



action

by

Christians

against

torture

April/May 2009

'A Powerhouse of Prayer'

*All that is required for the triumph of
evil is that
good men do nothing"*

Edmund Burke

In this Mailing: -

Kenya Special Report

Appeals. Kyrgystan, Morocco, Bolivia, Kenya,
Request for Judicial Enquiry UK

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The Lizard Challenge
Plus other bits and pieces

Letter from the Committee

This weekend I looked in my pond and found frog spawn. It is already getting little black spots showing me that new life is forming. Well Spring is here, or at least just around the corner.

The little blobs will ultimately turn into wriggly tadpoles and grow into large frogs and if all live, my garden will be full of frogs croaking and hopping around eating slugs and generally doing good in the garden.

In a small way this is rather like the work of ACAT. We are a small group of people (compared to the population in the world) we do little things such as writing appeals to Governments regarding People who are imprisoned and very often suffering at the hands of others. These little blobs of writers can do great things; - you can read of some of the good that has happened since our last mailing in this edition.

The frog spawn does not look as though it could even grow let alone be a complex body like a frog. In a similar way, individually we cannot do the things that a large body of writers all working together can do.

Life must have been like this in the early Church. Our Lord had been crucified and to the mind of his followers he had gone. Then he appeared first to Mary, then to His closest disciples and followers. They were astounded to see him. Some such as Thomas doubted it was Him.

He told them to say nothing about this until he came again.

When he did, what happened? He ascended to his Father in heaven. Following that He sent His Spirit to be with us and His Church began, a small group of people who could not have imagined the movement that they had started.

ACAT UK is relatively small in the scheme of things and individually it is doubtful if much can be done. However, a lot of good can be done if we work together. Lots of letters sent to countries on behalf of prisoners will do much good and make the leaders of the country sit up and take note. They see that someone outside is watching what they are doing and therefore they should adhere to agreements in existence.

This year represents 25 years of ACAT UK. The Committee is working towards marking this. Further details will be available in due course. We also have the Night Vigil. Last year was the first year this action was undertaken by ACAT UK, a small number of people took part. This year, we hope more people will feel able to participate. There is information about this in the mailing.

There is also early information about our AGM and Conference. We have been able to get Guillaume Colin from FIACAT to speak and it would be great if more members could attend as he will be speaking about Burkina Faso and the work being undertaken by FIACAT in that country.

Think of the frog spawn. It is insignificant as it is, but it grows into frogs which do great things in the garden. We can also be the frog spawn and do great things in the field of Human Rights if we take the plunge.

A very happy and blessed Easter to you all

Margaret Russell on behalf of the Committee

KENYA - UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

On the 25th February the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions, Professor Philip Alston, reported on his visit to Kenya at the invitation of the Government, where he had focussed on killings by the police, violence in the Mt Elgon district and killings which occurred during the post-election violence. He also expressed very great concern over atrocities committed by militias, armed criminals and organised gangs.

KILLINGS BY POLICE

There is systematic, widespread and carefully planned extrajudicial executions carried out by the police. They kill because they can do so, in the context of extortion or a ransom demand, or to control crime when they could easily make an arrest. Reports are then filed stating for example that a person has been unavoidably killed during a bank robbery. No one can then question the need to shoot such a suspect. Killings by the police take place every day in Nairobi alone. There is no comprehensive gathering of police statistics and no database recording the killings. The police deny that the killings occur and the Police Commissioner and those under his command were determined not to co-operate with the Rapporteur. There were no inquiries into killings by the police.

OPERATIONS AGAINST THE MUNGIKI

There was in addition detailed evidence of the operation of police death squads in Nairobi and Central Province, acting on explicit orders from their superiors, including the Police Commissioner to kill suspected Mungiki members. Extensive and reliable evidence have been gathered by the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights, which documented the killings or disappearance by police death squads of almost 500 people. The Mungiki sect is a quasi religious Kikuyu criminal organisation, responsible for attacks in Nairobi's shanty towns. They concentrate on mafia-like economic and political "activities", including protection rackets, levying charges for water and electricity, kidnappings, torture and beheadings. The Kenyan police crackdown in June 2007 was particularly brutal, exceeding the brutality of the Mangiki.

POLICE IMPUNITY

There is zero accountability - the police who kill are the same police who investigate police killings. There is no independent police internal affairs unit. Often families and witnesses are refused permission to file complaints or cases which are registered drag on endlessly without any resolution. Those who pursue claims are often threatened and whole families are known to have disappeared after pressing for police investigations. There is almost total impunity. The police argue that failures in the justice system leave the police with no alternative but to take the law into their own hands.

In the opinion of the Rapporteur the Attorney General had done nothing to ensure that the judicial system was reformed, the question of extrajudicial killings addressed, and police and accused criminals brought to court. He considered the Attorney General as the chief obstacle to prosecuting anyone in authority for extrajudicial executions. The whole judicial system was flawed, with bribery and corruption widespread.

MOUNT ELGON ATROCITIES

The residents of Mount Elgon were terrorized by the Sabao Land Defence Force (SLDF) militia between 2006 and 2008. This militia was carrying out widespread sexual violence, beatings, torture and murder. In many instances the police were bribed to do nothing. There was also

evidence that politicians and other officials were supporting and funding the SLDF. Over 700 killings and 120 disappearances have been documented. Requests from the Mt Elgon District Security

Committee for help and security reinforcements were largely ignored, as were appeals for action from many other humanitarian organisations.

In March 2008 the Government finally launched a major joint military-police operation, which resulted in hundreds being tortured and killed by the security forces. With the assistance of local information, the police and military cordoned villages, detained and beat residents, took them to temporary military bases, including Kapota, where men were stripped, tortured and interrogated. There is extensive photographic evidence of what happened at the Kapota camp. Those who died under torture were dumped in the forest, buried in mass graves or taken to local mortuaries. NGO's attempting to study the sites have received threats and have been prevented from doing so.

The abuses were well documented by local, national and international organisations, including Western Kenya Human Rights Watch, the Kenya National Committee on Human Rights, Medecins sans Frontieres, Independent Medico-Legal Unit. Police officials denied the allegations stating that the organisations were biased and unfounded. A police held inquiry was limited and superficial and its findings a whitewash. During and after the Rapporteur's visit, witnesses and the representatives of Kenya human rights groups were intimidated and harassed by the police, military and Government officials. Residents of one camp were threatened that food aid would be stopped, if they were critical of the military. Leading officials from the Western Kenya Human Rights Watch and Muratikho Torture Survivor's Organisation had to flee the area.

POST ELECTION VIOLENCE

In December 2007 and January 2008 over 1,100 deaths occurred in post-election violence in the Rift Valley and Nyanza Provinces. Thousands of people were displaced. Little or no action has been taken to bring to justice those responsible for the killings and other human rights abuses. The Waki Commission which reported on the violence and its aftermath stated that the Kenyan state was responsible for the killings. Government agencies did little to prepare or prevent the violence, Government officials had been directly involved in inciting, funding and organizing violence and the police were directly responsible for shooting demonstrators etc in Nyanza Province.

The Waki Commission recommended the setting up of a Special Tribunal to hear cases at a national level but failing that, arrangements should be made to involve the International Criminal Court. The Special Rapporteur agreed with these recommendations and considered action must be taken quickly as in his opinion Kenya was close to descending into ethnic warfare.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the preliminary recommendations made by Professor Alston was that the President should publicly acknowledge the widespread problem of extrajudicial executions and the need for sweeping reforms throughout the police system. He also recommended the immediate dismissal of the Police Commissioner and the Attorney General, in order that the question of impunity could begin to be addressed. He called for the setting up of an effective witness protection scheme, an independent civilian supervisory body with resources and power to investigate and institute prosecutions against police found to have committed abuses. A centralised system of police records should be set up and past records made public.

Eleanor Newland

THE APPEALS ARE AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS ONLY.

**PLEASE LOOK AT THE MEMERSHIP PAGE ON WEBSITE FOR
INFORMATION ON JOINING US**

PRAYER VIGIL TO MARK UN TORTURE VICTIMS DAY

ACAT (UK) will be taking part again in the Prayer Vigil, organised by ACAT France on 27th June. Last year individual members, groups and churches joined in this Vigil to remember in prayer the suffering of those tortured, imprisoned and murdered, their families and communities and the torturers. If you did not take part in 2008, do please join this great wave of prayer. We were pleased that so many people and churches took part in what was for ACAT (UK) a new venture and hope that on June 27th 2009 an even greater number will be united in prayer for the least of these our brothers and sisters.

A considerable amount of prayer and service material will be available free from the office from the beginning of May. A small donation would be welcome from anyone wanting quantities.

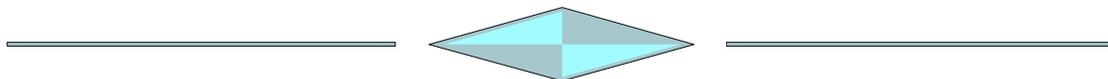
Materials available from ACAT Office 8 Southfield, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 4LX 01752 843417
Email: uk.acat@gmail.com. If emailing please include your full name and address.

Materials, available from the first week in May, will include:-

A 4 Prayer and Intercession for Group and Individual Use includes names of prisoners etc
A 4 Prayer and Meditation for Group and Individual Use, includes names of prisoners, etc
A 5 Service to Mark UN International Torture Victims Day, includes hymns and lighting of candles
A 5 Prayers for Individual/Group Use and for Intercessions, includes names of prisoners etc
A 5 Single sheet with 3 prayers, names of prisoners - useful for handing out at meetings, after services etc.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND CHURCHES INFORM THE OFFICE OF THE NUMBERS (OR ESTIMATED NOS) TAKING PART, TIME AND PLACE. ACAT (UK) WILL THEN PUT ALL THE DETAILS ON ACAT FRANCE'S WEBSITE.

Terry Newland



SOS Torture

We now have 39 individual writers of appeals - but it's impossible to say how many there are as I'm fairly certain that some groups take them up, the members writing separately. I'd be grateful to know about this - so if you're on my list and receive the Urgent Appeals from me and share them with other members of a group with a group membership of ACAT, please do let me know. This is very much to be encouraged Anselm

NB thank you Anselm for the work you do on behalf of ACAT. If any member wishes to join the SOS Torture scheme please contact Anselm through the Office. Also, if any member is on e mail and would be happy to receive the appeals by e mail let us know. Editor

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 10th October 2009 at Broadmead Baptist
Church, Bristol

AGM and CONFERENCE

One of our speakers will be Guillaume Colin from FIACAT who will talk of the work being done by FIACAT investigating institutions such as prisons and Police Stations in Burkina Faso. He should prove to be a very interesting speaker and well worth travelling to hear.

We are currently setting up a second speaker. Watch this space

PRISONER SUPPORT NOTES

I would like to begin by welcoming those who have joined the scheme and started to write to prisoners in recent times. I hope that things go well with your correspondence, but please do not hesitate to contact me if problems do arise.

If any members wish to make payments by standing order to be sent across to Zambia every 6 months, I should be glad if they would contact me so that I can send them a standing order form for completion, please do not use the form that may have been received relating to payments into the main account, as the bank account used for Prisoner Support receipts and payments is quite separate.

The next transfer of funds to Zambia will take place in May. Father Bohan has confirmed that he will be away from Kabwe during June and July, and as I believe that he will probably be leaving Zambia during the last week of May, I am planning to take the paperwork into our Bank on the 18th of that month. To allow for clearance of cheques, therefore, I should be glad if these could be sent to me, made payable to 'ACAT No. 2 account', as usual, by the 8th May.

The organisation that has recently distributed funds for us to men being held in the prison at Kitwe has confirmed that it is willing to assist us in the future, and funds may be sent to me at any time during May for prisoners in custody there.

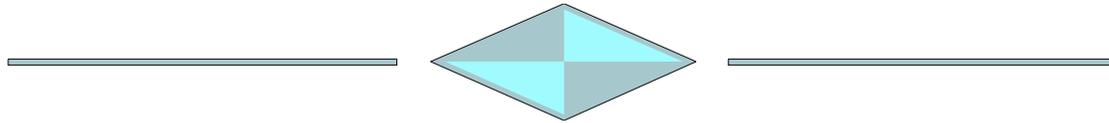
Margaret Turner has agreed to continue to handle donations intended for men in Lusaka, and these should be sent to her directly; her address being 29, Darvell Drive, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 2QL. As I have mentioned previously, this is a private arrangement, independent of ACAT, and so we would not be able to claim gift aid on such donations for example.

Kenneth Watson, 34 Wantage Road, Reading, RG30 2SF.
e-mail ken335@btinternet.com.

Note from Editor

On behalf of the Committee I would like to thank Ken for all the work he puts into the Prisoner Support Scheme.

Note to join the Prisoner Support Scheme you MUST be a member of Acat UK



We felt it would be good to learn more about who your Committee members are and why they joined ACAT

Ray Dunnnett - Treasurer

I first became aware of ACAT a few years ago when its work was publicised at a United Reformed Church District meeting by the Rev Tom Bayliss probably a little before he took on the role of Chairman. Three years ago Tom became minister of the church I attend, Portsmouth Road Guildford URC, and a year or so afterwards he asked me whether I would consider taking on the role of ACAT Treasurer. This was not long after I had retired after 38 years teaching at Cranleigh School, an independent boarding school for 13-18 year olds fairly close to Guildford. So I do not have a financial background but I taught mathematics, mainly at 'A' level and had been Guildford URC's treasurer for almost 25 years and also a URC District treasurer for over 10 years. The latter two are more relevant as it is generally assumed that a mathematician is automatically good at arithmetic - a popular misconception which mathematicians gently mock with the joke: "There are 3 kinds of mathematician - those who can count and those who can't!" I am, I think, reasonably competent at arithmetic, but am much happier using a simple computer accounts package and a spreadsheet to do all the adding up needed.

I have attended URC (or one of its forebears, Congregational) churches all my life and have been a member since the mid 1960s. As well as being the Guildford church's treasurer, I have been a serving elder there for many years. My wife comes from a similar church background and is at present Guildford's Church Secretary. We have two married children, one of whom is also a URC elder but in a different church and the other treasure of a Baptist church (so there does seem to be some sort of family tradition!) and three youngish grandchildren.

I see my role as treasurer firstly to ensure that the ACAT accounts are kept sufficiently meticulously to satisfy Charity Commission requirements and secondly, but really much more importantly, to ensure that the money given by you and others is used as productively as possible to raise the profile of our campaign to fight the evil of torture.

I would like to thank all those who have responded positively to letters I have written about routine matters and would once again urge any of you who can and have not yet done so to Gift Aid your contributions and pay subscriptions by a standing order. The former gives us more resources at no cost to you and the later simplifies book keeping and saves money spent on postage.

Ray Dunnnett

Margaret Russell- Membership Secretary

I am a retired teacher having taken early retirement for medical reasons. I am also a Lay Minister in the Anglican Church although not active in this role at the moment.

I have been a member of ACAT for nearly 17 years and first served on the National Committee a few years later. I had a break from the Committee due to work commitments but was able to rejoin after I retired some seven years ago.

When Lois Stamelis (Our paid Director) left us her responsibilities were divided amongst the Committee and I found myself as Membership Secretary and a few years later I combined this with being the Treasurer. A role which I was delighted to pass on to Ray after three years. In addition I edit and produce every other Newsletter with help from Richard Dent.

I have represented ACAT UK a number of times at international conferences in Paris, Lungern and most recently in Burkina Faso. I consider this a privilege and hope I represent our needs fully..

Why did I become involved in ACAT in the first place? Well this is easy to answer. I was on holiday in Poland and visited Auschwitz. I was sickened by the atrocities which had taken place and was sure that nothing of that nature would ever reoccur. Then I came home to news stories of the Kosovo atrocities, the ethnic cleansing and the imprisonment and starvation of men at that time. I vowed I would do everything in my power to highlight these atrocities and in some way help to stop them ever happening again.

It happened that Margaret Hodson (one of our long term members) was publicising a meeting in Bristol which happened to be only a short distance from my home so I went. Since then I have been as involved with ACAT as I could be and hope to be able to continue to do so for as long as this work is needed.

What do you think about the Mailing?

Last month we had an e mail conversation about the mailing, some members felt it was too long, some wanted more in it. Others felt it was just right.

We would like to extend this conversation to members who receive their mailing in the Post. Please let us know what you think about the mailing. We can then amend or change if necessary.

Write to Margaret Russell 47 Stoneleigh Rd, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2RH

THE LIZARD CHALLENGE

A true story from Japan, related by a prisoner (from Penwork News, the newsletter of Penwork Ministries).

In order to renovate a traditional house in Japan, the walls, which have a hollow space between them, are broken open.

When the walls of one house were torn down a lizard was found stuck there because a nail from outside had been hammered into one of its feet. The builder saw the lizard, felt pity, and became curious about it as he discovered the nail had been put in place 10 years before, when the house was first built!

How could the lizard have survived in a dark wall partition for 10 years, unable to move a step because its foot was nailed? It seemed impossible. The builder stopped work and decided to watch the lizard in the hope of seeing how it coped.

Later, apparently from nowhere, another lizard appeared, with food in its mouth. The man was stunned and deeply touched to think that the lizard that had been pinned down by that nail had been fed by another lizard for 10 whole years. Imagine! That lizard had been untiringly visiting for 10 long years, without giving up on its partner.

Our brothers and sisters in the prisons of this world are like the lizard in the wall, locked inside for many years, unable to fend for themselves. They are in chains (often literally) and cannot move about. They are alive but able to do almost nothing. They depend on other people to supply their needs. And other people, just like you, go about day and night gathering supplies for the prisoners and visiting them, pen on paper, if not in person, bringing them comfort.

With hugs and kind words of encouragement the prisoners feel loved and cared for.



PRAYERS AND MEDITATION

“ I believe that in the ever-increasing cacophony of the world the job of the Church is to be STILL. Evangelism is not shouting more loudly, it is exhibiting STILLNESS .”

The Benedictine Abbott of Worth, Kent.

Lord, help us to be still, in body, mind and spirit so that we may be aware of your presence and may pray for your world.

Dear Lord, Holy and Loving, I find it so hard to imagine being locked in a cell, perhaps shackled, for hours on end. Help me, I pray, to spend time to imagine what it must be like. Expand my mind and my imagination so that you will lead me to action, be it further prayer, writing to, speaking about or visiting those who are imprisoned . May my prayers and my letters be positive, spirit-filled and in accordance with your will.

Father, I pray for all those whose freedom has been taken from them and who live each hour with the threat of being tortured. May they be aware of Your presence, may Your warmth and love be a constant support and may they know that they are not forgotten by You or by those who pray for them.

Our Father, we are your servants, your chosen ones.
You have called us to serve the cause of right,
to free captives from prison, and those who live in the darkness of the dungeon;
to work for the end of all torture and the infliction of pain on those who cannot defend themselves.

Teach us, we pray, that this is Your will,
To break unjust fetters and to set free the innocent and oppressed.
Endow us with Your Spirit to bring true justice to the nations,
so that, through each of us, your light and love may shine in the sight of all.

“Our primary duty is to let God mould us and to receive from Him a new heart. We ought to be able to live without violence among ourselves and to bring reconciliation wherever it is needed. It is not a question of simply praying but of entering into a living human experience. Prayer is much more than intercession. It is a means of becoming more human”

The Poor Clare Sisters, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Richard Dent.

Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; The courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference!



We hope you will find this mailing stimulating and challenging! We welcome contributions from members - from your own experience or your recent activities in ACAT or other human rights work.

Contributions, written, typed or e-mail to:-

Margaret Russell
47 Stoneleigh Road
Knowle Park
BRISTOL BS4 2RH

Please send to arrive by 19 May 2009

Contact address:

Terry & Eleanor Newland
ACAT UK
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SALTASH
PL12 4LX

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e mail uk.acat@gmail.com

The things good Lord I pray for give me
grace to labour for.