE MID-ATLANTIC

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March 30, 2006

Dear Pastors and Clerks of Sessions:

I am writing to communicate with you about two important matters.

At the 62<sup>nd</sup> Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of the James held on March 18, 2006, the presbytery voted to answer an Overture from Bon Air Church Session in the affirmative. This Overture, "A Call to Say No To Torture," is enclosed in this mailing.

As part of the action of that Overture, **I am to communicate** this action to each Session. Please ensure that your Session receives this communication and encourages your members to consider the actions requested.

In addition, I have been asked by the Public Ministries Board to communicate an action of their Board concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have enclosed a summary of Senate Bill S-2125 which is calling upon a free and open election in the Congo. You are encouraged to contact your congressional representatives about this important matter as well.

To expedite those requested actions, I have enclosed a copy of the Overture as well as the addresses of U. S. Senators and U. S. Representatives and the President of the United States. Please be in prayer for this important issue in our society and world.

If you should have questions or concerns, please be in touch with me concerning these matters..

In this Lenten Season, may the Spirit of Christ continue to inspire and direct your lives and ministries.

Sincerely yours,  
/s/ H. Carson Rhyne, Jr.  
Stated Clerk

Cc: file  
Peacemaking Office, PCUSA

1251 PRESBYRERY COURT, GLEN ALLEN, VA 23059

## "A CALL TO SAY NO TO TORTURE"

The Presbytery of the James affirms "*A call to say no to torture*" and calls upon the congregations and members of the Presbytery of the James:

**To Pray** We should pray for those who are detained and their families, *and for* our troops and their families. Those who serve their country must never be asked to treat prisoners in ways that are contrary to the law, their own conscience, or basic human dignity.

We should pray for ourselves and our nation. We must strive to create a **climate of religious tolerance** and respect, rather than perpetuate a cycle of fear and vengeance. Requesting an end to torture in all its forms is the first step.

**To Study** Abuse and torture are complex and difficult issues, but knowing the truth--even uncomfortable truths--can set us free to act. The Public Ministries Board is hereby requested to design and lead a study opportunity for the Presbytery at either an upcoming POJ meeting or at another venue.

**To Dialogue** We are called to be in thoughtful, respectful dialogue with one another, seeking common ground and listening carefully to one another when we disagree. In so doing, we know that our witness as followers of Jesus Christ becomes ever stronger and more faithful.

### **Further: The Presbytery of the James Will:**

1. Encourage her members to correspond with our elected officials, calling on' the United States and its allies to advance the goal of eliminating torture and holding accountable any who are responsible,;
2. Encourage her members to correspond with our elected officials, sharing their concerns for those persons who have been detained without being charged with any crime, that the accused may receive fair .and speedy trials; and
3. Communicate its acceptance of "*A call to say no to torture* with our elected officials and the Peacemaking Office of the General Assembly of the PCUSA.

### **Rational:**

Making peace and affirming human dignity are recognized as central to the message of Jesus, as is witnessed by the Bible and the Confessions of our Church.

The PCUSA has repeatedly affirmed a commitment to Peacemaking.

The Moderator of the PCUSA General Assembly, Rick Ufford-Chase, and the Director of the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains, Ed Brogan, have issued "*A call to say no to torture*

US military experts and survivors of torture have declared that torture of prisoners is an ineffective way to extract useful military intelligence and is harmful to our own troops in the field.

**Summary of S. 2125**  
**Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security,**  
**and Democracy Promotion Act**

- Makes several findings about the importance of a peaceful and prosperous Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC) to the United States and Africa.
- Puts forward 14 core principles of U.S. policy towards DROC on a range of issues: elections, governance and human rights, humanitarian needs, security, sector reform, disarmament and reintegration of indigenous combatants, disarmament and repatriation of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, appropriate use of natural resources, civil society, sexual abuse, trafficking in persons, protection of vulnerable populations, engagement with other nations in the region, and appropriate use of forests.
- Authorizes \$52,000,000 in U.S. foreign assistance (a 25 percent increase) in FY 2006 to carry out the 14 policy objectives (listed above).
- Authorizes further increases in assistance in Fiscal Years 2007, 2008, and 2009, if progress is being made - particularly cooperation by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo toward accomplishing the aforementioned policy objectives.
- Asks the Secretary of State to consult with Congress on possible offsets for these increases—in funding.
- Requires a GAO report, one year after enactment, on the progress made towards accomplishing the 14 U.S. policy goals in the DROC. Provides the Secretary of State the authority to terminate U.S. assistance programs if sufficient progress is not being made.
- Requires the President to submit to Congress a strategy for accomplishing the policy objectives set forth by the legislation.
- Calls on the Administration to appoint Special Envoy to resolve the instability and insecurity in the Eastern Congo.
- Presses the Administration to use its voice and vote at the United Nations Security Council to strengthen the authority and capacity of MONUC, encourage regular visits to the DROC by the Security Council, enhance the arms embargo pursuant to Security Council resolution 1493, and encourage the Secretary-General to become more involved in resolving the situation in DROC.
- Instructs the Administration to use its voice and vote at appropriate international organizations to increase assistance for DROC.