



# Action

by

# Christians

  

# Against

  

# torture

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

Edmund Burke

December 12/January 13

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*“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). Matthew 1:23*

Dear Members

I am writing this at my table looking out on a sea of water which should be a nice green grassy square but is not, as a result of the incessant rain we have experienced in the last 2 days and I wonder how people who experience floods and other natural disasters on a regular basis must feel.

In recent months we have heard of tornados in the US, Haiti and the West Indies. We hear of famine in Africa, war torn countries in the Middle East, Africa and Afghanistan yet the people there pick themselves up and seem to carry on with their lives not as though nothing has happened accepting things as they are, a way of life it seems.

I then think of those who have suddenly had their lives turned upside down not by natural disasters but by the cruelty of man. Those who are arrested in the small hours, taken from their families and to somewhere which no one really knows about. Then are subjected to the most cruel and inhumane treatment.

Within this I wonder what has happened in our world today. That we can not only allow destruction of our world by misuse of resources, but by war, cruelty and misuse of humankind itself. Who is responsible we will never know, but what can be done about it is something we can all take part in. Whether it is the monitoring of our own energy use, using Fair Trade produce where we can and using ecofriendly items in our home. Other ways include checking our consumerism especially at this period of celebration of our Lord’s birth.

But what can we, as an ACAT do, to alleviate the evils of humankind in the way they treat each other. Joining our SOS Torture scheme and writing to authorities about the treatment of someone who is experiencing ill treatment as we speak is one way. Joining the Prisoner Support scheme whereby you take it on yourselves to adopt a prisoner not financially but by writing to them, campaigning on their behalf, praying for them and generally being a friend to them, is another. You most likely won’t hear from them or get to know them as a person but you will be carrying out one of the most important acts a Christian can do: ***love one another as I have loved you said our Lord***. At this Advent and Christmas time please support the Christmas card scheme. Send a card to a person who is either in prison or acting on behalf of prisoners. It doesn’t cost much in time or money. If you consider how much we spend in consumerism over the celebration time then a few extra cards is not a lot but it could bring a small degree of happiness to one person and may make the difference in their lives.

A new year is coming up rapidly, why not take the opportunity to not look back on the past but prepare for the future? Look at how you might be able to assist and support further the work of ACAT UK. The simplest way is to encourage others to join. Take part in our campaigns, pray for the work we do but most importantly pray for those who are experiencing ill treatment or are on the front line working to change lives.

Have a blessed Christmas and a prayerful start to a New Year

*Margaret Russell (Your new Chairman)*

## **APPEALS**

*(only available to members)*

## **RECENT NEWS**

### **NABEEL RAJAB, BAHRAIN June/July & Aug/Sept**

Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was sentenced in July to 3 years imprisonment; his appeal will be heard on 11 December. He started a "dry" hunger strike on October 5 (refusing water as well as food). He had stopped taking his medication in protest against the decision to withdraw the authorisation granted on October 4 to enable him to attend the second day of his mother's funeral.

### **NASRIN SOTOUDEH, IRAN**

Nasrin Sotoudeh, 29, married with 2 children, is a human rights lawyer, who defended opposition activists and politicians following the disputed 2009 elections. She has also defended young people sentenced to death. She was arrested in September 2010, accused of spreading propaganda and conspiring to harm state security. In January 2011 she was sentenced to 11 years in prison, banned from leaving the country and from practising law. She is held in Evin Prison and has been severely ill-treated, - at intervals she has been held in solitary confinement. On September 25 she went on hunger strike because she had been denied visits and phone calls from her family for many months. She has seen her children but the authorities would not let her husband visit her. Recently she was awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, together with a fellow Iranian. Please pray for her and her family.

## **CHRISTMAS GREETINGS CAMPAIGN**

Do let us know at the office if you organised an event to publicise the Christmas Greetings Campaign. We will hope to include reports in future Newsletters.

Eleanor Newland 8 Southfield, Saltash, Cornwall PL12 4LX Tel: 01752 843417  
Email: uk.acat@gmail.com

## FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Family of SATTAR BEHESHTI, IRAN, blogger, arrested 30th October, family informed on 3 November that he had died in custody.

DAGUIL CAPION, anti-mining leader of B'laan tribe opposed to mining on their ancestral lands; an unprovoked attack by the military on his home in October left his wife and two sons, 13 and 8, dead and a daughter of 4 wounded; these were extrajudicial killings; pray for his safety and that of the remaining members of his family.

ABUBACARR SAIDYKHAN, freelance journalist and BABUCARR CEESAY, First President of the Gambia Press Union, GAMBIA - received violent death threats following their arrest and detention for 7 days and release on bail charged with sedition and incitement to violence; they had planned to lead a demonstration over the execution of death row prisoners.

PASTOR BENHAM IRANI, IRAN, a leader of the Church in Iran, married with 2 small children, held in Karaj Ghazal Hesar Prison since 2010; he is serving a sentence of 5 years; he has been severely beaten by guards and inmates because he is a Christian and there have been calls for his murder; he is in desperate need of medical treatment which is refused. Pray for his release and good medical care.

MOHAMMAD NAZRUL ISLAM and his family, BANGLADESH, 38 , a farmer, abducted from his vegetable plot , in the village of Jhaoil on 13 June by two members of the RAB -12 (Rapid Action Battalion) taken to RAB-12 office inside Shirajganj Kowmi Jute Mill; he has not been seen since.

## PRAYER

*Loving Heavenly Father.*

*We lift up to you the suffering of our brothers and sisters, persecuted, harassed, imprisoned, tortured and killed because of their faith in you. Grant that in our freedom to worship you, we may not forget them.*

*Give us the will to bring them to you constantly in prayer. We also remember before you those, who in many countries of the world are subjected to abduction, disappearance and death. We pray for an end to this most terrible of human rights abuses.*

*The names of all who have disappeared are known to you as is the  
endless grief of their loved ones, the not knowing what has  
happened to them or where they are buried.  
Speak to them your words of love and comfort.  
We ask this for your Name's sake      Amen*



Please don't forget to send your adopted prisoner a greetings card in December, but only send a religious one where this is advised in the notes that were originally issued to members of the scheme.

If any replies have been received, either from a prisoner himself or from any of the government departments, please let me know. As ever, I would be very glad to hear from anyone who might like to consider joining the scheme, which is an important part of our work. I am always available to give help or advice if problems of any kind should arise in the correspondence that the scheme involves.

Ken Watson (Co-ordinator),  
34 Wantage Road,  
Reading,  
RG30 2SF.

## Introducing a new Committee member

At the AGM a new member was elected to the National Committee. He will undertake publicity work. Below is a little information about him.

Peter Dixon

Was born in Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire. He attended Hymers College in the city, and for his first job worked in the Education Department of the City Council.

In his early 20's he left Hull to test his vocation as a Benedictine monk with the Anglican Benedictines of Nashdom, near Slough. He remained there for 3 ½ years leaving in the early 1970's.

Staying within the London area he went to work at Heathrow Airport, firstly within the Airport Police records office then within the Finance department of the BAA. It was there that he met his wife, and they were married in the City of London in 1971.

He and his wife lived firstly in the London Borough of Ealing, and now in Hampton, SW London. They have 4 children and 2 grandchildren.

Peter continued to work for the BAA, and moved from Heathrow to the Head Office in Victoria, and then when the company relocated following privatisation, he transferred to the new Head office at Gatwick Airport. Finally he returned to Heathrow in 1984 where he remained until his early retirement in 1999. During that time he worked within the Landing Fees section of the Finance branch, the Noise and Environmental Policy Unit, the Airport Security Branch, and finally within the Policy and Development section of the Airside Team.

In personal terms he has represented the Diocese of London on the General Synod of the Church of England from 1972 to 1994. He was elected to the Crown Appointments Commission on 2 occasions, and represented the General Synod on the British Council of Churches. He was also a member of the Revision Committees for the Calendar of the ASB, the Funeral Rites and also an elected member of the Board for Mission and Unity. He was also a Guardian of the Anglican Shrine in Walsingham from 1977 until 2001.

He and his wife now worship at the Parish of St Margaret of Scotland, East Twickenham.



*And the angel answered her,*

*“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will  
overshadow you; therefore the child to  
be born will be called holy—the Son of  
God”*

*Luke 1: 35*

## SOS TORTURE



As ever, there is room for more volunteers to write urgent appeals, whether I contact you by e mail or by post.

And neither is needed for our prayers.

This brings the best wishes of your coordinator for a joyful Christmas - and may 2013 bring a measure of peace to the land of Christ's birth - and to the rest of his troubled world.

Anselm, SSF

## Christian Resource Exhibition 2013

This will be held January 23 – 24 at UWE Bristol:

Acat UK had a stand for the first time in Exeter last year and the committee felt that as it attracted a lot of interest it would be worthwhile exhibiting again.

Again we would very much welcome assistance in manning the stand on either day.  
UWE is based just off the M5 and is very accessible, there is parking available for exhibitors.

If you would be willing to help us this year would you please contact Margaret Russell, address in this mailing and on back cover BEFORE 31<sup>st</sup> December.

Let me have your name and contact details and if you intend driving your car registration details so a parking pass can be arranged.

There will not be a mailing before the event so contact me please for any further information

With grateful thanks in anticipation of your help

Margaret Russell

## **Why should Christians oppose the death penalty?**

We know from the history of the use of the death penalty that miscarriages of justice can occur in which innocent people are sentenced to death - as Jesus was. We Christians worship a saviour who was unjustly sentenced to death so this is an issue central to our faith. Miscarriages of justice in today's world are frequently at the expense of the poor and marginalised who do not have the means to seek justice. This is something we Christians are required to address. We are called to fight poverty and injustice in all its guises. As Christians we believe that all human beings are made in the image of God and are called to union with Him. The death penalty removes the possibility of reform and rehabilitation - both areas of human activity that Christians are called to engage in. We believe we cannot appropriate to ourselves a power over life and death that belongs only to God.

As Christians we acknowledge the need for governments to protect their citizens from crime and to create societies where justice and human rights are respected. However, we do not believe that the death penalty secures this end. Research has shown that countries where the death penalty is practised do not have any reduction in crime. The humanity of the executioner is diminished, the dignity of the human person is seriously undermined and a message is given that the state can decide who lives and dies. Calling for an end to the death penalty goes together with a firm commitment on the part of all Christians to work together for a just, humane society. This means addressing gross injustices, fighting to alleviate poverty and praying for those who see violence in all its forms as inevitable. A considerable task but one in which we can trust in the power of God to lead us and guide us to bring his light to those in darkness. An exciting challenge for us all.

Tessa Sheaf

## **AGM and Conference**

Lack of space and time sadly prevents a report of the AGM in this mailing. All things being equal we will endeavour to put a report into the next mailing.

The results of the elections to the National Committee were:-

Margaret Russell – Chairman

Ray Dunnett to remain as Treasurer

Eleanor Newland to remain as Hon Secretary.

Ken Watson, Richard Dent, Terry Newland, Kevin Burr Tessa Sheaf and Peter Dixon were all elected to the Committee.

We had a very interesting talk by the Refugee Council and a fruitful discussion on the Future of ACAT UK more of which will come in the next mailing.

Although again we had a very small attendance, a good time was had by all.

**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS CAMPAIGN**

Once again the Campaign ran from November to the end of January and featured victims of torture, prisoners of conscience, persecuted Christians and human rights defenders. A considerable amount of publicity was carried out advertising the Campaign to the religious press, churches, diocesan offices, Justice and Peace Groups, individuals etc. Those who took part last year were also contacted. Members and ACAT Groups were also asked to do some publicity and were provided with flyers etc. This Campaign, as well as linking Christians with those often in dire straits, also gives ACAT an ideal opportunity to advertise its work and hopefully move others to join.

Compiling the List is always a very difficult task - it takes hours of searching the internet and publications to access names, addresses and details, as ACAT has no first hand information on cases. Websites are not always updated from one year to the next. Prisoners can also be moved to another prison or can be freed (good news!) in the period between drawing up the List and cards being sent out. We also rely to some extent on information from lists produced by other organisations. These are not usually available until the beginning of November, the date when members and churches etc expect ACAT's List to be available.

**PRAYER VIGIL**

ACAT took part in the International Prayer Vigil (23/24 June): this marks the United Nations Day of Support for the Victims of Torture. The Theme this year was "the still small voice" a quote from 1 Kings Chap 19 - God appears to Elijah when he is in despair. The Vigil is organised by ACAT France but we did not use any of their website material or encourage members to add in their vigil details this year. Emily Rey, a French communications graduate, designed the publicity material for the campaign, including the flyers. These were sent out to members and groups. The prayer materials were updated and a list of prisoners compiled. The religious press was contacted, together with Justice and Peace Groups, individuals and churches. Once again the response from members and groups was disappointing and there were fewer inquiries for prayer materials. There were however a number of positive responses; some of these were written up in the Newsletter. The Committee has been asked to discuss the future of the Vigil and ACAT UK's part in it.

**CAMPAIGNING**

Brother Anselm, the Co-ordinator, runs the very effective SOS Torture Campaign. Letter writers who belong to this Campaign, take up cases sent out by him as they are received from the Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture and The Observatory, both based in Geneva. This involves a considerable amount of work and dedication on his part and commitment by those who take part in it. The Campaign is a vitally important part of ACAT's campaigning - the cases featured in the bi-monthly Newsletters take second place to the numbers of appeals sent out by Anselm. Quick action can be taken and lives can be saved.

Each Newsletter contains the usual five or six cases. There has again been a good response to appeals from embassies and governments. Replies give letter writers the assurance that their

appeals are effective and do make a difference and can give encouragement when appeals are met with silence.

Appeals continue to be sent from the Office, although slightly fewer concerns have been taken up this year. This has been because of pressure of ACAT work and other factors and not because of a reduction in the number of human rights issues, which were giving cause for concern, particularly in the UK. This area of campaigning and monitoring is regarded by Fiacat, the federation of ACAT's as of great importance.

## **PRISONER SUPPORT**

This scheme is run by Ken Watson, the Co-ordinator. Last year saw the setting up of a new, separate organisation supporting prisoners in Zambia. This left the Prisoner Support Scheme as a scheme for political prisoners and victims of torture. It is a very small scale project with only a few prisoners adopted. Accessing such prisoners is both time consuming and difficult. An appeal was made in the Newsletter for members and groups to adopt a political prisoner or victim of torture but with very little success. This is a pity because such adoptions can result in prison conditions being improved, cases reviewed or a prisoner released. There is little likelihood, as with prisoners in Zambia, of such prisoners making monetary demands on their correspondents.

## **RELATIONS WITH FIACAT**

ACAT UK has paid its membership fee, together with extra donations as in previous years. This enables countries such as the UK in the more prosperous West, to make a contribution to the servicing and setting up of ACAT's in Africa, travel to international meetings etc. It has taken part in a small number of Fiacat Prisoner of the Month cases and provided one case. Information is sent at intervals concerning our activities for inclusion in Fiacat's Newsletters, including details of human rights issues taken up by the Office.

The UK Universal Periodic Review by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations was held in May 2012 - the previous Review was undertaken in April 2008. ACAT UK co-operated with Fiacat in producing the necessary research and information on a number of topics relating to torture, ill-treatment and illegal detention. The report was presented by Fiacat. We then produced further information on a number of issues for an oral statement to be presented by Fiacat at a follow-up meeting of the Human Rights Council in September.

In last year's Review, information was given concerning ACAT;'s response to ACAT France's report on human rights concerns in the UK and the fact that our Committee had not been consulted over it. The ACAT Committee passed a resolution calling on Fiacat to ensure that consultation between ACAT's must be held prior to any in depth reporting on human rights issues in another country with an active ACAT. This as eventually put before the International Council Meeting at Brussels in June 2012 when our representative, Steve Goddard, a long term member and former Hon Treasurer, was able to speak on our behalf. This was accepted.

## **PUBLICITY**

Both the Christmas Greeting Campaign and the Prayer Vigil provide good opportunities to publicise ACAT - leaflets, flyers are sent out to those requesting prayer material or the Christmas List. Cathedrals and Christian Conference centres have been targeted. ACAT also took a stall at the Christian Resource Centre in Exeter. This was considered to be a great success. It is hoped to book again next year. Kevin Burr, who represents Catholic Justice and Peace on the Committee, took materials once again to the Swanwick Conference. Information about the Prayer Vigil was put on the website and Emily Rey, the French volunteer at the office for a few months, also set ACAT up on Facebook. It is hoped over the next few months to improve and develop this important means of informing others about our work and hopefully lead to an increase in membership.

ACAT was approached by The Universe, a Catholic newspaper, with a view to advertising our organisation. It was agreed by the Committee to take out a half page "advertorial" to advertise the Prayer Vigil and another in October to inform readers about the Christmas Greetings Campaign.

ACAT still has no Publicity Officer. This hinders our ability to reach out to churches and individual Christians. Our ability to campaign effectively against torture and on behalf of the tortured is seriously hampered. As I wrote in the last Review, we need to consider recruiting a Publicity Officer as a matter of urgency.

## **SUMMARY**

This has been a satisfactory year, although membership remains static, which is disappointing. The Committee must seriously consider mounting an effective membership campaign, as a matter of urgency. Certain denominations are still under-represented among our membership and also on the Committee. This needs discussion, leading to action and hopefully to the appointment of a publicity Officer or at least to seeking advice from a Christian expert in publicity.

The ACAT finances are in very good order, thanks to the dedicated work of our Hon Treasurer, Ray Dunnett. All the members of the Committee have once again done sterling work in their particular fields. There is still a need for others to join the Committee and take over some of the important tasks, which, because of the pressure of work on a small number of officers, get neglected or forgotten. This is particularly so where publicity, campaigning and group work is concerned.

Eleanor Newland (Hone Sec)

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Luke 2:13-14*

# Prayer and Reflection

When I'm down and helpless  
When lies are reigning  
When fear and indifference are growing  
May your kingdom come.

When joy is missing  
When love is missing  
and unbelief is growing  
May your kingdom come.

To the sick and lonely  
To the imprisoned and tortured  
May your kingdom come.

Into the churches  
Into our praying, into our singing  
May your kingdom come.

Into our hearts  
Into our hands, into our eyes  
May your Kingdom come. Soon!

Czech Litany Matt 6.9-13  
(From Bread of Tomorrow)

The desert will sing and rejoice  
and the wilderness blossom with flowers;  
all will see the Lord's splendour,  
see the Lord's greatness and power.

Tell everyone who is anxious:  
Be strong and do not be afraid.  
The blind will be able to see;  
the deaf will be able to hear:  
the lame will leap and dance:  
those who are unable to speak will shout.  
the imprisoned will be set free:  
the tortured will be tortured no more.

They will hammer their swords into ploughs  
and their spears into pruning-knives;  
the nations will live in peace;  
they will train for war no more.

This is the promise of God;  
God's promise will be fulfilled.

(adapted - Bread of Tomorrow)

For those oppressed by grief, remember, Lord,  
your agony. For those who suffer in the flesh,  
remember, Lord, the torture you endured  
For those who suffer in the flesh, remember,  
Lord, your crown of thorns.

For those who despair of life, remember, Lord,  
your cry to the Father.

For those who hope against hope, let your  
resurrection shine forth!

(From Hope in the Darkest Night)

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

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

Loving Lord,

You were born in a stable, far from home where  
no one knew you; where Mary and Joseph had to  
rely on the kindness of strangers. Be with those  
in so many lands, who have no home today.  
Your mother, Mary and your earthly father,  
Joseph, fled with you into Egypt because King  
Herod wanted to kill you. We can only try and  
imagine that long journey into the unknown -  
the anxiety, fear, vulnerability.

Did they wonder what life would be like once  
they arrived? Were you welcomed or was there  
a lack of understanding?

How did they cope with a different language,  
with different customs and ways of doing  
things? Lord, there are so many hundreds and  
hundreds of thousands of families like yours,  
who have had to flee their homeland because of  
famine, persecution, war, civil war and who  
have become refugees in strange lands where  
there is so often, little welcome and much  
hostility. We pray for all who are refugees, and  
particularly those who have had to flee from  
Syria, in fear of their lives. Be with all in their  
distress and give us the grace to stand alongside  
them.

*A final*

*Thought*

*Have a very Happy  
Christmas and a  
blessed New Year*

*The ACAT National  
Committee*

We hope you find this mailing stimulating and thought provoking

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

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

Margaret Russell, c/o ACAT Office  
Please send to arrive by 20th January 2013

Email - [uk.acat@gmail.com](mailto:uk.acat@gmail.com)

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