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STATEMENT OF CAROLYN B. LAMM, PRESIDENT, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
RE: JUSTICE DEPARTMENT LAWYERS' REPRESENTATION OF DETAINEES

Individuals and organizations conducting a witch hunt in order to name names of Department of Justice lawyers who earlier represented Guantanamo detainees are showing a profound disregard for a fundamental tenet of our justice system and our Constitution: that anyone who faces loss of liberty has a right to legal counsel.

Lawyers have an ethical obligation to uphold that principle and provide representation to people who otherwise would stand alone against the power and resources of the government — even to those accused of heinous crimes against this nation in the name of causes that evoke our contempt.

The American people understand this obligation, and the corollary principle stated in rule 1.2(b) of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct that “A lawyer’s representation of a client does not constitute an endorsement of the client’s political, economic, social or moral views or activities.” Impugning the character of lawyers who have sought to protect the fundamental rights of unpopular clients is a divisive and diversionary tactic.

Instead of charged political rhetoric, we should move forward — adhering to due process and rule of law — principles that continue to make our country a beacon before the rest of the world.

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