



# action by Christians

## against

## torture

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

Edmund Burke

August/September 2012

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*Don't fret or worry. Let God know your concerns. Then a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life.  
(Philippians 4 V. 6-7. The Message)*

Dear Members,

'---In the current context of widespread use of torture and ill-treatment in detention centres throughout Syria---'

This sharp reminder of just some of the horrors that are occurring daily in the beautiful country of Syria was included in the recent Urgent Action I received from Br. Anselm, who runs the scheme for us.

There is, as I write, so much happening in Syria that is anti-peaceful and disastrously painful, not just to the inhabitants but also to those of us who read about it or watch our TV's. It is difficult to know what to believe and to understand what might be the outcome of so much violence. Do the politicians and diplomats of all countries who want peace have the power and the will to bring the suffering to an end? If they don't, what chance have we, as members of a small charity dedicated to the abolition of one of the greatest sources of pain and suffering in the world, of doing so?

In fact, the question looms ever larger on the international canvas: 'Is violence the only antidote to violence?'

The answer must be 'NO', but in the light of corrupt governments, power-hungry individuals and repressive regimes determined to torture and eliminate their opponents, what positive steps can we suggest to end the cruelty?

It is indeed hard not to be a messenger of doom in this scenario. It is therefore essential to hold on to our Christian faith in all this. And that faith is a response to the greatest occurrence in human history - the resurrection of the Man, the Son of God, our Saviour Jesus.

So, all our responses --- letter-writing, campaigning, group and committee meetings, praying --- are the direct result of our realisation of that dynamic truth, and we share that truth with all ACAT members in over 40 countries throughout the world.

#### International Conference.

Steve Goddard, our former treasurer, recently attended the FIACAT International Conference as our representative in Brussels. One of the points made by a speaker was in answer to the question 'What might one ACAT do to support another?' He said 'Get as much information as possible about the situation, react quickly to all appeals and replies from Foreign Ministries and Embassies, alert other ACAT's to the facts, and pray. Always remember we are part of a worldwide organisation. Do we do all these things? If not, may I encourage you to do so when you respond to appeals in this and future Newsletters. As another speaker at the Conference said: 'If there is a vision, Utopia can be achieved'. She gave positive examples of French and German reconciliation after WW2, the end of South African apartheid, the abolition of slavery, and a black man as President of the USA.

So, whatever else you do, uphold your vision, and encourage others to do so too.

With every Blessing,                      Richard Dent

## Message from FIACAT's President, Sylvie Bukhari-de Pontual

Torture is absolutely banned under international law.

Whatever the circumstances, no one can be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

No exceptions to this are tolerated, nor should they be.

This is laid down in the main international and regional Legal instruments, such as the United Nations Treaties, Geneva Conventions, European Convention on Human Rights, European Charter of Fundamental Rights, American Convention on Human Rights, African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights, etc.

These texts have created international and regional mechanisms to prevent torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to ensure that people who have been arrested or imprisoned are treated humanely, to encourage States to protect individuals against a serious risk of torture, to combat the impunity which torturers too often enjoy, and to compensate victims of torture and their families.

The absolute nature of the ban on torture has given it a moral dimension: torture has become 'unthinkable'. It humiliates the human being and fundamentally attacks human dignity.

Christian faith teaches the dignity of mankind and the inestimable value of life. It is not only important to combat torture; it is a major component of spiritual life: rejecting the destruction of one person by another through passionate advocacy of human dignity.

Condemnation of torture therefore cannot be an optional part of Christian life. It is, rather, part of the very essence of that life, at its heart 'Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.' (Hebrews 13. 3)

At a time when torture is carried out in more than half of the countries in the world, Christians - congregations, religious institutions and Churches - should therefore engage more resolutely in the struggle for its abolition.

That is why, at the International Seminar in Brussels in 2012, FIACAT chose to discuss the issue: *'Regarding human dignity, what is the Christian contribution today?'*



## NORTHERN IRELAND - JUSTICE AT LAST

Liam Holden, 58, was the last person to be sentenced to death in the UK, having been found guilty of killing a teenage member of the Parachute Regiment in Northern Ireland 39 years ago. He confessed to the crime. The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and he served 17 years before release.

The Court of Appeal has now quashed his conviction, which it held had been obtained under duress- it was accepted that he had been subjected to a form of water boarding by members of the army following his arrest. Death threats had also been made by them.

The Criminal Cases Review Commission had discovered evidence of the army's use of torture during the Troubles. Their findings and the Court of Appeal's decision is likely to open the avenue for a number of others convicted of terrorist crimes to appeal.

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## REPLIES TO APPEALS

**CONSTANTIN and ADRIAN REPESCU, MOLDOVA (Apr/May Newsletter)** an investigation into the reports of torture. - a number of members have received replies from the Head of the Apparatus of the President of the Supreme Court of Justice - the English was not easy to understand but it looks as if there is another appeal pending. Further letters could be sent:- thanking the sender for the reply and the information that a further appeal has been made and accepted by the court and a re-examination of the case will now take place. Do also mention again that the brothers were severely tortured.

### **PHILIPPE KOSTENKO, RUSSIAN FEDERATION (Feb/Mar Newsletter)**

Replies have been received by several members in response to the appeal for Philippe Kostenko, Russian Federation, member of the human rights organisation, Memorial in St Petersburg.; the reply is very long and in Russian and has been sent off to Brother Peter for translation. We also received a translation from the Oswestry group.

## OTHER NEWS

**NABEEL RAJAB, BAHRAIN** (June/July Newsletter), President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was released but then re-arrested on 9<sup>th</sup> July. He is currently held in Jaw Central Prison. Four cases have now been filed against him since May.

### INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT -THOMAS LUBANGA

The International Criminal Court has sentenced Congolese warlord, Thomas Lubanga to 14 years in prison for abducting and recruiting children, some as young as 11 to fight as child soldiers in the eastern Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2002-03. He had been found guilty in March. This was the first sentence to be handed down by the Court.

Reparations can now be ordered. This is a very important decision both for the victims and as a warning to those who use child soldiers.

### KENYA

The trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague of four Kenyans accused of fuelling post-election violence in 2007 will begin in April 2013. They are charged with masterminding the bloodshed which killed over 1,200 people. The four include Uhuru Kenyatta, former finance minister (son of Jomo Kenyatta), and former higher education minister - William Ruto.

### ARGENTINA - VERDICT IN STOLEN BABIES TRIAL

Former President Jorge Videla 86 and former President Reynaldo Bignone 84, and 9 others were found guilty on July 6 of overseeing the systematic kidnapping of the babies of leftwing activists, who were killed between 1976 and 83 during the dictatorship. Videla was sentenced to 50 years - he is already serving a sentence of life imprisonment for crimes against humanity - and Bignone to 15 years. Other former military officers were sentenced to terms of up to 40 years; two were acquitted. The trial had begun in February 2011.

The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo had been fighting since 1996 to achieve such a verdict. Many watched the proceedings on a huge television screen. The court was packed with relatives of the children reunited with their families, families of victims, activists; many were in tears as they heard the judge give the guilty verdicts.

500 babies were kidnapped and taken from women, who gave birth while shackled and hooded in the maternity ward of the Naval Mechanics School, on the floor which led through a hallway to the torture chambers. The mothers were then thrown naked and alive into the sea from military planes.

## TO REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**RUSTAM MATSEV, RUSSIAN FEDERATION**, lawyer, working in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Caucasus, threatened with death by senior police officer at a pre-trial detention centre; his clients include some accused of membership of armed groups.

**AZIMJAN ASKAROV, KYRGYZSTAN**, human rights defender for past 25 years, sentenced after unfair trial to life imprisonment, on charge of killing policeman during inter-ethnic violence in 2010; he was ill-treated and tortured; his house was confiscated and he is now being sued for compensation by family of dead policeman.

**J.D., TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS REGION, CHINA**, an unnamed teenager age 17; she protested peacefully in the market square of Kardze by throwing leaflets into the air; she called for the release of Panchen Lama, and Tibetan prisoners, return of Dalai Lama etc; she was arrested, beaten and tortured and is now held in Kardze County's detention centre.

**MOHAMMAD BAKHSH BALOCH, PAKISTAN**, a 75 year old farmer, abducted from a public service vehicle on 20 June in Balochistan, a province of Pakistan by members of the Frontier Corps; he has not been seen since; his family fear he has been tortured or subjected to extrajudicial execution.

**ANAS AL-SHOGRE, SYRIA**, 23, peaceful activist, arrested in city of Baniyas on 14 May 2011; he is held incommunicado but it is thought he is detained in the State Security branch in Damascus; he is in poor health and has probably been tortured.

**WITNESSES** in the trial at the Hague of Ratko Mladic for crimes against humanity in Bosnia, - victims having to relive what happened to them and journalists who witnessed the results of the atrocities.



## **PRAYER - REMEMBERING THE DISAPPEARED**

**We remember before you, Lord, the disappeared in so many countries**

**Who lie in unknown graves and cemeteries.**

**We remember the victims of never ending massacres**

**Lord, we give you thanks for the forensic teams who seek the bodies of  
victims**

**Of enforced disappearance and execution.**

**We give you thanks that through their great skill and dedication**

**Families have been able to identify and bury their loved ones' remains**

**Mourn their loss and to find some sort of closure.**

**Lord, we lift up to you those individuals and groups still fighting for justice**

**And an end to the pain of not knowing what has happened to their loved ones.**

**Hold them in your loving arms and give them your peace. Amen**

## **S O S Torture**

Summer greetings to all SOS members - electronic or otherwise! Have a happy summer break, if not a sunny one!

And remember those for whom the weather is not an issue - torture victims, those for whom harassment is a daily threat, those for whom loved ones are victims of extrajudicial imprisonment, ill treatment, death even. Their wives and children, and friends suffer separation and friendship = many of them 'disappeared'. Pray for them, and appeal on their behalf - thanking God for the opportunity to do so. Anselm

# SPOTLIGHT ON KYRGYZSTAN

## GENERAL FACTS

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country of mountains and deep valleys in Central Asia, bounded by Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the east. It is farther from the ocean than any other country in the world. It was an important staging post on the Silk Road. The mountains cover 80% of the country, with less than 6% of the land cultivated, mainly in the northern lowlands and the fringes of the Fergana Valley. Because of its mountains and many rivers there is great potential for producing hydro electric power. It is the second poorest country in Central Asia and a third of its population lives in poverty. The population is 5.2 million. Russian is still the official language but Kyrgyz has been formally accepted, making it a bi-lingual state. 80% of the population adhere to the Muslim faith with 17% members of the Russian Orthodox Church and a number following the Ukrainian Orthodox faith.

It is an area where migration, conquest, intermarriage and assimilation have taken place over the centuries between many different tribes and races. Kyrgyz form the largest ethnic group - 69%; - they are still herders and semi-nomadic; Uzbeks live in the south and total 14%; other groups include Russians, Uighers, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and Ukrainians. The Uzbeks and Tajiks are farmers and live in the irrigated lands

## RECENT HISTORY

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the majority of what is today Kyrgyzstan was ceded to Russia; the area was incorporated into the Empire in 1876. Numerous revolts followed, leading to the exodus of many Kyrgyz to the Pamir mountains and Afghanistan. Later, in 1916, after a period of violent suppression, there was an exodus to China. Three years later Soviet power was established in the region and it became known as the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast. For the next few years the cultural and educational life of the inhabitants started to blossom; literacy improved and economic and social development increased. Although Russian became the state language, many aspects of local culture were retained. There were however a number of discriminatory policies which inevitably led to protests. Ethnic Kyrgyz were forced out of the major cities, which were then occupied by new settlers. - Russians, Ukrainians, migrants from the Slavic countries. By 1990 tensions between the majority Uzbeks and Kyrgyz resulted in riots.

In 1991 the country became independent following the break up of the Soviet Union and was renamed the Kyrgyz Republic in 1993. Political groups and organisations jockeyed for power. In the turmoil a number of M.P's were assassinated. The economy was severely affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union. It lost its vast market - the Soviet Union had taken 98% of its exports. Agriculture is an important part of its economy - with wheat, sugar beets, potatoes, cotton and tobacco as its major crops, together with wool, meat and dairy products. It also has a number of mineral resources - coal, gold, uranium, antimony.

## **EVENTS OF 2010**

Major concerns began to surface - the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, the expansion of western influences, inter-ethnic tensions and terrorism, corruption and the increase in the cost of living. By April 2010 there was serious ethnic unrest between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the town of Talas in the south of the country. This spread to the capital, Bishkek. Presidential offices, the radio and TV stations were attacked and a state of emergency was declared. Hundreds died and thousands were injured. Very large numbers were displaced. Serious crimes were committed by both sides but the majority of the damage, injuries and deaths were suffered by Uzbeks. Many opposition leaders were arrested.

Two commissions of inquiry were ordered - one national and one international. The national inquiry failed to address the human rights violations, ignored evidence of crimes against humanity and said it was Uzbek aggression which had provoked a response from the Kyrgyz. The International Commission of Inquiry reported in May 2011. There was strong evidence that there were widespread, systematic and co-ordinated offences perpetrated against Uzbeks in the city of Osh, including the possibility of crimes against humanity having taken place. It also said that the torture of detainees was almost routine. The authorities accepted that torture and ill-treatment had taken place but refused to accept the possibility of crimes against humanity having occurred. The authorities accused the Commission of ethnic bias - the authorities had opened more than 5,000 criminal cases - 83% of those prosecuted for homicide were Uzbeks.

## **TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT**

Reports of torture and ill-treatment continued to be made throughout 2011. A new Prosecutor General was appointed. He ordered full investigations into all reports of torture and ill-treatment, together with inspections without notice and on a regular basis of all places of detention. He spoke of the need for co-operation with the ombudsman's office and human rights groups. Independent detention and monitoring groups were set up throughout the country with the right of unimpeded access to all detention facilities. Efforts were being made to stop the use of torture in order to extract confessions at regional and local levels. The downside is that there is little commitment to stop ill-treatment and torture. While investigating serious crimes Uzbeks are still targeted by police officers, who are prepared to charge them with serious crimes, including murder in order to extort money.

Relatives of those arrested following the 2010 ethnic violence found that their complaints were obstructed by the police and that prosecutors failed to investigate allegations of torture, ill-treatment and also fabricated charges (see Newsletter - Case). Prosecutors also failed to obtain successful prosecutions for crimes committed against Uzbeks, including crimes against humanity committed in Osh.

The trials were unfair. Those found guilty were given long prison sentences, including life. Confessions made under torture were accepted as evidence. The trials were held under extremely hostile conditions and the lawyers defending Uzbeks were subjected to harassment and attacks with no one held accountable.

**Information from: CIA World Book; Amnesty Annual Report; Human Rights Watch Annual Report**

*Eleanor Newland*

## FIACAT CONFERENCE - June 17-22-2012

The 2012 conference of FIACAT was held in the beautiful, tranquil setting of Maison Notre-Dame du Chant d'Oiseau, a suburb of Brussels (Chant d'Oiseau means 'Bird Song'). The central theme of the seminars was DIGNITY.

There were discussions on dignity from different perspectives on the subject of torture. These were from secular, Muslim and Christian viewpoints; the speakers all stated that dignity is very difficult to define in practice, but can be seen to apply in certain circumstances.

There were workshops conducted by Pierre and Anne Debrielle to groups with approx. 10 in each (3 French-speaking and 1 English-speaking). These groups were named RESPONSIBILITY, LIBERTY, INTEGRITY & BROTHERHOOD. We were taken into various areas relating to ACAT'S work and had to feed back to the conference.

My group, BROTHERHOOD, took up the difficulties of getting the ACAT message into the churches.

A lady in the group went to 2 priests asking for ACAT to be introduced in his church.

One priest was totally disinterested (that was me- not bad for a Baptist non-conformist!),

and the other priest (from ACAT Canada) took up the invitation immediately.

Although funny, it had a realistic and serious message.



**Good Priest Bad Priest**

During the seminars a couple of statements stand out for me:

"Can keep dignity if tortured- can lose it if you don't respect yourself" and "Taking a stand against torture is a political stance".

In a group discussion it was stated that "Being committed in the ACAT is being committed in solidarity". This was highlighted by an example from ACAT Togo. On 23/4/12 Human Rights defenders had to leave the country quickly (they were being observed by a car outside their office and received news that they should leave immediately). Other ACAT's were authorised to speak to Togo authorities: it ended well with ACAT Togo members not worried anymore because of outside help.

This situation was discussed thinking about what other options there might have been available. After checking the information for validity maybe the church could help, other African ACAT's, the Togo embassy in Switzerland and who would the initial contact be with (possibly FIACAT). This need for help between ACAT's could be something to develop.

## "Can we construct dignity?"

One suggestion to help was 'do to others as we would want them to do to us'. From an ACAT point of view "Is human rights violation the same as a violation of dignity?"

Professor Elena Lasida gave a presentation on the question: How do we build and defend human dignity to make the world more liveable for all?

To this big question she gave a lengthy but very interesting talk.

Splitting her talk into sections and sub-sections of 3's, the main themes were:-

- (a) Create a world in which everyone can live.
- (b) Definition of human dignity.
- (c) Moving from independence to interdependence.

Ignace Berten & Koude Koussetogue spoke on the rather wordy title: Ethical criteria and evangelical dimension.

Picking out one point, they highlighted 4 Biblical aspects- Creation, Law, Jesus & Prophets.

This is where ACAT differs from Amnesty International, but although the church is a place of discussion, believers must realise that they have no monopoly of position.

The end of the seminars was addressed by Sylvie Bukhari-de Pontual, President of FIACAT.

A few of her comments that I noted:-

Our challenge is to realise that we live in a world far bigger than we are.

Our strength- INDIGNATION of torture and violations against indignity, Bring our strengths together and make our weaknesses into efficient work against torture and the death penalty.

We must have mutual trust to 'breathe fresh air' to our goals.

Finally there was a Celebration Service for 25 years of FIACAT. (At dinner there was a 25th birthday cake!)

The Seminar Programme finished, there followed the International Council meetings, but not before I had spent a very pleasant 'free' morning looking around the centre of Brussels- a very nice place with plenty of character.

Back to business; an Activity Report for 2009-2011, Financial Report for 2008-2011, followed by the Strategy Document and 2012-2015 Budget: all presented and accepted.

Then followed the real discussions! Lengthy amounts of time were given to drafts of the FIACAT Charter, Mission Statement, and Charter of Good Governance. Amendments were discussed; made and eventually agreed (some had to be agreed in French and English due to variations in translations).

Requests for affiliations came from Liberia (sadly there was no representative because a

visa application was turned down) and the USA; these were received and agreed. Elections to the International Bureau and Presidency took place. Because of my need to return to the UK I missed the announcement of the results and also the closing ceremony.

However, I can say that I am glad and honoured to have represented ACAT-UK at FIACAT'S Seminars and Council meetings, and it was good to have met ACAT and FIACAT people from Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Steve Goddard



Thank you Steve for stepping in to the breach as it were

I know from having attended several Conferences how much hard work it is. Hard work but as Steve says enjoyable and so worthwhile because you realise we are not just ACAT UK on its own - you are part of an International organisation with many other ACAT's all bringing their uniqueness to the Conference.

Some ACAT's are much nearer the evil of torture than we in the West are and that is important to remember I feel.

We can provide the back up and support by appeals and prayer; they actually go into the prisons and see the results of torture and on occasion are the recipients of this evil. We need to pray for all ACAT's wherever they are situated.

Margaret Russell

## REPORT ON THE PRAYER VIGIL

This year the number of inquiries and requests for prayer materials were disappointingly few both from ACAT members and groups. A number of churches and J & P groups did take part. Prayer together with campaigning is an important part of ACAT's work and can make a difference especially when circumstances are dire. This year's Vigil was discussed briefly at the recent Committee Meeting and it was decided to discuss the future of this important event in our calendar at a later date. We would welcome ideas, comments and suggestions from groups and members.

Eleanor Newland

From Steve Goddard

Following the morning service at Fishponds Baptist Church, there was an opportunity for prayer. Those who came used the ACAT material which they took with them for personal use.

In the evening I met in a home with just one other Christian. There was a round silver tray into which candles could be placed in slots. The candles chosen were some of the usual white ones, some black ones around the circumference and some red ones positioned in the shape of the Cross. As we prayed through the material the candles were lit; it was extremely powerful and moving. Because she is a primary school teacher and a Christian, the other pray-er was emotional reading of JOHAN TETERISSA, Indonesia, jailed for 15 years for raising an independence flag in 2007.

“Where two or three.....”.

From the Saltash Group

8 of us gathered in St Stephens Church on Saturday evening - the weather was appalling and there had been a Bell ringers Outing, which cut down the numbers attending the service. The moving service was written by our Chairman, Lesley Margetts, who is also a Lay Reader in the parish. It was an hour of readings, hymns - with the music pre-recorded - many prayers and lighting of candles. It is always very emotive when the names are read out and the candles lit. The candles were lit the following day and an explanation was read out; the tortured were also included in the intercessions.

Late in the evening Terry and I set out candles in our sitting room and read and prayed the Service of Prayer and Meditation. For the second time on the Saturday night we were moved as we lifted up to the Lord the names of so many of our suffering brothers and sisters.

Again “where two or three are gathered in your name.....”.

Rosemary Garrod from St Leonard's Scot Episcopal Church ACAT Group in Bonnyrigg, tells us that the service of prayer, meditation and the lighting of candles for the tortured was held as in other years at their usual Wednesday morning meeting when 10 people were present. The candles were placed in a pottery bowl filled with sand; the words "The Lord is my Shepherd" decorate the bowl, which was bought in memory of Joan Basden, who founded the ACAT Group.

Two prayer vigils were held on the 20th June at the Convent of Mercy in St Albans for the tortured and their families, for those who minister to them and for the torturers. On 21st at the monthly meeting at the Presbytery at St Albans and St Stephens RC Church the names of the tortured were read out.

Revd Roy Jenkins, a member of ACAT from the early days and president of CAT Wales, (Campaign Against Torture) was the preacher at the Sunday morning service, nearest to the Vigil date- at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Cardiff. This was a most moving service and talk about human rights and the tortured. A number of members will have heard this and listen to Roy regularly on "Thought for the Day". Our thanks to him!

## **AGM and CONFERENCE**

Enclosed with this mailing is the voting form to elect the new committee.

All members, (except our Chairman Richard Dent who is retiring as Chairman this year) are willing to stand again. We are still short of Committee members please give this your prayers to see if you are called to assist us in this work. We can always find someone to propose and second you.

The instructions on voting are on the form

The AGM is on the 13<sup>th</sup> October at Broadmead Baptist Church Bristol, final details will be given in the next mailing.

Please make a huge effort to attend it is always an inspiring event

*Harrow Group sent a report of a talk given at a recent meeting. Although the subject is not within the remit of ACAT –UK there is a lot which is relevant. ACAT UK has a narrow mandate - torture, fear of torture, extrajudicial execution, death threats and disappearance. We take up cases of rape in times of conflict - such as happened in the Congo and Bosnia. We also wrote an article for the Newsletter on rape in time of war and conflict.*

### Ending Violence against Women

In June this year ACAT (Harrow Group) hosted an open meeting at which Peter Grant, Co-Director of Restored, gave a talk on “Ending Violence against Women, the Global Perspective”.

Restored is a recently established international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women. It aims to raise awareness of male violence and to stop it happening, both at home and in the wider world. Restored, ([www.restorerelationships.org](http://www.restorerelationships.org)) wants churches to be places where women and men work together to restore relationships and end the fear of violence.

Violence against women is a universal problem and a global scandal. Restored’s research shows that at least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with the abuser usually someone known to her. In the UK a woman is killed by her partner or an ex twice a week, in El Salvador every day and in the Ukraine every 35 minutes.

For women aged 15-44 violence is a major cause of death and disability. In some parts of the world it exposes a woman to an increased risk of contracting Aids and everywhere it impoverishes individuals, families and communities and may have an appalling effect on the children who witness it. We may be familiar with cases of domestic violence and honour killing but violence against women can also involve sex-trafficking and female genital mutilation

Rape has been used systematically both as a method of torture and as a weapon of war to oppress civilians in many parts of the world; examples include the 1960-96 civil war in Guatemala, the Bangladesh war of secession, 1971, Bosnia in the 1990’s and more recently Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here, rape has been described as “an ugly and defining feature of the conflict”.

Peter Grant pointed out that dealing with violence against women may create difficulties for churches but also presents them with opportunities. Within the church as a whole the stigma of domestic violence may be a barrier to disclosure and there may be patriarchal attitudes which might, if anything, make the problem worse. Tearfund’s HIV research quotes a Zimbabwean pastor as saying “I expect my wife to bow down before me as I bow down before Christ”. Changes in culture and particularly in the attitudes of some men are needed but with God’s help this is possible. Restored is part of a worldwide network which, within and outside the UK, works to raise awareness of this issue and to enable churches to engage with it.

Other individuals and organisations are also trying to prevent violence against women and to deal with its effects. Notably, in 2006 the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, launched a study of all forms of violence against women which resulted in a General Assembly resolution calling on all member states to intensify their efforts to eliminate it.

***NB ACAT UK although abhorring violence against women cannot organise campaigns against it as the subject does not fall within it’s very narrow remit as detailed above***

# Prayer and Reflection

Lord,

Through your death and resurrection  
You have broken the hold of evil in our world  
To proclaim justice for those who are  
tormented, tortured and destroyed by other  
men's cruelty and greed for power.  
We pray that all those who suffer will swiftly find  
peace, comfort and freedom,  
And renew our hearts to work for their cause.  
We ask this for your Name's sake. Amen

*(For those in solitary confinement – the darkness  
can be taken literally or as a symbol of isolation  
and mental distress)*

Lord,

Help us to see in the groaning of creation  
not death throes but birth pangs;  
help us to see in suffering a promise for the  
future,  
because it is a cry against the inhumanity  
of the present.  
Help us to glimpse in protest the dawn of justice,  
in the cross, the pathway to  
resurrection, and in suffering, the seeds of joy.  
Ruben Alves, Brazil

Father, you are a God who lies hidden  
And yet there is nowhere cut off from your  
presence.  
No-one who can be locked away from your care.  
Do not remain hidden from those who have  
been shut away in the loneliness and isolation of  
solitary confinement.  
Even the darkness is not dark to you,  
and the night is as clear as the day.  
Even in the darkest dungeon, even behind the  
bars and the bolted doors of the smallest prison  
cell,  
your hand is there to lead them and to hold  
them fast.  
Be with them now as their light and their hope in  
the darkness.  
Your Spirit of courage and strength

Warm them with your presence and your  
love,

Speak to them your Word in their silence  
And show them that they are never alone,  
And pour into their cells and their hearts for  
you are with them always.

*Bishop Trevor Huddleston, who campaigned  
tirelessly against the evils of apartheid and  
wrote "Naught for Your Comfort", once said:*

"I have found Jesus where every Christian  
should expect to find him; in the darkness, in  
the fear, in the blinding weariness of Calvary,  
And Calvary is but one step from the Empty  
Tomb."

Jesus, you set prisoners free, in your mercy,  
remember those deprived of liberty.  
Jesus, you bring justice for the oppressed: in  
your mercy, remember those whose lives  
have been torn apart by human justice.  
Jesus, you were scorned for no reason: in  
your mercy, remember those who have been  
deceived or betrayed.

Jesus, you gave your life for love of the  
Kingdom:  
In your mercy, remember those who give  
their lives for others.  
Jesus, you found no consolation: in your  
mercy remember those who are in distress  
or losing hope.  
Jesus, you were given vinegar to drink: in  
your mercy, remember those who suffer for  
justice.

From Hope in the Darkest Night (Fiacat)

We cannot take the full measure of the  
world's sorrows but Christ has died, Christ  
has risen and Christ will triumph; the world's  
evil will be swallowed up in the goodness of  
our God; the clamour of war will be silenced  
by the peace of our God; the despair of  
humanity with all its need will be over ruled

*Pause  
for  
Thought*



We hope you will find this mailing both 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

c/o ACAT Office

Please send to arrive by 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012

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