

## BLUEPRINT INTERNATIONAL WHISTLEBLOWING PRIZE



### JOHN KIRIAKOU (US)

John Kiriakou is the recipient of the 2016 Blueprint International Whistleblowing Prize.

A “reluctant whistleblower”, Kiriakou is considered the first US intelligence officer to reveal information about the US intelligence community’s use of torture techniques.

Kiriakou’s disclosure demonstrated true bravery and has had a profound impact on the public interest across the world. John was a 14-year decorated veteran intelligence officer with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He was subsequently convicted of disclosing classified information, and sentenced to 30 months in federal prison. During a 2007 interview with the ABC, Kiriakou disclosed the use of torture techniques — particularly waterboarding — on terror-suspect Abu Zubaydah in Pakistan in 2002. At the time, this was reported as the first instance of a U.S. intelligence officer confirming the use of torture techniques during operations. Following his initial disclosure, Kiriakou continued to provide various media outlets with information and opinions on the CIA and Intelligence community practices related to this.

In April 2012, the Department of Justice indicted Kiriakou for violating the *Intelligence Identities Protection Act* and *Espionage Act*. Kiriakou was charged with disclosing the identity of a covert officer and for repeated disclosures of national defence information to unauthorised individuals.

After pleading guilty to one count under the *Intelligence Identities Protection Act*, Kiriakou was imprisoned for 30 months and served three months house arrest post-imprisonment.

In an open letter published by *The Nation* in May 2015, Kiriakou describes his post-imprisonment life as highly controlled:

*“Every Tuesday, I had to meet with my case manager and give her a copy of my proposed movement for the week — a list of doctor’s appointments, visits to Hope Village, meetings with my attorneys and prospective employers, and plans for the weekend. I also had to give her receipts from the weekend to prove that I did what I said I would do, and a copy of my monthly phone bill.”*

Kiriakou’s disclosure is immensely significant in the US, because it made citizens aware that their government was engaged in the practice of torture — which is illegal under international law. Torture is an offence not just against the victims, but also against the international community.

The disclosure sits in a context where worldwide — especially in the *Five Eyes* countries — intelligence agencies are asking their governments and people for increased and enhanced powers. Central to this request is the notion that they should be trusted to act in the best interests of the people they work for, and to be allowed to do so with little to no public oversight. Disclosures like Kiriakou’s demonstrate that there are disconnects between the actions of such agencies, and the expectations of the community that they act lawfully. This further underscores the importance of transparency, accountability and freedom to report and publish.

John has worked hard since his release from prison to change standards in the community of professional psychologists such that professional bodies in this space explicitly renounce the use of torture. He has been a significant protagonist for positive change, helping to draft new ethics guidelines for the American Psychological Association that prohibit APA members from participating in national security interrogations. *The Brookline Principles*, in which he played a major role, condemn torture without reservation. All these efforts mark a milestone in the advancement of society away from the use of torture, including psychological torture.

John’s courage and acceptance of great risk against powerful interests are inspiring. Blueprint has great pleasure in presenting this award to him.