



# Action

by

# Christians

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

# Against

# torture

April/May 2015

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*Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee.*

Dear All

Firstly may I apologize for the delay in publishing this mailing, circumstances caught up with me meaning I had to suddenly stop work on it and go off to visit a relative.

However, the upside of the delay is that this letter is being written on Bank Holiday Monday and I can include quotes from both the Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope Francis as a lot of what they said in various Easter addresses is so pertinent to the work of ACAT (UK).

Easter for many people in our country is purely a time for excess chocolate indulging, Easter bunnies and being with the family, not that I am against all of this, the chocolate indulging is a very sensible way to spend a Bank Holiday in my opinion!

But we have as a nation gone away from what the meaning of Easter actually is, which is possibly worse than actually not knowing what the real meaning of Christmas is.

The celebration of the Easter season is for Christians one of learning of the wrongful arrest of a man, going through an unfair trial with him which culminated in an unlawful execution. All of this sounds familiar to tall who work in the field of human rights. The section of the story which sets us apart from the acts of inhumanity nowadays is that our Lord rose again after 3 days and is alive in us today. Without Him we would not have the strength needed to do the work we do today. It is in His name we write the appeal, we write to leaders and appeal when people are undergoing the possible execution and living many years on Death Row.

So what did Archbishop Justin and Pope Francis have to say that grabbed my full attention?

We see in you (Jesus) our persecuted brothers, beheaded and crucified because of their faith in you, before our eyes or often with our complicit silence," Pope Francis in his Good Friday address.

We Christians are undergoing quite a tough time in the world today, we know of the terrible action done by Boko Hara and ISIL in Africa and Syria, Iraq and many other countries, where if you are Christian you are destined to die because of your belief. We cannot ignore the fact that in some countries Christians are being targeted specifically because of their beliefs

Nearer to home, our Patron Cardinal Vincent talked of the trial of Jesus saying how at the end of the trial of Jesus, we should know that He is our rock on which we build our lives, lives that shape our society to strive for the common good, serve others, respect human life and the dignity of the person and recognise that all of our fellow human beings, no matter where they come from, are children of God (Good Friday address)

The Archbishop of Canterbury said Christians must support persecuted communities, with "love and goodness and generosity". He spoke of the need for all Christians to bear witness to Jesus Christ and the resurrection and stated that age, gender, politics and sexuality were irrelevant to this action.

I believe that this is what sets us apart in the world today and in our work as ACAT (UK) it is not relevant what religion a prisoner is, nor the gender, sexuality or age. A person who has experienced abuse, torture and in humane treatment needs our help and support no matter what.

But it is only through the love, support and strength in our Lord Jesus Christ that we are able to do this work, only through the death and resurrection of Christ that we have the inner faith that we are doing His work and know that He is with us continually even if things get tough.

This is what keeps me going, going when sometimes it seems I do not have the support in practical terms that I would wish for. It is Jesus. The Cross and the knowledge that I am part of His Resurrection which keeps me whole.

With my prayers for you all.

Margaret

## **UPDATES ON FORMER ACTIONS**

### **Srebrenica Massacre**

7 suspects linked to the Srebrenica massacre in 2005 in Bosnia when some 8,000 Muslim men were killed in an act of genocide, were arrested on 18 March. One suspect escaped arrest. The suspects held are former members of the special brigade of the Bosnian Serb police force and will be charged with mass murder of about 1,000 men at a warehouse in Kravica outside Srebrenica. Serbia will now mount its first trial in almost 20 years. This will mark a watershed in attempts to deal with what happened in the 90's. Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serbs during the 1992-95 war, are at present on trial at the International Court in The Hague, charged with genocide for their oversight of the Srebrenica massacre.

### **Pastor Behnam Irani, Iran - see appeal for July/August 2014**

Pastor Behnam Irani and two other ministers in the Church of Iran - Abdolreza Ali-Haghejad and Reza Rabbani, were sentenced in October 2014 to 6 years in prison because of their involvement in house churches. Pastor Behnam Irani will serve his sentence after completing his present 5 year prison term. It is thought that he will be transferred possibly when his present sentence is completed to the remote Zabol Prison on the Afghan border. His health still gives great cause for concern.

### **Umarali Kuvvatov, Tajikistan - see appeal for Feb/March 2013**

Leader and founder of opposition group of politicians and activists, Group 24, arrested in Dubai 2012 following request for extradition. He would have risked torture, incommunicado detention etc. if returned. He had previously fled to Russia; the authorities there had also refused to extradite him. In September 2013 he was released from prison in

Dubai and fled to Turkey. Once again Turkey refused to extradite him. On March 5 he was shot and killed in Istanbul. There had also been unsubstantiated reports that attempts had been made to poison him. This example shows the lengths to which some governments will go to kill their opponents.

**Raif Badawi, Saudi Arabia - see appeal February /March 2015**

There has been a huge world-wide campaign on Raif Badawi's behalf. There have been no further floggings since January 9<sup>th</sup>, which means that the authorities have taken note. On a more despondent note, it was reported in The Independent on 1 March that he may now face the death penalty.

The judges of the Criminal Court are, according to an article in the paper, wanting him to be retried on a charge of apostasy which can carry the death penalty. A charge of apostasy was thrown out previously in 2013.

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### A small news item from the Catholic Herald 20 March 2015 Page 9 'News in Brief'

Headline: Faithful urged to write to persecuted at Easter

Text: A Bishop is urging Catholics to send Easter cards to persecuted or imprisoned Christians. Bishop Declan Lang (one of our Patrons) said that cards gave "hope and encouragement".

Potential recipients are listed on the Action by Christians Against Torture website, [acatuk.org.uk](http://acatuk.org.uk).

## PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**Jerry Corrie - Philippines** In January 2012, **Jerry Corrie** was arrested by police officers in plain clothes and allegedly tortured with electric shocks, beatings and waterboarding at the Tomas Pepito police camp in Pampanga province. The police eventually realized that they had arrested the wrong man, but they charged him anyway.

**Mohamed Fahmy and Baher Mohammed - Egypt** Accused of 'broadcasting false news' and promoting the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood movement, Mohamed and Baher are prisoners of conscience, jailed for simply reporting the news - they have committed no crime.

**Azza Soliman - Egypt** human rights lawyer and founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women Legal Aid (CEWLA). On March 23, 2015, she received information that she was formally charged with “unauthorised protesting”, and “breach of security and public order”.

**Pastor Behnam Irani - Iran** sentenced in October 2014 to 6 years in prison because of their involvement in house He will serve his sentence after completing his present 5 year prison term. His health still gives great cause for concern.

**Umarali Kuvvatov - Tajikistan** Leader and founder of opposition group of politicians and activists, Group 24, arrested in Dubai 2012 following request for extradition.

**Raif Badawi -Saudi Arabia** There have been no further floggings since January 9<sup>th</sup>. It was reported in The Independent on 1 March that he may now face the death penalty

The work of Memorial - Russia

All those who have suffered as a result of large scale human rights abuse in Africa, Syria and Iraq

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LOVING GOD, father of the crucified and risen Jesus, send your Holy Spirit to comfort all who share the agonies of the Lord, and bring them

## MEMORIAL, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Memorial was formed in 1991 by Nobel Prize laureate, Andrei Sakharov and for 25 years has campaigned against repression and discrimination. It is made up of independent human rights centres in a number of regions, including Chechnya, as well as the best known organisations in St Petersburg and Moscow. It played an essential part in the law passed in 1991 which rehabilitated victims of political repression under communism and drew up a comprehensive database of victims - more than 2.65 million names. It also played a key role in the creation of an annual day of remembrance. It has provided legal and moral support for jailed government opponents in the Russian Federation and in the countries created after the post Soviet era and maintains a list of political prisoners.

In 1991 a Memorial office was opened in Grozny at a time when human rights abuses - torture, kidnappings and killings- were at their height- it became a beacon in a dark world. The office was closed following the kidnap and murder of lawyer, Natalya Estemirova five years ago because of her investigations into kidnappings and murders in Chechnya- no one has been prosecuted for her death. However, Memorial still continues to publish near daily bulletins on human rights abuses in North Caucasus - it also promotes Romany rights and now the rights of labour migrants from Central Asia, who are routinely subjected to torture at the hands of the police. It has also taken up the persecution of ethnic Tatars in the Crimea It has set up round table talks on racism and soccer ahead of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia. It stresses the importance of education through the use of films, and documentaries highlighting totalitarian “crimes” and runs “terror “ tours of Moscow’s Lubyanka district (where the notorious prison was situated) and the part played by the secret police.

Oleg Orlov, head of St Petersburg Memorial and his staff have been subjected to constant harassment; he has also been sued for defamation by the Chechen leader, after he accused him of orchestrating the killing of Natalya Estemirova.

Fortunately Oleg Orlov was found not guilty - if he had lost he would have faced a huge fine.

The authorities with the support of Vladimir Putin decided to take measures to ban certain human rights NGO's. On 28 January the lawsuit presented by the Ministry of Justice which attempted to shut down Memorial because it was not properly constituted was rejected by the Supreme Court. This was a rare victory for civil society and for freedom of speech. However, Memorial and other human rights groups are now fighting a legal battle against an official move to target non-governmental groups receiving overseas funding. It would be a disaster for human rights in the Russian Federation if this second battle is lost.

## Concert Advertisement

St. Patrick's RC Church Netham Road, Bristol Avon BS5 9PF  
Saturday, 20th June 2015, 7:30pm

Piano & Organ Recital (Romantic genre)

**In Aid Of Iraqi Christians in Need (ICIN)** supporting refugee families in Northern Iraq (played by Carl Bahoshy; UK-born Roman Catholic pianist & organist of Iraqi Catholic parents)

Free admission- retiring collection

Works by:- Beethoven (Sonata); Chopin (Ballades & Scherzi); Messiaen, Schubert & Vierne

None of us remains untouched by the plight of Christians and other minority groups barbarically persecuted, tortured and murdered by ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Iraqi Christians In Need (ICIN) is a UK-registered charity founded in 2007 that provides direct financial relief to displaced refugee families under the care of the Catholic Chaldean, Syriac and Orthodox churches in Erbil, northern Iraq. Current economic priorities include the procurement of medical aid & long-term shelter in the form of family caravans.

## ACAT (UK) AT CRE-----

Stalls, stalls and more stalls. There were stalls selling motor cycle funerals, chairs of all shapes and sizes, beautiful examples of embroidery and, of course, books galore. Even a full-sized working biplane was on show, and a racing car. (Neither was for sale!)

And ACAT (UK) also had a stall, giving information about our work.

This was all at the Christian Resources Exhibition (SW) in Exeter in February, and a very busy two days it was. As a result we recruited several new members, had many people ask what we did and why, and many who were happy to take and hopefully read our literature. It is especially good to be able to spread the word about ACAT (UK) and to get people talking about our work

-Twenty people wanted more information about ACAT sent to them, (which has been done). As a result also of signings at the exhibition and previously we were able to send 1200 signatures to our Petition to the Home Secretary, Theresa May, urging the government to take immediate and strong action against torture especially with respect to the Syrian and Iraqi refugees.

Shall we have a stall at the CRE next year? Please let us have your views and offers of help (if possible) so the Committee can make an informed decision.

Many thanks go especially to Rosemary Parvitt, Elveen Mead and Richard Dent without whom we just could not have managed.

## **IRAQ AND SYRIA ----- THE END OF CHRISTIANITY ?**

How are you to choose? There were so many excellent workshops at the Christian Resources Exhibition in Exeter in February it was hard to know which to go to and which not. ACAT (UK) had a stall there and, leaving it in the capable hands of our Chairman Margaret, I chose to sit in on the workshop led by Dr. Rod Westrop of Barnabas Fund on the tragic plight of Christians in Iraq and Syria.

As many members will know, Barnabas Fund is an aid agency for members of the persecuted church worldwide. He told us that 'Islamic State' (Isis) had between 10000 and 30000 fighters in Iraq and Syria. They are an offshoot of Al Quaida and give Christians 4 choices when they overrun their villages. If you are an 'infidel' (i.e. non- Muslim) you must either: convert to Islam, pay the Islamic tax (which most Christians cannot afford), leave the country immediately, or be killed. About 200,000 Christians have been displaced in Iraq, which, he said 'Could mean the end of Christianity in the region'. This, of course, is precisely what ISIS wants.

To try to help this huge problem Barnabas Fund sends funding, clothes, food, medical personnel, encourages prayer by all Christians and offers spiritual help to the persecuted. The Fund sends money to Church leaders in both Syria and Iraq rather than to the government because if donations are made via the government it is by no means certain that individual Christians will benefit. So they need special help.

Clean water, or the lack of it, is a vital problem. When you are forced from your own home and village, having to leave everything behind the three basic things you need are shelter, food and clean water. Barnabas have dug 16 wells in Syria, where the brutal civil war has been ongoing since 2010, provided 14 safe houses, medical centres for the elderly and infirm and sent over £2million in aid to help displaced and persecuted Christians there. Between 6 and 7 million people have been forced to leave their homes, and Christians, who numbered about 2 million, now live in isolated pockets of land in the country.

In Iraq, as in Syria, there are freezing conditions in winter, and the UN has built Portacabins and the British Ministry of Defence has provided

tents (some centrally heated) formerly used in Afghanistan. These are built on land which has been given to Barnabas Fund.

So, this was and is a story of great suffering, but also one of national and international determination and help. What, you may ask, has it to do directly with torture, and why should ACAT (UK) be concerned? I merely say that if you and your family are homeless, cold, without proper food, clothing or shelter and there seems to be no end in sight to the suffering and violence, is that not torture? It may not be 'conventional torture' as we think of it, but such deprivation and pain must amount to torture in its widest sense. That is why I believe we, as members of a Christian charity, should be concerned and do what we can to help, if it is only by praying: for those who are suffering and for the charities trying to help to end this massive international tragedy.

When we read figures like 200,000 people being displaced or thousands living in tented camps, it is hard to realise that each of those numbers speaks volumes about individual people. Whether young children, middle aged or very old they are all individuals with a story to tell. It is often not until we concentrate on that simple fact that we realise something of the enormity of the suffering.

We may not, individually, be people with much power, but, as a charity, and with faith, together we can move mountains.

Richard Dent.

## MEDIA REPORT

What is the news regarding the latest forms of communication within ACAT?

We have expanded our contact lists once more to include many university and college chaplaincies, but this has proved to be more difficult than expected because of the way in which many chaplaincies are organised.

We have however been able to continue the consolidation and updating for records thus allowing us to contact many theological colleges, religious communities and Diocesan media departments. The religious press is now fairly well covered, as are the Central Offices and HQ's of all major religious denominations both in England, Scotland, Wales and parts of Northern Ireland.

Our new Twitter account puts out individual messages regarding our prisoner contacts but this is sporadic depending upon the latest news of our contacts.

Finally we do ask you to keep us up to date with your own personal contacts; electronic communications are the quickest and most cost effective means of communication, allowing us to keep on top of rapidly changing situations.

Please do remember to let us have your views about the use of the new technology, unless we keep abreast of it we shall fail to keep ACAT moving ahead with our contacts.

Peter Dixon

Peter does sterling work keeping ACAT's name visible in the media. Not an easy task by any means.

Thank you

## SOS TORTURE

Earlier this year we were saddened by the news that Brother Anselm, following a period of ill health and subsequent hospitalisation, had decided it was time to pass the mantle of administering the SOS Torture work.

We were concerned not only for the health of Brother Anselm but also worrying about who could take on the work. Janet Norwood, our newest Committee member stepped up and agreed to take it on.

All current members of the Scheme were kept up to date with the change and the reasons for it as we were unable to operate for a couple of weeks. Thank you Janet.

However, we cannot let this information go without expressing our heartfelt thanks to Brother Anselm who has been running the scheme for many years, he took over at an AGM held in Oxford when we were asking for help with it at that time.

With Brother Anselm's diligence, and hard work the scheme has steadily grown in numbers and many urgent appeals have been sent as a result.

Thank you Brother Anselm on behalf of ACAT (UK)

The main Committee

## ACAT NIGHT VIGIL AND DAY OF PRAYER

The annual day of prayer organised by ACAT France will take place during the Night and Day of Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015. As in previous years, there is a theme for prayer and meditation and this year the chosen theme is from Psalm 8

*What is mankind that you are mindful of them?*

*Human beings that you care for them?*

The web site containing further details and resources is open from 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015 at the following address:

[www.acatfrance.fr/prier](http://www.acatfrance.fr/prier)

Posters are available in an A4 format from *our* web pages and by request from the ACAT e-mail address. Also available will be a list of those prisoners for whom we shall be praying at this time.

Other resources are available on request from ACAT-UK and we hope that you and your groups will give this time of prayer and meditation wide publicity within your respective Christian Communities.

## PETITION FOLLOW UP

As our members will remember with the last mailing we included a petition addressed to the Home Secretary asking for more Syrian and Iraqi refugees to be allowed to come to the UK. I have sent a large packet to the Home Secretary including over 1200 signatures. I pointed out to her that this was almost 1100 more than the number of refugees allowed in.

To date I have not had an acknowledgement from the Home Office although many members have had replies to their appeal letters.

In addition, we found out that the House of Lords was debating Tigris last week so we wrote to The Lord David Alton, (a Patron) The Arch Bishop of Canterbury, The Bishop of Bristol and several other members of the House of Lords, asking them to raise the subject of Iraqi and Syrian Refugees at the same time.

I received replies from the first 3 which was very positive and pleasing.

I will keep you advised of the result of our appeal as soon as possible although as we all know Parliament has been dissolved from the 27<sup>th</sup> March until The General Election.

Despite this we must keep pushing this matter so it remains part of the agenda of whoever is in Government.

Margaret Russell

### **For your diaries**

The AGM and conference this year will be held on  
17<sup>th</sup> October and once again in Bristol

We are hoping to have David Fulton speak about his  
experiences as a Chaplain in The Gambia and  
subsequent arrest, imprisonment and ill treatment  
over 5 years.

## ACAT/UK DEATH PENALTY SECTION

This month the spotlight has been on two countries which have recently reversed their moratoriums on executions: Pakistan and Indonesia.

In Pakistan the moratorium was lifted after the Taliban blew up a school in Peshawar in December 2014. As a result not only already arrested terrorists but all those on death row are being lined up for execution. Some of them may be completely innocent as in the case of Shafqat Hussain. Aged 14 when he was sentenced to death after being tortured for 9 days into making a confession, he was due to be hanged on 19<sup>th</sup> March. However after an international protest in which ACAT /DP participated there has been a last-minute stay of his execution for further investigation into his case. This shows the importance of appeals and lobbying against death sentences.

In Indonesia the moratorium was reversed when a new president came to power last autumn. Five Indonesians were shot by firing squad in January. This month we sent out appeals on behalf of 9 prisoners sentenced to death on mainly drug smuggling charges. They include 2 Australians for whom their Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, is desperately trying to intervene, a Brazilian with schizophrenia, and other foreigners as well as Indonesians. Although the prisoners have been moved to the island with the execution ground, the executions have not yet taken place, probably due to international pressure. A British grandmother has also been sentenced to death in Indonesia for drug smuggling. Whether she will face death by firing squad is as yet unclear.

If you are interested in trying to obtain a reprieve for someone sentenced to death, please email ACAT-UK and say you wish join the Death Penalty Section of ACAT. You will receive usually once a month details of someone sentenced to death and the names and addresses of people to whom to write. Thank you.

Audrey Wells

## *MEDITATION FOR THE EASTER SEASON*

There was a man called John Newton, whose career was not what many of us would choose. But it was acceptable to most --in his day. He became a slave trader, capturing, selling, and transporting people 1000s of miles, across dangerous seas, for most of them, never to return to their former lives. However, when he converted to belief in Jesus, he used his experiences to write the hymn, "Amazing Grace".

Appreciating God's grace in calling us out of our former lives to a new life is one of the ways that we are seen as Christians. Even if we do not actually change the work we do, it is highly likely that our views and ways of working may change. Jesus calls us to love one another and at work, that can be hard. How do you love the work's bully, who delights in sarcasm, and pointed remarks designed to hurt?

At this time of year, we are reminded how, with God's grace, we must love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. How easy for us, who may not know any enemies or do not feel particularly persecuted!

But for those in prisons, unjustly sentenced to harsh punishments, they must require so much of God's grace, to enable them to carry out Jesus' command.

So we need to pray for and remember them in their trials, whilst we may experience God's grace in different ways.

In Pakistan, there are many Christians whose lives are very hard. Men, women and children are like slaves, bound to an employer, e.g. in a brick kiln, often paid very little, or unjustly accused of minor crimes with terrible results, including death.

Yet they have the usual celebrations as us in the UK, parading through the streets with palm leaves, enjoying baptism ceremonies, wanting to give the children gifts at Easter and Christmas. Also, they long for education and Bibles.

Lord, help us to see how your people have to live in other countries, and do all we can to help them gain the freedoms which we enjoy.

Lord, in your mercy--hear our prayer.

# A final Thought '

*Don't be alarmed, You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'*

We hope you find this mailing stimulating and thought provoking

Articles for the next and future mailings are always required. Especially it would be good to hear about individuals or group activities, any good news about prisoners or any queries you may have about the work of ACAT (UK).

Please send any material - handwritten, or typed to:-

Margaret Russell, c/o ACAT Office or by e-mail by 20<sup>th</sup> May

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