



Action

by

Christians

Against

torture

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

February/March 2015

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Chairman's Letter

I am not sure if I have ever said how I became involved with ACAT - UK, if I have please forgive me repeating it.

I went to Poland as a student nearly 26 years ago. As with all first timers I visited Auschwitz Concentration Camp and was moved to tears by the absolute lack of humanity undertaken in that place and the sheer degradation of people's existence. I won't describe the camp as I am sure many of you have either been or seen pictures of it. Safe to say I could not enter the Gas Chamber to see for myself what went on.

On leaving I was sure in my mind that this kind of evil would never reoccur in this world. The world had learnt: Or so I thought.

I came home to hear news of the Kosovo atrocities, the media pictures of starving people staring out from behind barbed wire fences. Hearing of genocide on a mass scale. For what purpose?

Then I vowed I would do everything in my power to work against the inhumanity of humans, to bring this type of evil to people's attention. So on finding literature about ACT as it was in those days I joined.

Was it worth it? All the letters written, all the prayers made, all the lobbying?

I ask this because we are now hearing of the atrocities carried out by the USA with which the UK cooperated.

We hear of the CIA involvement in torture and of the UK's complicity in it.

We hear of investigations being started and then being put back until after the 2015 elections, and we have to ask why? What is the problem?

We are involving ourselves with the Stop Torture Campaign. It is 30 years since the Convention Against Torture, but we as a country are involved in torture and rendition and who knows what else?

In addition to this, we are still very much troubled by the conditions both Syrian and Iraqi refugees are living in, and we are asking you to write once again to your MP's and the Home Secretary to voice your concerns. We are also enclosing a Petition asking the Government to

allow more refugees into the UK. I would ask you to draw the attention of your Churches to this.

Finally, as part of our Good Friday campaigning we are looking at the role the UK alongside the CIA in torture in Iraq. We make no apology for printing fairly comprehensive information about this looking at both the US and UK positions. Information about this is further on in this mailing.

I am writing this mailing whilst spending a few days with friends in Crewkerne. This led me to think about the freedom we have in this country.

Freedom to travel to different areas without notice. Freedom to worship as we wish. Freedom to be educated whichever our gender. Freedom to express our own sexuality and not suffer ill treatment if we do not adhere to what is considered 'the norm'.

We are very lucky and we should value this and use this freedom to work to support others who do not have this freedom. As such one of our appeals relates to **Raif Badawi**, blogger and creator of the website Free Saudi Liberals, sentenced to 50 lashes weekly until he has received 1000, and for what? For voicing opinions.

With all that has happened in the world in the 26 years since I visited Auschwitz, I do wonder has the world learnt? Will we ever learn? The good part is that is that the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights was written 60 years ago, and many countries signed up to it. The bad news is many countries who did sign up do not adhere to it.

I pray that the work we do as ACAT - UK brings people's attention to what is happening in our world and we can in some small way make changes to other people's lives.

With very best wishes

Margaret Russell

**APPEALS ONLY AVAVAILABLE TO
MEMBERS**

PLEASE PRAY FOR



RAIF BADAWI SAUDI ARABIA arrested and placed in the Jeddah prison on charges of “apostasy” - an offence punishable by death penalty in Saudi Arabia - and “setting up an illegal website, commuted to 1000 lashes, 50 of which to be administered each Friday outside the Mosque.

VILLAGERS OF I - HABI SALEH PALESTINE The villagers have held weekly peaceful protests since 2009 against Israel’s military occupation. They oppose the Israeli settlement of Halamish, established in 1977, with currently as much as 1 600 settlers. The Israeli army responds to the villagers’ peaceful protests with excessive and unnecessary force. They fire live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets and stun grenades, and throw tear gas canisters at people and property. So far they have killed two people and injured hundreds of others, including children.

SYRIAN AND IRAQI REFUGEES Deep snow has closed roads leading to Lebanon’s Bekaa valley, preventing aid workers from reaching refugees who are shivering in knee-deep snow, as mobile phone photographs sent to the Norwegian Refugee Council show. Syrian and Iraqi’s made vulnerable by torture are still not accessing appropriate protection, treatment and support.

For the success of the Stop Torture Campaign

That the CIA and UK involvement of torture in Iraq is properly investigated.

Urgent appeals from Egypt, India, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, that they have been successful



Lord Jesus

You endured ill-treatment, torture and a
violent death, although you had
done no wrong,

Be with those who suffer at the hands of the
torturers.

Grant that in the midst of their
suffering, they may
know they are not alone.

Give them renewed
strength and hope, and an
end to their suffering and
their despair.

If it is your will bring them freedom.
Be with the families of all who suffer harsh
imprisonment and torture. Bring them,
in the pain of not knowing what has
happened to their loved ones,
the knowledge that all are held
in your loving arms and
that nothing can tear them
from you.

Amen



STOP TORTURE.... YES, BUT HOW?

One of the problems about torture worldwide is that we don't know how much and when and where it happens.

We know about the terrible methods used and we know something of its results. But we don't know, yet, how to stop it.

That all sounds pretty negative and it is too easy to be negative about a subject as baffling and as deep-seated as torture. So can we be positive about the subject for a change? What has been achieved in, say, the last 10 years to reduce the practice of torture as a weapon, in war and in peace?

We know of many cases where letter writing to governments, visits to prisons and other places of detention, mass demonstrations and heartfelt speeches have helped reduce torture and given prisoners release. We are asking members and others to sign an urgent petition to the UK government to try to persuade them to set up a full, independent judge-led inquiry into how deeply the UK was involved in acts of rendition and torture carried out by the American CIA. It is now well known that waterboarding, 'rectal feeding', mock executions, sleep deprivation and other cruel and degrading treatments were used by the CIA against detainees.

How much was the UK involved in these acts? We don't know. And how are we to get the government to tell us?

One way is to sign the petition included with this mailing. Another is to write to your MP using the letter outline in this mailing. A letter to the Home Secretary herself (Theresa May) at the Home Office, Whitehall, London would also greatly help to put necessary pressure on those in power.

The year 2014 marked the 30th anniversary of the Convention Against Torture. As Amnesty say in their web-site report 'It is time for the UK government to properly investigate our country's role in the programme of torture and rendition'.

Speaking on the 9th Dec last about the involvement of the UK in the CIA revelations the Prime Minister said 'I am confident this issue has been dealt with from the British perspective'. Yet in 2010 he said 'for public confidence, and for independence from parliament, party and government, it is right to have a judge-led inquiry. We need to get to the bottom of this case.'

But, be assured that to help regain some of that power, pressure from letters written, demonstrations, and petitions do have a strong influence. Therefore, if we care about the fact that torture exists (which we in ACAT (UK) certainly do) and that the UK has possibly played a very nasty part in horrific acts of torture (which we do), please do all you can to obtain the truth of this important issue.

As we have said in these pages before, on the matter of torture, if we don't do something, who will?

Please use the enclosed petition in your churches. Could you return them to our Office address in Bristol them during Lent in order that they can be presented to Theresa May during our Good Friday Campaign.

Many thanks

Richard Dent.

CIA AND UK INVOLVEMENT IN TORTURE

In The States the US Senate Intelligence Committee has released a summary of a report into the CIA interrogation program established by US spy chiefs after the terror attacks of 11 September 2001.

The report is summarised

- 1) The CIA's use of "enhanced interrogation techniques" was not an effective means of acquiring intelligence or gaining co-operation from detainees.
- 2) The CIA's justification for the use of its enhanced interrogation techniques rested on inaccurate claims of their effectiveness.
- 3) The interrogations of CIA detainees were brutal and far worse than the CIA represented to policymakers and others.

- 4) The conditions of confinement for CIA detainees were harsher than the CIA had represented to policymakers and others.
- 5) The CIA repeatedly provided inaccurate information to the Department of Justice, impeding a proper legal analysis of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program.
- 6) The CIA has actively avoided or impeded congressional oversight of the programme.
- 7) The CIA impeded effective White House oversight and decision-making.
- 8) The CIA's operation and management of the programme complicated, and in some cases impeded, the national security missions of other executive branch agencies.
- 9) The CIA impeded oversight by the CIA's Office of Inspector General.
- 10) The CIA co-ordinated the release of classified information to the media, including inaccurate information concerning the effectiveness of the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques.
- 11) The CIA was unprepared as it began operating its Detention and Interrogation Program more than six months after being granted detention authorities.
- 12) The CIA's management and operation of its Detention and Interrogation Program was deeply flawed throughout the programme's duration, particularly so in 2002 and early 2003.
- 13) Two contract psychologists devised the CIA's enhanced interrogation techniques and played a central role in the operation, assessments, and management of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program. By 2005, the CIA had overwhelmingly outsourced operations related to the programme.
- 14) CIA detainees were subjected to coercive interrogation techniques that had not been approved by the Department of Justice or had not been authorised by CIA headquarters.
- 15) The CIA did not conduct a comprehensive or accurate accounting of the number of individuals it detained, and held individuals who did not meet the legal standard for detention. The CIA's claims about the number of detainees held and subjected to its enhanced interrogation techniques were inaccurate.

16) The CIA failed to adequately evaluate the effectiveness of its enhanced interrogation techniques.

17) The CIA rarely reprimanded or held personnel accountable for serious and significant violations, inappropriate activities, and systemic and individual management failures.

18) The CIA marginalised and ignored numerous internal critiques, criticisms, and objections concerning the operation and management of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program.

19) The CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program was inherently unsustainable and had effectively ended by 2006 due to unauthorised press disclosures, reduced cooperation from other nations, and legal and oversight concerns.

20) The CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program damaged the United States' standing in the world, and resulted in other significant monetary and non-monetary costs.

Whilst in the UK Sir Malcolm Rifkin has said: "If British intelligence officials were present when people were being tortured then they were complicit in that torture"

A parliamentary committee is to request the US hands over any material documenting the UK's role in the CIA's post-9/11 interrogation programme.

Sir Malcolm Rifkin said the intelligence committee he chairs would act "without fear or favour", although some MPs want a judge-led inquiry.

It follows a US Senate report which found "brutal" treatment of suspects.

Downing Street has said some material was removed from the report at the UK's request for national security reasons.

But it said no redactions related to British involvement in the mistreatment of prisoners.

'Brutal interrogations'

Sir Malcolm was speaking as Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee - which he chairs - is conducting an inquiry into the

treatment of detainees by British intelligence agencies in the decade following 9/11.

He told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show it would ask the US government if it could see the redacted material.

If British intelligence officials were present when people were being tortured then they were "complicit in that torture", he added.

"That would be quite against all the standards of this country, it would be something that ought to be brought into the public domain," Sir Malcolm Rifkind denying accusations that the committee would water down its conclusions, Sir Malcolm said the committee would act "without fear or favour" and would seek answers from senior minister and former ministers, if necessary.

He added: "If people deserve to be embarrassed, it's our job to embarrass them."

BBC political correspondent Robin Brant said it was "almost certain" that ex-Prime Minister Tony Blair would be called by the committee. Former Labour foreign secretaries Jack Straw and David Miliband may also be required to give evidence, he added.

However, Labour's shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper told the Marr Show she had concerns that the intelligence committee did not have the capacity or scope to be able to get to the truth.

Conservative MP Andrew Tyrie, who chairs the all-party parliamentary group on extraordinary rendition, called for the government to "reconstitute a judge-led inquiry".

He said it should have "wide-ranging powers" and a "substantial investigative capability" to look into the UK's role in the CIA's interrogation programme.

Clare Algar, from the charity Reprieve, told the BBC that Prime Minister David Cameron had previously said only a judge-led inquiry could get to the bottom of the UK's involvement, adding: "I think that is still the case."

'Legal hurdles'

A report revealed that the CIA carried out "brutal" interrogations of terrorism suspects in the years after the 9/11 attacks. Among the abuses, the committee found:

- Detainees were subjected to repeated waterboarding, slapping, stress positions and sleep deprivation
- One suspect was kept confined in a coffin-sized box for hours on end
- Others were threatened with severe harm - psychologically and physically

However, the summary contains no reference to UK agencies.

Shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper: "We've got to have the truth"
When the report was published, Downing Street said any requests for redactions from the UK had been made by British intelligence agencies to the CIA.

It said the requests had been made for reasons of national security on intelligence operations - and later added that Number 10 itself had not made any requests for redactions.

A Freedom of Information request by the charity Reprieve earlier this year showed the UK government had met members of the Senate Committee on Intelligence 24 times since 2009, although there are no details about what was discussed.

Meanwhile, **the Sunday Telegraph reported** that Defence Secretary Michael Fallon had called for former Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to reveal what they knew about the CIA's torture and rendition programme when they were in office.

"It's for ministers in that [former Labour] government to account for their actions," he said.

Mr Straw told the BBC that he would "be delighted to give evidence today", adding that "as soon as the legal hurdles are out of the way, I fully expect to do so".

The Metropolitan police began investigating claims that a UK secret file was passed to the Crown Prosecution Service earlier this year.

From the BBC Website

As we now know the Committee will not now be presenting any findings until after the 2015 UK elections.

S O S TORTURE



Urgent appeals have been from Egypt, India, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, recently - the last case having attracted a lot of publicity, as a state which practices public flogging. We have 31 writers in SOS, the aim being for each to be provided with two appeals a month to respond to.

Please join us.

Anselm.

Christmas Greetings Card signing



Once again this campaign has proved to be both popular and successful. We would especially like to thank Eleanor Newland for undertaking the compilation of the list, it takes many hours to research and draw up the list and we sincerely thank her for undertaking this arduous task.

We would also like to thank Steve Atherton of the Liverpool Justice and Peace Commission who found photos of many of the people on the list enabling us to make the list very personal when it went live on our website. We will be adopting this for the 2015 list.

Not only were many hundreds of cards sent by our members and others but we received donations of well over £500 which is really wonderful. Thank you to all who took part. We asked for information about how the campaign would be run in your Churches. Here are a few reports which may help you with the 2015 campaign.

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Here in Belmont Abbey parish we have three consecutive Masses on a Sunday, I originally introduced the idea of sending cards by getting permission to give a short talk at the end of each mass in mid-November. These days I usually put an advance notice in the Sunday newsletter towards the end of the month and then again on the last Sunday a further notice (see attachment). At the end of Mass, a couple of us stand outside church offering people as they leave one or more slips which I prepare, based on the lists you publish. Each slip contains the details of one addressee on the front and, on the back, notes for guidance in sending. I manage to fit two of these onto each A4 sheet. For the next two Sundays, any remaining slips are available in the church porch and there is a reminder notice in the newsletter in case anyone missed the main distribution.

This year we managed to distribute 145 altogether so I hope the majority of these will have been used by those who took them. One very encouraging thing was that some of the young people also wrote some cards. I'm hopeful that next year they may be willing to do the distributing of the slips!

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At St Joseph the Worker in Brentwood, Essex, 133 cards were sent over the weekend of the 2nd Sunday of Advent using the details of prisoners on the card list. There was a wonderful response to this campaign sending messages of hope at Christmas a total of £142 was donated.

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At Horfield Parish Church Bristol we held card signings over 2 Sundays just before Advent. 68 cards were sent, it was great to have some of our young people also participating. I encourage parishioners to take the slip with the recipient's details on home with them and to pray for that person over the Advent season



PRISONER SUPPORT NOTES

As members will be aware, quite a bit of time has been spent in recent months to try to see if it is feasible to set up a prisoner support arrangement in Zimbabwe, but letters and e-mails that I have sent have produced no response whatever, apart from a reply that I received from an organisation to which I have been introduced recently, and which said that my e-mail had been forwarded to their staff in Zimbabwe and that they would be in touch directly if they could be of assistance. Nothing further has been heard as at the date of writing these notes, the 14th January. After discussion at the last Committee meeting it was decided that if we were still without any information by the date of our next meeting (5th March), we would abandon the idea of our work being extended into Zimbabwe once and for all, and we would begin to investigate how we could start to support prisoners in the Country formerly known as Burma.

I will provide a report in the next Newsletter to keep members abreast of what steps we are taking.

Ken Watson Prisoner Support Co-ordinator.



In Memory of 'Chas' Raws

Former Chairman and Patron of ACAT UK

Chas was a Quaker and was Chairman of several charities which helped asylum seekers and members of the black and ethnic communities in Merseyside where he lived.

In addition he administered a fund created by Merseyside churches to help destitute and homeless asylum seekers.

He also was the author of a book on the Life of George Fox.

Within the area of torture and human rights he was convenor of Q- Cat (the Quaker concern for the Abolition of Torture) and was for some years our Chairman and was subsequently one of our Patrons.

My memory of Chas will be of a caring man who worked tirelessly for those who were vulnerable and seeking help. He was very respected by all who worked with him for his Human Rights knowledge, his compassion and his calm, positive and caring manner to all he met. He will be very much missed.

Chas died on 30th December 2014 and his funeral was held in Heswall where he lived on 20th January.

Steve Goddard recalls his help when Steve undertook a long distance walk in Aid of ACAT

At the time that I started serving ACAT (UK) as Treasurer the finances of ACAT (UK) were in a very parlous state; a part time Director was employed at that time. Income just about kept up with outgoings.

In 2003, in order to help improve the situation on a long term basis I undertook a sponsored walk from Sedbury (near Chepstow) to Prestatyn on the Offa's Dyke long distance footpath. For the final three days of the walk a friend, Alf, from Bristol joined me. He left his car at Chas's house in Heswall, Wirral and Chas drove him some 35 miles to a very rural setting at Plas Nantyr, some 10 miles west of Chirk, near LLangollen.

Three days later we arrived at Prestatyn (some 30 miles from Heswall) for Chas to 'meet and greet' us. He drove Alf and I back to collect the car and, following a 'cuppa' and a short de-brief we drove back to Bristol.

The result of all these efforts was that ACAT's finances were and remain much improved.

May he rest in Peace

Prayer and Meditation

Oh Lord, we can never fully comprehend the length, Breadth, depth and height of your love:
but we pray that your love may so transform us through Your suffering as to make us reach out to the despairing and the desperate and work for peace and reconciliation between all people.
Amen

Blessed are you, Lord, who have called men and women to rise up and defend every human beings right to dignity and integrity of mind and body.

They do this, often putting their own lives at risk. Blessed are you, Lord, for allowing us to take part in this, your work of salvation for humankind created in your image.

Sustain us all in our struggle to defend human rights. May we be guided, in our words and actions, by intelligence, wisdom and the life giving force of the Holy Spirit.

As we receive the grace of Your blessing, Lord, make us truly certain of Your love for humankind and save us from the temptation of despair.

Pierre Toulat and Michael Freychat
From Hope in the Darkest Night

Lord Jesus, you are alive: This is our faith and our hope, at the centre of our lives and daily struggles. Risen from the dead, you appear to us today as you did to your Apostles, showing the signs of your suffering: the wounds which still mark your resurrected body. We cannot see you, but we believe and turn to you.

As witnesses to human suffering, particularly the suffering people inflict on each other, we see in you a man subjected to torture.

As believers from all Churches, in the footsteps of the Apostles, we believe that the world is in the grip of birth pains and that the Spirit you promised us is at work here.

Holy Spirit, remind us of Jesus' words to his Apostles when He sent them out to preach the Good News and warned them of the fate which awaited them at the hands of the powerful!

Holy Spirit, let your love grow within us and between us, a love which transforms our hearts and gives hope to our world!

Amen

A final Thought '

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

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:-

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By 20th March 2015

President: *Reverend Dr Paul Oestreicher*

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