



action by

Christians

against

torture

December 2007/ January 2008

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and some other matters!



Chairman's Letter

Dear friends,

Like all of you I am always saddened at the news these days, because it seems there is never anything good. Even the local stuff is horrific and every day seems to bring to the fore the news of the discovery of some unfortunate person's murdered body. Recently, listening to the television presenter telling about one of these discoveries, I was intrigued to hear him say something like, "There will be special services of prayer for..."

Prayer meetings are never crowd pullers. If you walked past two identical venues and if outside one there was a notice saying "prayer meeting" and outside the other was a notice saying "car boot sale", which do you think would be the most popular? Are prayer meetings so strange that people never attend them, or that when they happen for specific reasons they need newscasters to tell the world, with incredulous expressions, that they are taking place?

When I first heard the news that a "special service with prayers" was to be held I couldn't believe it. Surely, I thought, all services have prayers. Why make such a big deal about the fact that prayers are being said?

But sadly it's true.

In the New Testament there is a very strong connection between prayer and action. Jesus himself taught that there was no use in praying for a hungry person if you weren't going to do anything about feeding him. In other words, "You can't eat prayer!"

So for us today there is a strong connection between the thinking and the doing, the prayer and the action. Sadly, today there are still many Churches that not only *do* nothing for those who are being tortured but also don't pray for them either. It is my hope and prayer that by the end of 2008 we shall get every church in the UK to be aware of ACAT and of the need to *pray and act* on behalf of all who are tortured today.

This December Newsletter comes naturally at the beginning of Advent, a time of preparation to remember the coming of Christ. The Christmas story reminds us that God didn't just *think* we were worth doing something for, he actually *came* in person and *did it*. It also reminds us that God has a high regard for humanity - high enough to become flesh himself. As Jesus taught his disciples (John 13) "As I have done it to you so you must do it to others," so it is impossible for anyone who calls him-herself "Christian" not to be proactive in the 'caring for others' campaign, in which 'anti-torture' features highly.

A few years ago I came across this humorous Christmas riddle; "What do you call Santa's little helpers?" The answer was "subordinate clauses"! As we remember the many who are subordinate to the whims and sadism of others, so may we be obedient and subordinate to the will of God, and as willing instruments in his hand may we be the means by which peace and security are achieved on earth, for the benefit of others and to the glory of his Holy name.

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Tom Bayliss

Christmas Appeal 2007

Dear friends,

Christmas is the time of year when charities make impassioned tugs on your heart strings for worthy causes that are in need of funding. This year we too are asking, whether or not you have anything to spare for ACAT. We are grateful for all the support we already receive and we hesitate to ask our generous members and friends for yet more assistance, (we know you can 'go to the well' too often) - however, there is a reason.

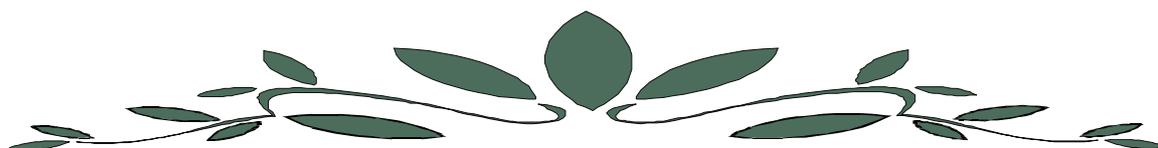
None of us are getting any younger! One of the concerns we have as a committee is for the future of ACAT, as an organisation and as a Committee. One of the things we should like to see happen this year is a new initiative aimed at encouraging young people in schools, colleges and universities to take an active and positive interest in human rights, and particularly in what we do as ACAT through prayer, appeals, campaigns etc.

Our hope is to launch "YACHT" - Youth Against Cruelty, Hatred and Torture, as something specifically provided for young people. Whether or not it happens depends very much on finding the right person/people to drive it and in having the funding to back it.

Please consider the future of ACAT and the presents and futures of all those for whom we pray and work and send your donations to us here at the ACAT Office.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas and every blessing for the new year.

Tom Bayliss



WELCOME!

Tom Bayliss, Chairman and members of the Committee welcome new members who have joined ACAT over recent weeks and two new groups - Melrose and Wayside Justice, Peace and Human Rights Group. We look forward to their taking an active part in our campaigning and in prayer for the victims of torture. We welcome comments, and also items for the Newsletters - from members and groups. We would also be pleased to hear what members, churches or groups did to publicise the Greetings Card Campaign. Do let us know?

Leaflets, other publicity and worship materials are available from the office without charge, together with a set of 7 articles on various aspects of torture

ACAT COMMITTEE - 2007-2008

The following were elected to serve on the Committee at the AGM in October

Chairman -	Rev Tom Bayliss	Membership Secretary -	Margaret Russell
Hon Secretary -	Eleanor Newland	Information Officer -	Terry Newland
Hon Treasurer	Ray Dunnnett	SOS Torture Co-ordinator -	Brother Anselm
Prisoner Support	Co-ordinator - Ken Watson		
Ex officio -	Kevin Burr (RCJustice & Peace)		
Rev Richard Dent			

Richard Dent resigned as Publicity and Development Officer; he had served for about 10 years. Margaret Russell also resigned as Hon Treasurer a position she had held for 3 years. They are owed a great debt of gratitude for their work on behalf of ACAT and its membership. We welcome Ray Dunnnett as the new ACAT Treasurer.

The Annual Report and Accounts were presented and accepted at the AGM on October 13th. Copies are available from the office - 8 Southfield, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 4LX - for £1.50.

The AGM and Conference, held in Bristol, were, as in recent years very poorly attended; there was barely a quorum. This was disappointing, particularly as the two speakers, Craig Murray, former Ambassador to Uzbekistan, and Andrew Hogg, publicity officer for the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, had been chosen in the hope of attracting a wider audience.

The Committee discussed the AGM and Conference at length at its last meeting and would like members to give their views. Where would you like the meeting to be held? Would you attend if there was a change of venue? If it was held at a different time of the year? In the recent past the AGM has been held in Oxford, London and for several years in Bristol in September or October. For a number of years in the past it was held in March or June for instance. Are there other reasons you do not attend apart from the venue? Do let us know.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS AND GROUPS

There is little "official" information from members or groups for this Newsletter, but we know that a number of groups and individuals planned on getting their local churches to take part in the Greetings Card Campaign - a number for the first time.

Churches in Saltash took part in the Campaign. The Wesley Church also asked for an article about ACAT for its circuit magazine.

One new group - Wayside Justice, Peace and Human Rights worked very hard to send out the Lists to 120 congregations in their diocese in the Midlands. This was quite an achievement!

Please send in details of your experiences with this Campaign.

Saltash ACAT Group also asked the minister at St Stephens Church for a service to mark World Day of Prayer for Peace. He agreed and produced an excellent service. ACAT wrote the numerous petitions, which were read by members of the congregation. Candles were light on a cross made of foil. This was very moving and evocative, made more so by leaving the candles alight until we were ready to leave the church after coffee had been served.

What about holding such a service next year - in September? We will give the date nearer the time.

CONFERENCE REPORT

1) ANDREW HOGG

Andrew Hogg opened his talk by stating that there was a fundamental moral crisis in the developed world. Since 9/11 there had been a steady erosion of the statutes, conventions etc relating to torture which had resulted in the idea that torture was not now beyond the pale. Certain academics and others were putting forward the concept that while abhorrent, the use of torture was possibly acceptable in certain circumstances. There had been creeping changes in the way that violence, extreme violence and torture were now portrayed in certain TV programmes, reflecting what we now see in the real world since 9/11. He stated that the ban on torture must be absolute.

He related how Helen Bamber, working among the survivors of the Belsen concentration camp at the end of World War 2, had witnessed how quickly compassion can change to apathy and irritation and how governments were not prepared to open their doors to victims. This attitude was still very prevalent in the manner in which asylum seekers are treated by officials in the UK. She had also learned the importance of listening to those close to death at Belsen who wanted to tell her of their experiences and to ask her to be a witness to the truth. This was one of the key tenets of the Medical Foundation in its work.

He spoke of the work done from the late 1960's onwards by the Amnesty's Medical Group concerning refugees from the repressive regimes in Latin America and the setting up of the Medical Foundation by Helen Bamber in the mid 1980's when it was realised that a specialist service was needed to help victims of torture. Practical help is given - medical and psychological care, legal advice, limited financial help. Treatment is wide ranging and appropriate and includes - counselling, intense psycho-therapy, group therapy; there are also art projects and gardening schemes, among others. For many victims of torture group therapy can be life enhancing - victims so often are filled with shame, especially rape victims, and have a deep sense of isolation, which can be lifted when they learn that they are not alone and that their fears and distress can be alleviated.

Over 2,000 new arrivals are seen each year, together with about the same number of "old" clients. At the moment there are large numbers from the Middle East and Africa. The Medical Foundation, based in London, has in recent years opened centres in three other cities- among them Newcastle and Glasgow. He mentioned the problems young teenage asylum seekers face when they have no valid birth certificates and the authorities give them a higher age than they should. There are now schemes in place for their dispersal, which results in disruption of education, the loss of recently acquired friends and neighbourhoods and an increase in dislocation and loneliness. In addition, once children reach the age of 18, they are at risk of deportation back to their home countries. There was real concern about the treatment of children and teenage asylum seekers by the authorities. He also spoke of the adverse effects of the use of detention and stressed that in his opinion it should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

2) CRAIG MURRAY

Craig Murray became Ambassador to Uzbekistan in 2002 and was relieved of his post in 2004.

UZBEKISTAN - THE COUNTRY

He gave brief details of the history of the country which had been part of the old Soviet Union. It was ruled by President Karimov (he has since died) a dictator of the worst kind running a totalitarian state. There was a cult of the Leader. No opposition parties were allowed, there was no free media and in effect no freedom of expression, the economy was totally controlled, there were extreme restrictions on religious groups. Many Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptists and other Christians were in prison. PEN reported that there were more Uzbek writers in prison than anywhere else in the world. Very few people or groups had access to news, especially news from abroad. The people lived in a police state where there were vast numbers of armed and unarmed police together with huge forces

belonging to the ministry of the interior; these were totally out of all proportion to the numbers in the population. He gained the impression that most lived in fear.

Great numbers lived as virtual slaves on the cotton farms; they were paid slave wages, lived in appalling conditions and were not allowed to leave the farms. Cotton was the main source of income for the state. He went to look for himself causing consternation. He said that the conditions were worse than he had experienced when he had worked in Ghana.

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

It was estimated that there were at least 8,000 prisoners of conscience in Uzbekistan, held under conditions of terrible degradation and suffering. He had learned of the trial of supposed El Qaida cell members and went to find out what was happening. This was something that no Ambassador had ever done. It horrified him - he said it was like one of Stalin's show trials with the inevitable verdict. When his actions became known he was given information about many examples of human rights abuses by certain people, who saw him as giving them a glimmer of hope in the darkness. They gave him photographs of a dead man, who had been boiled alive - this hit the headlines in the UK at the time; he was also given details of instances where prisoners had arms or legs immersed in boiling water. He sent the photographs of the dead man off to the University of Glasgow for analysis,, where the findings were verified.

This particular action hit the headlines here and caused great agitation at the Foreign Office. He also detailed the appalling scale of human rights abuses and the use of torture, including rape, suffocation, drowning and other sadistic methods. The United Nations and the European Union sent rapporteurs on torture to Uzbekistan in 2003 who reported that torture was widespread and systematic.

BRITISH POLICY

He considered the British Government, in its dealings with Uzbekistan, was concerned only with global security and the security of the vast supplies of oil and gas. He had been told this in the briefing he received before setting out for Uzbekistan. The "Great Game" was still being played in that the importance of securing a pipeline out of Central Asia, by-passing Russia was stressed. His concerns regarding human rights abuses, torture and the rendition to Uzbekistan of over 60 supposed terror suspects did not feature in the Government's scheme of things.

TORTURE AND THE WAR ON TERROR

He spoke of the manner in which the use of torture in countries such as Uzbekistan is being used to further the battle against terrorism in our country and others in the West. Victims of torture in Uzbekistan confess to being part in non-existent terrorist plots and implicate their relatives and colleagues; they in turn are arrested and tortured and in turn confess to taking part in non-existent plots. Information is passed to UK and US intelligence services, who accept it as bona fide even though they are aware of the manner in which the information has been obtained and that most will not relate to any actual terrorist attacks.

From Terry Newland, Editor - I think extracts from the final paragraphs of Craig Murray's book, Murder in Samarkand, sum up where he stands and where we should all stand in the battle against torture.

"If you achieve a voice that will be heard, you should use it to speak up for the voiceless and the oppressed. If you possess any power or authority, you must strive to use it to help and to empower the powerless.

When I learned of men, women and children being tortured, I had no doubt that the only and overriding duty of any representative of the British people must be to stop it. Governments must have some principles of conduct and not torturing people is a fundamental one. For me, this came before my personal career."

It is important to remember that we are not powerless - we have freedom of expression and freedom of speech - we, each of us, has a powerful voice

TO REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

RUEL MUNASQUE, PHILIPPINES, Christian community worker, leader of the Christian Youth Fellowship and a community development worker for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, was abducted by soldiers on Mindanao Island in October with a friend, who was later released; Ruel's sister had a phone call from a soldier to say the military was holding him and she spoke briefly to him but since then she has not been able to find out where he is held or if he is still alive. Enforced disappearances have increased over recent years.

MOHIT RAM, NEPAL, 30, house painter, arrested on 29 October and charged with a robbery, to which he confessed; he was interrogated, beaten and tortured for almost 4 days at the Morang police station; he is still in detention in the station.

MARYAM HOSSEINKHAH, IRAN, member of the Women's Cultural Centre and leading women's rights activist in the "One Million Signatures" petition campaign, arrested on November 18 and sent to Evin Prison having been charged with "publication of lies", "disruption of public opinion" and "propaganda against the state".

MOHAMMAD BSHARAT, ISRAEL, Executive Director of Nafha Society for the Defence of Prisoners and Human Rights in Nablus, a Palestinian, arrested at the beginning of August and given an administrative detention order of 6 months (these are often renewed several times) on 26 August; he is held in Ketziot Prison, Nablus; he has not been charged or tried.

PASTOR OQBAMICHAEL, ERITREA, senior leader of the Kale Hiwot Church(Word of Life), was arrested for the third time in 5 years in Asmara at the beginning of August; he suffered a severe breakdown during one period of imprisonment when he was held in solitary confinement, and subjected to hard labour and other forms of ill-treatment so there is great concern for him; his youngest son, HURUI, was arrested in 2006 and is held in Sawa. Please pray for them and the many, many other Christians held under appalling conditions in Eritrea.

It had been intended that the case of Pastor Oqbamichael should have been featured in this Newsletter but according to the most recent information some prisoners have been given more severe treatment as a result of appeals (Release International)

JIHAD MSOTI, SYRIA, member of the Al-Atassi Forum(a human rights group), arrested on November 1, at Damascus Airport, held for 2 days - he was going to Egypt for a workshop run by the International Federation of Human Rights; other human rights defenders were also prevented from leaving Syria to attend that meeting and another in Jordan, although not arrested; they are key figures in the fight for human rights and also in the defence of those arrested and tortured."

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

*Saviour of the world, born in a stable at Bethlehem,
we celebrate your birth, safe with our families and friends
in the warmth and security of our homes.*

*Grant that in the midst of our joy, we may not forget those
who are imprisoned, tortured and suffering great anguish and pain.*

*Help us to lift up to you those who live in fear of the knock
on the door, the abduction in the street, or the assassin's bullet.*

*May we stand alongside them in their suffering and fear and in
the suffering of their families.*

*Comfort them with the knowledge that they are remembered and
that nothing can separate them from your love .Amen*

APPEALS FOR DECEMBER 2007

The full edition of this newsletter carries details of 5 appeals. These appeals are asked for on behalf of those whose names appear on page 7 under the heading "to remember in your prayers."

Full details of cases, addresses of those to write to and sample appeal letters are available in the full newsletter, which is sent by post or email to subscribing members and groups.

If you would like to join ACAT and share in this part of our valuable work please contact us. Details of how to do this are on the website and on the last page of this Newsletter.

EXTRACT FROM THE PROLOGUE TO THE TESTIMONY OF GUANTANAMO DETAINEE, JUMAH AL-DOSSARI

“What I have seen is a huge tragedy. The enormous horrors that my eyes have seen have and continue to see renew my anxiety and pain and my very being and feelings are shaken at the mere thought or flash of them in my memory. How can my heart forget them and how can my soul who bore these horrors continue with life? As I hold my pen, my hand is shaking. How will I write about these horrors and must I swallow the bitter lump that forms in my throat when I remember them? I wish my memories and my thoughts could be forgotten. But for me there is lifelong evidence of what happened to me in my wounds, my afflictions, my pain and my sadness. I am writing a story that has no end. I am writing about the suffering I have sustained for months and years. From here, from behind the walls of these dreadful cells, I am writing these lines about the part of my life that has come to pass and which is still continuing in American detention camps; lines about humiliation, indignity, oppression, deprivation and attacks on my religion, my person, my dignity and my humanity, all in the name of fighting terror. I am writing for those who will read my words. I am writing the story of what I have suffered from the day I was kidnapped on the Pakistani border and sold to American troops until now and my being in Guantanamo.”

Jumah al-Dossari, a Bahraini businessman, was seized in Pakistan in late 2001, held for weeks under appalling conditions and then sold to US agents. He was taken by airplane, shackled, blindfolded and chained, to Kandahar airbase in Afghanistan, where he was tortured, humiliated, beaten and kicked and subjected to every kind of abuse. He was transferred to Guantanamo in January 2002, where he is still held. His Testimony is 22 A4 pages of close print. It is a truly horrifying story that made for very difficult reading.

URGENT PLEA - ACAT(ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY)

This Campaign, which is non-charitable and a separate entity from ACAT (UK), was discussed by the Committee at its November meeting. ACAT (Abolition of the Death Penalty) is affiliated to FIACAT (the International Federation of ACAT's) as is ACAT (UK). Because of charity law, it was set up as a separate body. Eleanor Newland has run this campaign for several years but is unable to do it justice because of pressure of other work. Too few urgent actions are sent out or individual cases taken up.

There is an urgent need for a committed co-ordinator to take on this campaign - he or she would not necessarily have to be a member of the Committee. The work would involve sending out information on cases to members who have opted into this campaign, writing information articles for the Newsletters and recruiting more members. At present very few belong.

The campaign against the death penalty is very much part of the mandate of FIACAT. The death penalty is considered the ultimate in cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment - in effect torture! The battle for the abolition of the death penalty throughout the world has changed over the last few years - there are signs that the tide has turned. A resolution calling for a moratorium on executions has just been adopted by the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. This is good news!

If you are interested in this running this campaign, please contact Eleanor Newland - details on back of Newsletter. It is also important that more members are recruited to join this campaign. Because it is a separate campaign, those interested in joining and taking up urgent action cases should contact the office and opt in.

EXTRACTS FROM AN ARTICLE IN THE GUARDIAN, 13TH NOVEMBER BY ONE OF OUR PATRONS, ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

(This was written to coincide with the UN debate)

I have experienced the horror of being close to an execution. Not only during the apartheid era of South Africa when the country had one of the highest execution rates in the world but in other countries as well.

And I have witnessed the victims of the death penalty the authorities never speak of - the families of those put to death. I remember the parents of Napoleon Beazley, a young African-American man put to death in Texas after a trial tainted by racism. The pain was evident as the killing of the state to which they paid taxes approached. I can only imagine the unbearable emotional pain they went through as they said their final goodbye to their son on the day of his execution.

It is often asked by those favouring the death penalty: "What if your child was murdered?" And it is a natural question. Rage is a common reaction to the homicide of a loved one and a wish for revenge is understandable. But what if the person condemned to death was your son? No one raised a child to be a murderer, yet many parents suffer the grief of knowing that their child is to be killed. In 1988, the parents of those killed on death row in South Africa wrote to the president saying: "To be a mother or father and watch your child going through this living hell is a torment more painful than anyone can imagine.". We must not put these children to death. It is to inflict horrific and unacceptable suffering upon them and their mothers and fathers.

Retribution, resentment, and revenge have left us with a world soaked in the blood of far too many of our sisters and brothers. The death penalty is part of that process. It says that to kill in certain circumstances is acceptable, and encourages the doctrine of revenge. If we are to break these cycles, we must remove government-sanctioned violence.

The time has come to abolish the death penalty worldwide. The case for abolition becomes more compelling with each passing year. Everywhere experience shows us that executions brutalise both those involved in the process and the society that carries them out. In country after country, it is used against the poor or against racial or ethnic minorities. It is often used as a tool of political repression. It is imposed and inflicted arbitrarily. It is an irrevocable punishment, resulting inevitably in the execution of people innocent of any crime. It is a violation of fundamental human rights.

NO RELEASE BUT STILL GOOD NEWS!

There was an appeal in the October/November for Mansour Ossenlu, Iran, the Tehran bus drivers' leader, held in Evin Prison. He was in urgent need of eye surgery to prevent blindness, but the prison authorities refused to allow this. Appeals were launched and more than 10,000 messages arrived. He finally underwent eye surgery in Tehran Hospital and was then returned to Evin prison. Continue to pray for his release.

PLEASE NOTE

Should you have queries or comments about appeal cases and Christmas card replies or replies from governments, speak or write to Eleanor Newland. The addresses (e-mail & postal and the phone) are on the back cover.

PRISONER SUPPORT NOTES

In the last Newsletter Ken Watson, the Co-ordinator, set out the problems which had arisen concerning the sending of funds to prisoners in Zambia. First of all, Father Bohan did not return to Kabwe until the beginning of August and then did not have a list of prisoners who were being or had been moved. Efforts were made to find suitable contacts who would be prepared to pass funds on to named prisoners in prisons such as Kitwe. Eventually he obtained the name of a minister through Penwork Ministries; he has agreed to carry out this important mission for prisoners in Kitwe. In the meantime Ken sent a list of names of men for whom donations had been received and Father Bohan reported back on those who had been transferred. The transfer of prisoners from Kabwe has now been halted for the time being; this has eased the situation for Ken somewhat.

Ken had intended that the funds would be transferred to Zambia by the 1st December, the date on which he was booked to go on holiday. In addition to all the confusion and problems associated with the movement of prisoners, there have now been minor difficulties over the sending of the bank transfers, concerning the signatories on the transfers and their verification - banks are now very careful to vet all transfers to Africa apparently. The transfers should now be on their way to Zambia by 10th December.

We realise that many donors have written telling their friends that donations were on the way to them and that both donors and prisoners will be disappointed that the money will be later than expected. While we apologise for all the problems which have arisen over the past months, they were not of Ken or ACAT's making. Ken has worked very hard over many months to sort out all the difficulties and problems, and also to ensure that funds could be sent safely to Kitwe. His work as co-ordinator of the Prisoner Support Scheme involves considerable stress and great responsibility. He has done sterling work! (excuse the pun)

At the recent ACAT Committee there was a discussion on the frequency of money transfers to Zambia. Ken gave details of the cost of sending funds - these are now very high and will be doubled by the fact that now funds will be sent to Kitwe as well as Kabwe. Ken proposed that money transfers should be made twice a year - in May and November. This was accepted by the Committee.

Eleanor Newland

SOS TORTURE

Brother Anselm, is looking for more members to join this campaign. This is a campaign similar, although much smaller, than Amnesty's Urgent Actions. Cases are obtained from OMCT (Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture), and The Observatory (which takes up cases of human rights defenders), both based in Geneva. Cases for the Newsletters have been received sometime prior to their being taken up by members - these are usually on going cases. Cases from SOS Torture however, are received and distributed very quickly. Each member decides how many cases they are prepared to take up. Those who take part in this work can make a real difference -someone's life can depend on enough people responding without delay.

Do think very carefully about joining this campaign. It is a vitally important work. You can write in to the office with your details and email if you have one and they will be passed on - at present Brother Anselm is between addresses.



UPDATE - CONVENTION AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

On December 9th 2006 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted this Convention. It was then open for ratification. The Newsletter for Feb/March 2007 gave details of its provisions and the importance of its ratification.

On 26 September the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances launched its first campaign for ratification in the Palace of Nations, Geneva in the presence of numerous families of those who have disappeared, representatives of NGO's, including FIACAT and delegates from various states. The President of the Council for Human Rights and ambassadors from many countries reaffirmed the importance of this Convention and the need for ratification so that it can be implemented.

This is a very important Convention and a great step forward in the development of international law. Unfortunately the UK Government has not yet signed - it has a number of reservations.

ACAT is encouraging members to write to their M.P's, asking them to put pressure on the Government to give details of its reservations if they are still causing concern, to ask what action is being taken to resolve the difficulties and when the Convention will be signed. Do stress its importance in the fight against enforced disappearances which are major abuse of human rights in many countries.

Please write to your M.P at:-

The House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

AT RISK OF TORTURE

It is reported that hundreds of Afghans detained by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan have been handed over to the Afghan authorities, including the Afghan National Directorate of Security where they are at great risk of torture - see below. At least 5 of the 37 ISAF countries which contribute forces, have signed Memorandums of Understanding with the Afghan government, believing that they will protect detainees handed over. Such Memorandums do not absolve them from their obligations under international law. ACAT will ask our Government if it has signed such a Memorandum.

Gul Mohammed, a farmer was taken prisoner by Canadian forces as he worked in his field. He was handed over to Afghan interrogators, who subjected him to 6 months of beatings with rifle butts and cables, electric shocks and sleep deprivation

FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Light looked down and beheld Darkness.
"Thither will I go," said Light.
Peace looked down and beheld War.
"Thither will I go," said Peace.
Love looked down and beheld Hatred.
"Thither will I go," said Love.
So came Light and shone.
So came Peace and gave rest.
So came Love and brought Life.

Lawrence Housman [1865-1959]

* * *

Give us courage, God our strength,
to see your Christ in all who suffer,
to be hands to the helpless,
food for the hungry,
and rescue for the oppressed.

from A New Zealand Prayer Book
Copyright 1989 by the Anglican Church in Aotearoa

* * *

Holy One, holy and eternal,
awesome, exciting
and delightful in your holiness;
make us pure in heart to see you;
make us merciful
to receive your kindness
and to share our love
with all your human family;
then will your name be hallowed
on earth as in heaven.

from A New Zealand Prayer Book
Copyright 1989 by the Anglican Church in Aotearoa

* * *

May Christ our infant Saviour
give you the joy
of the Bethlehem shepherds,
the awe
of the worshipping sages,
and the humility and love
of the Holy Family;
and the Blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you
for ever. Amen

* * *

What are the colours of winter?
White for the crispness of the snow,
Red for the breast of the robin,
and for the berries
amidst the Green of the holly
picked by the blue-cold fingers
of laughing children with
pink-flushed cheeks...
...or is it...

White for the fear of the moment,
Red for the wounds made by torture,
and for tear-stained eyes
amidst the Green of sickness
suffered by blue-cold bodies
at the hands of laughing people
in the pink of good health?

Must it always be winter for some,
Or shall we help their Spring to come?

* * *

TB

Now I say to you in conclusion,
life is hard,
at times as hard as crucible steel. (Mmm)
It has its bleak and difficult moments.
Like the ever-flowing waters of the river,
life has its moments of drought and its
moments of flood. (Yeah)
Like the ever-changing cycle
of the seasons,
life has the soothing warmth
of its summers
and the piercing chill of its winters. (Yeah)
But if one will hold on,
he will discover that God walks with him,
(Yeah. Well)
and that God is able (Yeah) to lift you from the
fatigue of despair
to the buoyancy of hope
and transform dark and desolate valleys
into sunlit paths of inner peace. (Mmm)

Eulogy for the martyred children
Martin Luther King jr. - 1963

* * *

The Word gave life to everything that was
created, and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness, and the
darkness can never extinguish it.
from John 1 (NLT)

A Final Thought

**"In our age the road to holiness necessarily passes
through the world of action"**

Dag Hammarskjold UN Secretary General (1953 – 1961)

We hope you have found this newsletter interesting and challenging.
Contributions from members (and others)are always welcome – particularly
your activities for ACAT.

Please send any material hand written, typed, or e-mail

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(who is doing the next
newsletter)

**Please send material for the
Feb./Mar. 2008 mailing to
reach us by
15th January2007**

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