



Action

by

Christians

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

Against Torture

Aug/Sept 2015

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Chairman's Letter

I am sat at my desk on a lovely sunny day listening to the grass cutting on the green just outside. It is hard to remember that yesterday we had nonstop rain all day and I had to put the fire on in the evening.

Life is a little like our weather; one day everything goes swimmingly and the next nothing goes right, At least that is what it seems like to me although some people's opinions would differ.

In ACAT it seems rather like that as well. I became Chairman 3 years ago, we had a lot of upheaval at that time due to long standing members leaving the committee. It seemed to us that we as a Committee would never ever be able learn about the running of the Organization and keeping the main reasons for existence in our headlights. Gradually things settled, we learnt to work together and how to run the Charity efficiently. (At least we hope we do!). Yes, we had to curtail some activities and now we really only take on what we know we can do. This is my final year as Chairman, 3 years being the figurehead is sufficient for anyone and new people need to be onboard with us.

The year has been very busy for us, not only was the day to day work heavier, but we have run several additional campaigns and petitions. The Syrian and Iraqi petition to the Government was especially worthwhile we feel. Not in terms of publicity but in working together both members and committee to draw attention to the lives of the refugees in both Countries and highlighting the apparent lack of assistance given by our Government. In a small way it could well have made changes we wait to see.

In addition, following many requests we produced an Easter Greetings Card list which astounded us with its popularity.

Last month 2 Committee members represented us at a Conference for European ACATs in Belgium. There is a brief report in this mailing. One exciting result of the conference was an agreement to work more collaboratively on appeals and campaigns. In this way we have greater clout on the international stage. Watch this space!

This work reminds me of Jesus parable of the mustard seed. -

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that

the birds of the air come and perch in its branches” Matt 13 v31 - 32

Tom Wright in his book *Matthew for Everyone* says that somehow Jesus wanted His followers to live with the tension of believing that the kingdom was arriving in and through his own work and that this kingdom would come, would arrive, not all in a bang but through the process like the slow growth of a plant.

I believe the work of ACAT’s worldwide is like the mustard seed, the fight against the evils of torture and ill treatment in the world is not an instantaneous fix but a gradual pecking away at the roots of the cause so that one day something good will happen, it may be small but it happens.

We can see this within the results of the conference. A greater willingness to share ideas and actions so that a larger number of appeals can be made and a wider audience can be sought. This degree of collaboration has been slow in coming, but the results it will bring can and will be huge.

I just wish that I had been able to attend the conference myself, in the words of my God daughter I am “well jell”!! Of the experiences that Audrey and Janet had. But it is good to know we have committee members ready and willing to represent us in this way.

Our AGM is approaching rapidly.

With this mailing is a nomination form for committee members. As we are such a disparate organization we felt that it was unfair on our members to expect them to seek seconders for their nominations. So, please feel free to nominate yourselves for a place, you will be made extremely welcome. We are especially needing a Chairman, a Secretary and a Mailings editor along with committee members. \We are producing job descriptions for the main posts so please contact us for further information. Our main criteria is of course an interest in Human Rights, which as you are ACAT members you will have.

As I have already said this is the final year of my Chairmanship, I can only hope and pray that I have done the best I could over the last few years, and that under a new leader we will be able to develop more and grow in numbers.

May God bless you all *Margaret Russell*

Please send Appeal on behalf of Aster Fissehatsion- Eritrea

Aster Fissehatsion was arrested together with 10 other members of a group of political dissidents known as the Group of 15 (or G-15), including her former husband, former vice-president and foreign minister of Eritrea, Mahmoud Ahmed Sheriffo.

Before their arrest, the G-15, who were all senior party officials in the People's Front for Democracy and Justice Party (PFDJ), Eritrea's only political party, wrote a letter to party members describing and proposing solutions for the "crisis of Eritrea". The letter contended that the President and the PFDJ were obligated by the Constitution to call internal party meetings, follow correct parliamentary and government procedures and follow up on a number of promises the party had made, particularly regarding judicial reform.

In August 2001, the Secretary General of PFDJ accused the G-15 of attempting to destabilize the country and in response the G-15 published a letter in a newspaper, calling upon the Eritrean people to help solve the country's problems. On the night of 18 September 2001, 11 of the 15 signatories of the letter were arrested.

Aster Fissehatsion is a prisoner of conscience arrested and detained for solely exercising her right to freedom of expression.

Please write a letter of appeal to the Eritrean Ambassador to London

Mr Tesfamicael Gerahtu Ogbaghiorghis,
96 White Lion Street,
London N1 9OF. (Your Excellency)

Suggested Letter Aster Fissehatsion - Eritrea

I am writing to urge you to immediately and unconditionally release Aster Fissehatsion and all other prisoners of conscience detained in Eritrea for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, opinion, association or religion or belief.

This includes the right to peaceful opposition to the government and if they are a family member of someone who has refused conscription or fled the country.

Since her arrest in September 2001, Aster Fissehatsion has been held incommunicado. Her whereabouts are unknown and her family has not been able to see her or speak to her in close to 14 years. She has not had any legal representation. At the time of her arrest Aster was suffering from stomach ulcers but I am not aware if she is receiving medical treatment.

I urge you to immediately ascertain Aster's whereabouts and fate, to ensure that she is granted access to her family and to legal representation, that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and provided with all necessary medical care.

Finally, I urge you immediately to charge all other prisoners suspected of a crime with a recognizable criminal offence or else release them. Those charged must be tried promptly in fair proceedings which meet international standards.

Yours sincerely/Yours respectfully

Amnesty International



Please write an appeal on behalf of those people trapped between Boko Haram and the military - Nigeria

Since 2009 the armed group known as Boko Haram has killed, abducted and tortured thousands of civilians in north-east Nigeria. As a result more than a million people were forced to flee their homes. In a report Amnesty International found that these acts amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The response by Nigeria's security forces has been brutal. In military detention facilities, such as Giwa barracks, in Maiduguri, Borno state, the overcrowding was extreme. Former detainees told Amnesty International that they could only sit on the floor in turns, and took turns sleeping. Suspects were often beaten by soldiers. They received little food and had no access to toilets or medical care. Due to these horrific conditions, more than 7,000 people have died in military detention since 2011. The majority of their families were never informed of their fate.

The Nigerian military has also executed more than 1,200 people. One of the most horrific mass extrajudicial executions by the military happened on 14 March 2014 in Maiduguri, Borno State. In the aftermath of a Boko Haram attack on the military detention facility at Giwa barracks during which the detainees were released, the military killed at least 640 men and boys, most of them recaptured detainees.

Despite human rights organisations raising these concerns with the former Nigerian government, no adequate investigations took place. On 29 May 2015 a new government, led by President Buhari, was inaugurated. The President has the opportunity to make a break with the mistakes of the past by providing justice for the people of north-east Nigeria.

Please write an appeal letter to

Muhammadu Buhari President of Nigeria,
Central Business District, Abuja. Nigeria (Your Excellency)

Dalhaltu S. Tafida High Commissioner, 9, Northumberland Ave,
London, WC2N 5BX

Suggested Letter Nigeria

In north-east Nigeria, both parties to the conflict have committed crimes under international law.

Boko Haram members have murdered thousands of civilians, imprisoned many more, and destroyed their property. Boko Haram fighters have tortured, raped, forced into marriage and recruited children, women and men. At the same time, more than 7,000 people died in military detention facilities from torture, suffocation, and a lack of access to adequate food, water, sanitation facilities and medical assistance. The Nigerian military has arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, who are then detained without access to their families and lawyers and without ever being brought before a court.

Your administration has the ability to put an end to these atrocities and provide justice for their victims, drawing a line under the mistakes of the past.

I urge you to uphold your commitment to lead a government founded on values that promote and protect fundamental human rights by:

- Initiating independent and impartial investigations into allegations of crimes under international law, including crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the Nigerian military and members of Boko Haram, with a view to bringing suspected perpetrators to justice in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.
- Introducing safeguards against human rights violations, including allowing all detainees access to their families, lawyers and doctors; allowing independent human rights monitors unfettered access to all people in detention; ensuring that a centralized register of all people arrested and detained is accessible to their relatives and lawyers; and charging all detainees with a recognizable criminal offences

Thank you for giving this matter your attention

Yours faithfully /Yours respectfully

Amnesty International

Please write an appeal on behalf of Mr Lae- Goon Park, South Korea



Mr **Lae-Goon Park**, a standing steering committee member of the Coalition 4.16 which demands an independent investigatory commission be set up for the Sewol Ferry incident which happened on April 16, 2014.

According to information received, on July 17, 2015, Mr Park was detained by the Seoul Metropolitan Police in relation to his participation in a series of protests to commemorate Sewol victims and for calling for an independent and transparent investigation into the Sewol Ferry incident. He is currently detained under a pre-indictment warrant, and is awaiting a possible indictment by the prosecutor's office, which must be filed within 10 to 20 days following the beginning of his detention.

Police agents have claimed that Mr. Park incited sedition during protests and colluded with other human rights defenders to take violent action against the police. According to Coalition 4.16, no conclusive evidence has been provided for Mr. Park's involvement in inciting violent acts during the protests. To the contrary, Coalition 4.16 has stated that Mr. Park tried to calm participants during the protests and asked them not to use any violence against authorities.

In addition, since April 2015, six protesters, including Mr. **Hyung-Jae Ham** and Mr. **Hyun-Sik Kim**, two staff members from the People's Committee for the Sewol Tragedy, have been detained and face criminal charges for participating in the Sewol ferry tragedy protests.

Background information

After the Sewol ferry disaster on April 16, 2014, Sewol families and civil society organizations have continuously urged the Government to set up an independent investigatory commission to reveal the truth regarding the Sewol ferry disaster. The People's Committee for the Sewol Ferry Tragedy, together with Sewol families, collected more than 3.5 million individual signatures calling for the enactment of a law to establish an independent and transparent investigation

commission on the Sewol ferry disaster and submitted these signatures to the National Assembly on July 15, 2014.

After the submission, some Sewol families, individual citizens, and human rights defenders including Mr. Lae Goon Park, went on hunger strike, demonstrated overnight in the street, and shaved their heads in protest calling for enactment of a Special Law on Sewol. The Special Law for Seeking Truth of the Sewol Ferry Disaster and Establishing Safer Society (Sewol Special Law) was finally enacted on November 7, 2014.

However, on March 27, 2015, the government announced an enforcement ordinance for the Sewol Special Law which human rights defenders say runs counter to the provisions of the law and risks denying the rights of victims and families to truth and adequate compensation. The members of Coalition 4.16 therefore organised a series of protests to call for the abolishment of the enforcement decree and to commemorate Sewol victims and call for a truly independent and transparent investigation into the tragedy. During the protests in April and May 2015, physical clashes between protesters and police occurred and violence broke out.

Please write an appeal calling upon the South Korean authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Messrs. Lae-Goon Park, Hyung-Jae Ham, Hyun-Sik Kim and all peaceful protesters, and to drop all charges against them as these charges are related solely to their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities

Please end appeals to

Mrs. Park Geun-hye, President of the Republic of Korea,
1 Cheongwadae-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul 110-820, Republic of Korea

Mr. Hwang Kyo-ahn, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, 77-6
Sejongno, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea

**Ambassador : H.E. Ambassador Sunnam Lim; 60 Buckingham Gate,
London SW1E 6AJ**

Suggested letter

I have been informed of the arrest and detention of Messrs Lae Goon Park, Hyung-Jae Ham, and Hyun-Sik Kim

I would urge the immediate and unconditional release of Lae-Goon Park, Hyung-Jae Ham, Hyun-Sik Kim and all peaceful protesters and putting an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against them as well as against all human rights defenders in South-Korea;

Also to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Lae-Goon Park, Hyung-Jae Ham, Hyun-Sik Kim and all peaceful protesters as well as all human rights defenders in South-Korea.

And to conform to the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular:

- Its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;
- it’s Article 5 (a) which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others to meet or assemble peacefully”

Finally I would ask you to ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by South Korea.

I thank you for giving this matter your attention

Yours faithfully or yours respectfully

Please send an appeal on behalf of Ny Chakrya - Cambodia

Ny Chakrya is Head of the Human Rights and Legal Aid Section of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC). ADHOC monitors human rights violations, provides legal assistance to victims of human rights violations - including victims of land disputes - and engages in human rights advocacy.



On 12 May 2015 a press conference was organised by ADHOC's office during which Ny Chakrya condemned the arbitrary arrest and detention of two farmers in Svay Loeu district over their land dispute with an agricultural firm.

On 15 May 2015, the Prosecution office of the Siem Reap Provincial Court published a statement threatening Ny Chakrya that it would initiate legal proceedings against him, alleging that the “provocative comments” made during the press conference jeopardised the effective functioning of the Cambodian judicial institutions and the on-going proceedings in the land dispute.

On 20 May 2015, Ny Chakrya filed a complaint with the President of the Disciplinary Council of the Supreme Council of Magistracy, claiming that the proceedings against the two farmers were not conducted in accordance with fair trial standards because of the lack of independence of the Deputy Prosecutor.

On 1 July 2015 Mr Ny Chakrya was summonsed to appear for questioning before the Deputy Prosecutor of the Phnom Penh Municipal Court on 13 July 2015.

On 19 July 2015, this Deputy Prosecutor decided to refer his file on charges of “public defamation”, “acts of slanderous denunciation”, and “publication of commentaries to put pressure on jurisdiction” to the investigating judge. This judge will conduct judicial investigations in order to decide whether there are sufficient grounds to believe that Ny Chakrya committed the three counts of defamation. The investigating judge has the sole power to formally charge him. Ny Chakrya was not notified by the Deputy Prosecutor that his complaint and evidence had been submitted to the investigating judge but found out from the Cambodian press which had sought information on the progress of his case.

(Acknowledgement for information from The Observatory and The Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development)

PLEASE SEND APPEAL TO

Mr. Hun Sen, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, 41 Russian Federation Blvd, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia.

Email: leewood_phu@nida.gov.kh

Mr. Om Yentieng, Minister & President of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee, Office of the Prime Minister, 41 Russian Federation Blvd, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

His Excellency Mr Meas Kin Heng, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, The Royal Embassy of Cambodia, 64 Brondesbury Park, London NW6 7AT

Suggested letter - Ny Chakrya, Cambodia

I am writing on behalf of Ny Chakrya, Head of the Human Rights and Legal Aid Section of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC).

On 1 July 2015, he received a summons to appear before the Deputy Prosecutor of the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. The summons is in response to public statements made by Mr Ny Chakrya and his colleague, condemning the arrest, detention and torture of two farmers in Svay Loeu district over their land dispute with an agricultural firm. On 19 July his case was referred to an investigating judge on charges of “public defamation”, “acts of slanderous denunciation”, and “publication of commentaries to put pressure on jurisdiction”.

This appears to go against the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular with articles 1, 6c, 9a and 12.2, signed and ratified by the Kingdom of Cambodia.

We would ask your Government to honour these commitments and to drop all charges against Ny Chakrya, which are an attack on his lawful activities as a human rights defender. We would also for the cessation of all forms of harassment, including at the judicial level, against him and other human rights defenders in the country; Yours sincerely *or* Yours respectfully

Remember in your Prayers

Aster Fissehatsion - Eritrea a prisoner of conscience arrested and detained for solely exercising her right to freedom of expression

People trapped between Boko Haram and the military - Nigeria Boko Haram members have murdered thousands of civilians, imprisoned many more, and destroyed their property. Boko Haram fighters have tortured, raped, forced into marriage and recruited children, women and men. At the same time, more than 7,000 people died in military detention facilities from torture, suffocation, and a lack of access to adequate food, water, sanitation facilities and medical assistance. The Nigerian military has arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, who are then detained without access to their families and lawyers and without ever being brought before a court.

Mr Lae- Goon Park, South Korea Mr Park was detained by the Seoul Metropolitan Police in relation to his participation in a series of protests to commemorate Sewol victims and for calling for an independent and transparent investigation into the Sewol Ferry incident.

Ny Chakrya - Cambodia summoned to appear before the Deputy Prosecutor of the Phnom Penh Municipal Court. The summons is in response to public statements made by Mr Ny Chakrya and his colleague, condemning the arrest, detention and torture of two farmers in Svay Loeu district over their land dispute with an agricultural firm. On 19 July his case was referred to an investigating judge on charges of “public defamation”, “acts of slanderous denunciation”, and “publication of commentaries to put pressure on jurisdiction”.

For the tortured:

Lord, for our sake you became the suffering and despised servant, hated by some and rejected. You were beaten, flogged and nailed to a cross for us.

Look with pity, I pray, on all who suffer now the barbarity of the torturer, particularly those whose names we read in these pages. Bring them comfort and relief in their pain, healing of mind and body, and strength of spirit.

Lord, hear my prayer.

For the oppressor and torturer:

Holy Spirit of God, be merciful to the oppressor and the torturer. Grant to them a new heart and a new spirit. Put yourself in them to open their eyes so they may see in their victims the face of Jesus, the Christ.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Amen

European ACAT Conference with FIACAT.2015

Time- June 12th-am.---June 14th pm.

Place- Brussels, at the House of Our Lady of Birdsong! (La Maison Notre-Dame du Chant d'Oiseau.)

Countries represented- France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium and UK.

Your 2 UK representatives were Audrey Wells, (London), and Janet Norwood, (Shropshire), who were offered good rooms, good food and a lovely garden to take breaks in, with many singing birds and parakeets flying round!

Delegates- most were bi- or tri-lingual, with 2 translators for French/English translations. About 33 people participated, including:-

Elisabeth Edland (International Relations Officer of EEAS;(European External Action Service),

Raphael Fisera, (Advisor on Human Rights to a sub-committee of the EU Parliament),

Christine Sidenius, (Policy Advisor on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs in the EU Parliament).

They talked about their roles before we were introduced to the President of FIACAT—Sylvie Bukhari de Pontual.

Saturday 13th—Archbishop Alain Lebeaupain, the Apostolic Nuncio to the EU, and Stefan Kessler of the Jesuit Refugee Service addressed us, this was followed by debates, and then, Lionel Grassy, FIACAT representative to the EU Institutions and the UN in Geneva, and Nicolas Huet, FIACAT representative to the Council of Europe spoke of their roles.

I was impressed by the depth and professionalism of these FIACAT workers.

Sat. pm. Gabriel Nissim, President of ACAT France asked “How to fulfil our Mandate in a Secular Society and translate our commitment into a mutual sharing of values with others?” ---More debating, then later, we met Sabrina Bignier-General Secretary of FIACAT, and Isabelle Detavernier-President of ACAT Belgium, (French speaking).

By Saturday evening, my head was almost spinning with trying to listen and converse in English, French and German! Janet Norwood

This message was received following the Petition about Syrian and Iraqi refugees sent to the Home Office

Matthew Holehouse, in Bratislava

12:30PM BST 19 Jun 2015

Britain will accept several hundred more people fleeing the civil war in Syria, David Cameron has announced. The UK will “modestly expand” a scheme that has taken in under 200 refugees so far, the Prime Minister said.

Last year announced Britain will take around 500 Syrian refugees over three years. Some 187 people have been taken in since that announcement.

Government sources said that will increase "by a few hundred more" after today's announcement.

An estimated nine million Syrians have left their homes due to the civil war.

Three million have fled to neighbouring countries, while the rest are internally displaced in the country.

Together with people fleeing violence in Sudan and Eritrea, they have contributed to a surge in asylum applications in Europe.

Some 184,815 people applied for asylum in the first three months of this year in Europe - an 86 per cent increase on the same period the year before.

Labour has called on the Government to sign up to a UN quota system for Syria. Sweden has accepted some 40,000 Syrians over the course of the crisis, while Germany has pledged to take in 30,000 people.

However, Mr Cameron said that the biggest factor that dictates whether people would attempt to cross the Mediterranean is their treatment once they reach Europe.

He said Britain would seek to emulate a Spanish scheme that returned people who arrived in large numbers on the Canary Islands.

ACAT hands in over 11,000 signatures against torture to the Foreign Ministry

On Monday 29 June, two days before the start of the Luxembourg presidency of the EU Council, a delegation from ACAT¹ handed in to Mr Jean Olinger, Political Affairs Director at the Foreign Ministry, its petition entitled 'Time to take torture seriously', with 11,557 signatures, asking him to forward them to Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn.

This action, intended as an alarm signal to Europe, was launched on 1 May by ACAT-Luxembourg, in cooperation with the ACAT International Federation and a number of European ACATs and with the support of Amnesty International Luxembourg. The campaign reached its climax on 26 June with a solidarity vigil, held to mark the International Day in Support of Torture Victims at the Villa Pauly, Luxembourg's Gestapo headquarters during the war.

Through this petition, ACAT is appealing to the EU Council, under Luxembourg's presidency, to give efforts to promote human dignity, and particularly the fight against torture, the absolute priority they deserve. ACAT is deeply worried that, in view of the current security concerns raised by from terrorist threats, human rights and fundamental freedoms may be relegated to a secondary position. The revelations of recent years regarding the complicity of many European countries in the CIA's interrogation and torture operations have shown the dangers that await our countries in this area.

The petition calls on the Luxembourg presidency of the EU to make every possible effort to ensure that Europe sets an example in the fight against torture, and to bring all the EU's influence to bear on other countries around the world in order to ensure that they comply with the prohibition of torture.

It also calls on the EU Council to provide effective support for programmes for the prevention of torture and the rehabilitation of torture victims, and to guarantee that protection will be provided to all asylum seekers who would be exposed to the risk of torture if they were to return to their countries.

Time to take Torture seriously

Dear friends in the European ACATs,

Monday morning, a small delegation, made up of Patrick Byrne (vice-chairman and initiator of the petition), Bernadette Jung (representing FIACAT) and myself, as chair of ACAT-Luxembourg, had the great pleasure of handing over 11,557 signatures to Jean Olinger, Political Affairs Director at the Luxembourg Foreign Ministry. Minister Jean Asselborn was unable to be present as he was on an official visit to London.

We were warmly received and were able to outline the main points of our petition 'Time to take torture seriously', in particular the need for Europe to show a greater commitment to combating torture during the Luxembourg presidency of the EU Council, which has just opened.

The director assured us of the importance which Luxembourg attaches to the issue and said that a written reply would be sent to us regarding the points raised in the petition.

A press release (attached) was then sent to the media.

We wish to thank all the ACATs very warmly for taking part in our joint action and collecting so many signatures!

Thanks also to FIACAT for encouraging us and supporting the campaign.

Number of signatures collected on paper and online, by country:

Belgium	387
France	96
Germany	2,725
Italy	316
Luxembourg	2,600
Spain	1,740
Switzerland	2,730
UK	57
Other countries	37

Total **11,557**

Patrick Byrne

SOME BIG QUESTIONS.

Because Britain is an island, we can be very insular! Not only in our thinking but in our behaviour and attitudes.

Lionel Grassy, an influential member of our international organisation FIACAT, has written to us about the recent European Neighbourhood Policy consultation and how to enforce it.

He asks specifically for our views as ACAT members on two particular issues:

1. a. The rule of law
 - b. Human rights
 - c. Democracy
2. Migration and the fight against people smuggling and illegal immigration.

These are huge subjects but I feel sure we all have views about them. Without trying to cover them in any depth, I will just give a few thoughts here, hoping to provoke other members to air their opinions and suggestions.

1.a. On the rule of law we in this country tend to take it as read. With a judicial system said to be the envy of the world, we trust the judges and advocates and their decisions, even though we may not agree with them! At least they were arrived at fairly, having heard evidence from both sides. How important those things are, and yet so many countries have little idea of what a fair trial is, untainted by political or other outside interests.

So often, in the appeals we receive, one of the complaints is that the defendant was not allowed to give his evidence, or could not be represented by a lawyer, or the defence were not allowed to know what the prosecution's case was. It may also be that the judge had clearly made up his/her mind about the defendant's guilt before hearing the evidence. Clear evidence of torture of the defendant leading to a 'confession' is often dismissed. These breaches are basic elements of the rule of law that we should be aware of and therefore campaign against.

1.b. Human rights and the failure to uphold them in many countries go hand-in-hand with the rule of law. One is the counterpart of the other. Again, many appeals we receive clearly show a failure to uphold people's human rights. They are arrested and detained at the whim of the security forces, often tortured, with the authorities refusing to tell their families their whereabouts.

Anything our writing appeals can do to help this dire situation is time and effort well spent.

1.c. Democracy is again a truth we take for granted. Yet, how many countries have very little idea of what the word means, let alone know how to practise it? One of the biggest factors in governments understanding democracy is education. Without education, very often those living in developing countries can have little idea of what is going on in other parts of the world and how other countries are run.

But it is a slow job. Leaders with absolute power do not give it up willingly or quickly. They will and do fight to retain it. It takes years, very often, to change the government of a country from rule by a dictator to rule by the people. It may, of course, be hastened by physical and military revolution or a coup d'état, which in turn may lead not to democracy but to another form of despotism.

I firmly believe our appeals written to Presidents and Ministers of Justice can encourage the democratic process. It may be slow, but it is in the right direction.

2. The desire of people to leave their own country and face a perilous journey across the sea in an overcrowded boat is something of a recent phenomenon. It is a form of torture because the 'boat people' are fleeing a poor, corrupt and often lawless country in the hope of finding a better life across the water. We may well understand something of this, but cannot justify the actions of the 'people smugglers' making money out of their countrymen's agony.

How to stop it? we are asked. Obviously, one answer is to find the smugglers, arrest and try them and, if guilty, punish them. Much easier said than done! Meanwhile, it is argued that by rescuing the 'boat people' on their dangerous journey, the European countries are encouraging others to attempt the crossing.

The answer is at least two-fold: one immediate, the other long-term.

- a. Find and arrest the ‘people smugglers’.
- b. Try to influence the governments of the countries from which the people are fleeing to change their policies, end corruption and become more democratic, acknowledging human rights and the rule of law. This is a huge and on-going task. Some would say it is an impossible one. But I believe each of the appeals we write moves the recipients just a little towards those aims.

So, we must keep praying, keep writing and keep campaigning.

Richard Dent.

SURPRISE? SURPRISE!

Some surprises are good. Some are bad.

You may have read recently what I would describe as a good surprise. The little-known (in the UK at least) former president of Chad, Hissene Habre, charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture, has been arrested in Dakar, Senegal, and will face trial in September.

It is ‘an event of historic importancefor a whole continent and beyond’ said the newspaper. ‘A major step for international justice’. For over twenty years those people who suffered under Habre’s rule have worked to put together a legal case against him, when his torture and other crimes can be examined by an African court, not a western-based one.

During Hissene Hebre’s regime there was much systematic torture, killing and thousands of arbitrary arrests. More than 40,000 people are said to have suffered his abuse.

So, although his appearance before a Court of law is indeed a surprise, it is a very good surprise, with, hopefully, an honest and just outcome.

Richard Dent.

The Purpose of Torture is Torture

[George Orwell - 1984]

A couple of weeks ago reports started to appear in the press concerning the independent review in the USA of the work of Psychologists and other medical professionals involved in the post 9/11 torture.

For more than a decade, the American Psychological Association (APA) has maintained that a strict code of ethics prohibits its more than 130,000 members to aid in the torture of detainees while simultaneously permitting involvement in military and intelligence interrogations. The group has rejected media reporting on psychologists' complicity in torture; suppressed internal dissent from anti-torture doctors; cleared members of wrongdoing; and portrayed itself as a consistent ally against abuse.

However, a large independent review conducted by a former assistant US attorney, David Hoffman, undermines the APA's denials in full - and vindicates the dissenters.

Members of ACAT wishing to follow this further in detail will find much to cause concern by reading the articles in The UK Guardian, Vanity Fair, Democracy Now, and the Intercept [all these latter American publications]

The latest revelations from the APA report are only a partial accounting of the scope of the US government's torture programme. Even the intricacies of how CIA and DOD [Department of Defense] gained control of policy making at the APA remain murky. The scale of US torture, especially at CIA black sites, for which there is still no accounting of the names and fates of prisoners, remains unknown. Only a small percentage of the recent Senate report on CIA torture has been released. Only a tiny number of the photographs and videotapes of torture at Guantanamo, Iraq, Afghanistan and the archipelago of CIA black sites have been released.

But the devastating effects of US torture persist. Prisoners were injured; most, by the government's own reckoning, were innocent or ignorant. Government personnel who tortured were traumatized. The United States destroyed a 60-year framework of international law against torture when it asserted that "national emergency" and "executive order" could void the laws against torture - a view that is sweet music to dictators around the world. And because of the APA's collusion with the government and the lack of accountability for doctors who assisted with torture, the credibility of the United States medical and psychological associations' challenges against colleagues who torture in other countries has been destroyed by unwillingness to convict, de-license or even censure torture the United States' torture clinicians. The ability of United States medical and psychological associations to speak on behalf of the simple proposition "do no harm" has been silenced by the APA's silent, shameful complicity with torture.

And so what do we actually think torture is, and as Christians what is to be our response? It is quite difficult to find any information on the official position of Christian churches in the country in respect of torture. Much of the information concerning a Christian understanding of torture is to be found on sites like our own or ones linked to us.

However one notable exception is one of our Patrons - Bishop Declan Lang, who as Chair of the Catholic Bishops Conference Department for International Affairs gave his backing to our worldwide prayer vigil on June 26 just gone.

The vigil coincides with the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

Encouraging Catholics to take part, Bishop Declan stated:

"Torture is among the ultimate violations of human dignity and has no place in our world. Yet countless numbers of people are being tortured or living with the effects every single day.

I hope that Catholics throughout England and Wales will stand in solidarity with them by taking part in the Action By Christians Against Torture vigil - either through an organized event or an individual prayer."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is equally forthright when it says in Para **2297** *Kidnapping* and *Hostage Taking* bring on a reign of terror; by means of threats they subject their victims to intolerable pressures. They are morally wrong. *Terrorism* threatens, wounds, and kills indiscriminately; it is gravely against justice and charity. *Torture* which uses physical or moral violence to extract confessions, punish the guilty, frighten opponents or satisfy hatred, is contrary to respect for the person and for human dignity.

As Christians we must always be mindful of the precept - “The second commandment is namely this - You shall love your neighbour as yourself”

Peter Dixon

Freedom from Torture - an Open Day

Friday 10th July seemed set to be a beautiful summer day. But I was heading for the West Midlands Freedom from Torture Open Day held in their Birmingham Centre. 2015 marks the 30th anniversary of the start of their work (formerly The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture). Susan Munroe their CEO started by telling us a little about their work.

There are 5 Centres in the UK; clients are so widely dispersed it can be difficult for them to access a centre. In 2014 1272 clients were seen and many services were delivered by volunteers but this represents only 1/5 of the people needing help. It was expected that in 10 years time there would be more conflict in the world, more people on the move and more people being tortured. Freedom from Torture’s first aspiration is to support many more victims including those who cannot get to the UK such as those in UNHCR refugee camps.

Research shows that 20% of people in the UK think that torture is in order in certain circumstances and Freedom from Torture would like to reduce this number (I’m sure ACAT members would concur).

Andy Keefe Director of Clinical Services talked of article 5 of the Human Rights Act (All have the right to freedom from torture) and that survivors have the right to rehabilitation. FFT adopt a multidisciplinary, holistic approach and that the narrative phase of treatment is especially important. As torture has an isolating effect, social groups, e.g. playing football, are important. We learnt that about 450 referrals come from the NHS and these are people with complex psycho social needs.

Several Clients from various countries spoke to us all attesting to the help which they had received from FFT. A group of women entitled their presentation 'I am a woman' and their pride in their new found self confidence was palpable. A survivor who is now a Trustee emphasised the importance of ensuring that survivor's voices are heard.

Mark Jones, a Human Rights Lawyer talked of the impact on clients of less legal aid being available. And there is a decrease in the quality of reports on asylum seekers but such reports can be challenged. He felt there was scope for training in the tribunal service so that the quality of decision making could improve.

We were offered a delicious lunch. Equally important was the session where we were handed an almost blank sheet of paper headed "How to look after myself", with sections on "What you could do" and "What others could do". When having contact (in any way) with distressing situations, we need protection. These sections helped to identify some helpful measures. I imagine that for many ACAT members prayer would be a prime factor.

The day ended fairly loudly with a drumming session. It is being explored whether such activity might be helpful to clients.

In mid afternoon, when we left the meeting the day was still lovely, perhaps enhanced by the realisation that, although torture is so ugly, the rehabilitation and restoration of survivors can be beautiful. ACAT hopes that one day its work and that of FFT will be finalised.

Elizabeth Leicester

**AGM and Conference Saturday 10th October
Broadmead Baptist Church, Union St, Bristol**

Start: 10.30 for 11.00

Bring lunch although drinks will be available.

**Morning will be the AGM where we elect new members for the
Committee**

Afternoon speaker: David Fulton on his experiences in prison
where he was tortured and ill treated for some years

There will be a time of worship and remembering those who are
ill treated and tortured.

**PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO COME we need to elect new
committee members and a New Chairman plus we would like a
really good audience for David Fulton**

MEDITATION

In his book 'Meditation --- A Foundation Course' Barry Long says 'the purpose of meditation is to find the stillness within you'. He also says 'Meditation is destructive----it gradually dissolves the false in you and the false you think you are, but are not'.

But this is not an article about only ourselves and undoubtedly, the falseness that lies within each of us. Our meditation has to be linked to the falseness and evil in the minds of people who perpetuate torture and cruelty.

This is a big jump, a huge link. How can we do this?

I believe we start by ourselves being still. Sitting, breathing, and being. At ease and yet aware of a presence, the vital spiritual side of our nature: the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The spirit will then guide us in our silence, our stillness, and show the way to meditate on the desire of some people to inflict pain and suffering on their fellow humans.

So, please stop reading this NOW. Relax, be still and wait for the spirit's prompting.

After a while (and don't be in a hurry) allow your mind not only to contemplate the evils of torture and those who practise it, but also, in line with the purposes of our charity, how best to work to eradicate it.

Don't force yourself necessarily to think of methods and actions at this stage. Just allow the Holy Spirit to plant a single idea in your mind. This may well take time. It may not happen at all. But, if we persist in our quest for stillness, and allow a pathway for access of the Holy Spirit to open up within us, ideas will come.

Then we can act on those ideas. We may already do a lot to further the aims of ACAT. We may do very little, because of age, disability or lack of confidence. Again, the Holy Spirit will guide and empower.

But it all begins with stillness of body and mind. Prayer is, of course, a great help. Action will follow--- action which will, if enough people are moved to respond, eventually see a world without torture.

RD.

PRAYERS.

For a pathway:

Holy Spirit of God, lover of all people, the good and the bad, encourage us to allow a pathway for your power and presence in our lives.

May we meditate upon your beauty and your goodness? Fill us with yourself so we may know something of the quality of eternal life and your purpose for the world.

Lord hear my prayer.

For the oppressed:

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to set at liberty those who are oppressed. We do not understand why so many are forced to live under tyranny and fear. Bless, strengthen and release those whose lives are so often ruined by the cold ambition and greed of the powerful and the heartless. Help us to feel with them in their situations, to learn of their bravery and also their faith.

Lord hear my prayer.

OUR FATHER-----

‘In every way and in every day blossom where you are planted.’

We prayer further

The old mnemonic A C T S for the practice of prayer still holds good.

A is for ADORATION. Lord God, beyond all we can imagine, whose nature is total Love: We ADORE your Majesty and your unfathomable Glory. You create and sustain all life; You have placed within us the capacity to appreciate Beauty; You have given us a desire to Worship you;

Lord God, we lift our spirits to you, the giver of Good and the Lover of all

LORD WE ADORE YOU

C is for CONFESSION Compared to your perfection, O Lord, we are puny. As humans, we have your image implanted in us, yet we so often distort that image with our waywardness, with our desire for power, with our insensitivity to one another. FORGIVE us Lord, and help us climb the hill to goodness and love, Love for you and for one another.

LORD WE CONFESS;

T is for THANKSGIVING

THANK YOU, GOD, for your very self; for the gift of Your Son, Jesus, the Christ; For His Resurrection to New Life, which we can share. From your nature comes Beauty, thank you Lord

From your nature comes Goodness, thank you Lord; from your nature comes Love, thank you Lord. For your world, of which we are merely tenants, thanks for our fellow humans, who are brothers and sisters, thanks. For our experience of You, and for our faith, thanks.

LORD WE GIVE THANKS

S is for SUPPLICATION Father and Mother eternal, we seek your PEACE for all people. Bring peace to your world, bring reconciliation to the nations, bring love and life to the tortured, the lost and the hungry, so that we may reflect your light into the darkest corners and be beacons of HOPE to all who suffer.

WE ASK YOU LORD

A final Thought '

Whatever you think the impact of your work may be, it will always be greater than you can imagine ❖
Syrian former prisoner of conscience and poet,
Faraq Ahmad Birqdar

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:-

The ACAT (UK) Office
c/o 19 The Square,
Knowle Park,
Bristol, BS4 2ST

Contact Phone numbers:

Margaret Russell (Chairman)
0117 9710379

By 16th September 2015

Ray Dunnett (Treasurer)
01483 273544

President: *Reverend Dry Paul Oestreicher*

Patrons: *Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Rt Rev Declan Lang, Rt Rev Peter Wheatley, Professor Lord David Alton, Rev Dr David Deeks, Rev Dr David Cornick*

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