



Action by Christians

Against

torture

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

June/August 2016

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**FROM THE COMMITTEE:
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ACAT-UK 2016**

As previously announced the AGM for 2016 will take place at 2 pm on Saturday 15th October 2016 at St James's Roman Catholic Church, Spanish Place, 22 George Street, Marylebone, London W1U 3QY. All members are welcome and we urge you to attend and, if you feel able, to contribute.

We still urgently need new committee members. Nomination forms are included in this mailing. Completed forms must be received at the ACAT-UK office (c/o 6 Coleridge Road, Ottery St Mary, East Devon EX11 1TD) by Monday 12 September 2016. Resolutions, proposed and seconded by ACAT-UK members or from an ACAT group, must also be received by this date and must be presented in person at the AGM.

We are pleased to announce that our guest speaker this year is **Mr Massimo Corti**, who is head (president) of ACAT-Italy and has just been elected to FIACAT's International Bureau. Mr Corti has especially distinguished himself by revitalising the membership and engagement of ACAT-Italy and joins the International Council with both the qualifications (he is a graduate of two universities in Rome), and experience in business and management that ACATs throughout the world may benefit from. He has a proven track record in human rights work and we also hope that he can advise and assist us on developing the profile and reach of ACAT within the UK.

REVEREND RICHARD DENT: AN APPRECIATION

Following the death on Sunday 17 April 2016 of the Reverend Richard Dent, ex-chairman and very long-time committee member, we are pleased to print an appreciation by a friend and fellow committee member.

Richard was born in Cambridge, educated at the Perse School and after National Service studied Law at Downing College. As a newly qualified solicitor he and his late wife came to Bristol in 1966 to work in a solicitors practice. Subsequently he opened his own practice, Richard Dent Solicitors, which eventually merged with Amery Parkes.

In his private life Richard was a Lay Preacher, eventually becoming ordained as a non-stipendiary minister; his first full time post was at Highworth group of parishes in Swindon in 1985, when he also married Ann. He went on to work in 2 other parishes, finally as a Chaplain at Frenchay Hospital and retired in 1997.

Throughout his life Richard was a keen advocate of human rights, and he is mentioned in a book about the Bristol bus protests in 1966. He instigated the on call solicitor scheme in police stations which allows all prisoners to see a solicitor whatever time of day, and helped to set up a drug rehabilitation hostel in Bristol in the late 70's, only dropping out when the hostel was taken over by the City Council Social Services. This was where I first met Richard, when I helped out at the hostel and served on the same committee.

During his time at Frenchay Hospital he came across a leaflet advertising a meeting of the then ACT (Action by Christians Against Torture), now known as ACAT UK. A Bristol group of supporters was started which aimed to raise the profile of the organisation in the South West. He designed a pack of service, sermon and prayers which could be used by churches to highlight torture worldwide.

On the home front he became Chairman of the National ACAT, a post which he held for three years, retiring but still participating on the committee. He represented the organisation at exhibitions such as the Christian Resources Exhibition in Exeter and in Bristol. He wrote countless numbers of appeals for prisoners who were experiencing ill treatment or awaiting the death penalty and supported prisoners in prayer and occasionally – especially Zambian prisoners – financially as well. He wrote many articles for our mailing, all of which were clear, well written and very interesting. In addition, every few months he came to my house to help put the mailings into envelopes and then to take them and post them – a task which was made all the more interesting as we chatted and put the world to rights at the same time as sending the mailing. Internationally he was held in high regard as a person who could easily understand a topic and was able to discuss it with deep sincerity and often humility. Yet, he always felt he was not doing enough and that frequently troubled him.

In one of the ACAT UK newsletters as Chairman he wrote of a man walking along a beautiful sandy beach when he came across a young man, dancing with his arms in the air on the sea shore. Drawing nearer he saw hundreds of starfish stranded on the sand. Then he saw that the young man wasn't dancing he was throwing the starfish back into the sea. "You're wasting your time," said the observer, "you'll never save all those starfish". "Maybe not," replied the young man as he picked up another starfish and threw it back into the sea, "but I saved that one". This story epitomised Richard. He always tried to make the world a better place.

Margaret Russell

The following items are taken from Richard's thanksgiving service, which was held on 16 July 2016:

Made His Mark, by R. L. Stevenson

He has achieved success who has lived well,
Laughed often, and loved much;
Who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of
children;
Who has filled his niche and accomplished his task;
who has left the world a better place than when he found it;
who has looked for the best in others, and given the best he had;
whose life was an inspiration whose memory is a benediction.

The Lord's Prayer, adapted by Peter Bell

Our Father in heaven – in hostels, temporary homes, alone on a
park bench,

Hallowed be your name – hallowed be your tenderness for all your
people.

Your kingdom come – to those who hunger for righteousness, to
those who hunger for justice

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven – by those in
Parliament and palaces – give us this day our daily bread – to share
with our brothers and sisters.

Forgive us our sins – our fear of risk, of loss, of sharing our wealth,
our reluctance to follow where Christ leads – in as much as we
forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation – into pride, self righteousness, into
denial of truth.

But deliver us from evil, that prevents us from taking responsibility
for those who feel left out in our country.

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
which will transform all lives forever.

Amen

MEMORIES OF TERRY NEWLAND

We are sad to announce the death of Terry Newland. Together with his wife Eleanor, Terry was fully committed to the work of Action by Christians Against Torture – UK (ACAT-UK, formerly ACT) from its inception. As members of the Broadmead Baptist Church (Bristol) group at the time, we received the regular mailings and responded to many appeals on behalf of those suffering all kinds of human rights abuses. This information took many hours of diligent and painstaking research in order to obtain the correct and accurate details needed to write to governments, ministers, ambassadors and so on.

I first met Terry when the AGM was held on one occasion in York. Sadly, due to the scattered nature of the membership, the attendance was low, as it seems to be more recently. This, however, did not appear to diminish Terry's commitment to the cause. When I accepted the invitation (from Richard Dent) to become treasurer of ACAT, the funds were in a precarious state (there was also a part time employee at that time). Quite clearly this situation was of great concern, particularly to Terry as chairman. Thankfully, with annual membership renewals and various other donations the accounts gradually improved over many months to reach a satisfactory situation.

Terry oversaw ACAT becoming a charity, although a major requirement of that status was for the work for the 'Abolition of the Death Penalty' to be separated from the main account, as that part of it is considered political by the UK government. All this took a lot of extra effort. Even when Terry stood down as chairman his input was maintained and, of course, his knowledge of the subject, contacts, etc. was extremely valuable. He will undoubtedly have had a 'Well done, good and faithful servant' accolade for standing up for those who needed support when all around seemed hostile. Thank you, Terry.

Steve Goddard

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

The children and juvenile detainees in Palestine, who suffer physical violence during their arrest, interrogation or transfer, who can be forced to remain immobile for hours in the rain, in the cold or in the sun, without water, food or access to toilets, and who may be convicted and imprisoned far from their families for minor offences.

The children of The Philippines, who are routinely detained in secret locations, where they are habitually subjected to torture and abuse.

Mirsobir Khamidkariev, an asylum seeker from Uzbekistan, who was abducted by officers of the Russian Federal Security Service in June 2014, held incommunicado in an unidentified location for a day, forced to wear a bag over his head, and subjected to repeated beatings before being forcibly returned to Uzbekistan, where he was tortured for two months and finally sentenced to eight years imprisonment following an unfair trial.

Lahpai Gam, a Kachin farmer who was arrested in June 2012 by the military-backed government in Myanmar (Burma). He was charged under Article 17/1 of the Unlawful Association Act, brutally tortured into signing a false confession, and he is serving a 20 year prison sentence in Myitkyina Prison.

Rached Jaïdane, who was arrested in 1993 for alleged links with an Islamist movement and held incommunicado and tortured by the Tunisian state security. He now seeks justice in the face of an obstructive legal system.

Pray also for all **victims of torture** and ill treatment across the world. May all governments honour the commitment to stamp out torture, over three decades after the ground-breaking Convention against Torture was adopted by the United Nations in 1984.

UPDATE ON APPEALS

Renditions

Following our appeal for the UK government to follow up on its undertaking to constitute a judge-led inquiry into British involvement in the US-rendition programme (ACAT Newsletter, April-May 2016), we can report that ACAT members have received a response from the counter-terrorism department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The response reiterates the government's commitment to 'ensuring that the serious allegations that Britain was implicated in the improper treatment of detainees held by other countries are examined carefully' and refers to the Gibson Detainee Inquiry and its termination. It also states that the government will be 'able to take a final view on whether a judge-led inquiry is necessary to add any further information of value to future policy making in this area' only after the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) of parliament has taken further evidence and reported the result of its own investigation into 'the themes and issues raised'. While the door is still open to a judicial inquiry, the ISC is held by critics not to be the appropriate vehicle for an independent examination that would command public confidence. Although the Crown Prosecution Service concluded that, despite the involvement of Sir Mark Allen, former head of counter-terrorism at MI6 in rendition to torture and his having sought political authority for it, there was, after such a long passage of time, little prospect of gaining evidence for a conviction. Sonya Sceats, associate fellow in the International Law programme at Chatham House and a member of Freedom from Torture, writes that the passing of time is precisely why the government should not delay in holding an inquiry and that victims of rendition have already been waiting years for the full truth to emerge (*The Guardian*, 9 June 2016). It may be added that making an investigation contingent on the perceived necessity to influence future policy making could be a preparation for withdrawing from the commitment altogether.

Mexico

The following is a summary of results of recent appeals sent to Mexico since 2013 by Harrow Group based on information kindly sent by Anne-Marie Dennis, who chairs the group (the group, incidentally, includes representatives from a number of churches of different denominations). Many thanks for Anne-Marie for this.

Following a letter to the Mexican government in February 2013, two months after the new president took office and raising concerns about the abuse of human rights highlighted by an Amnesty International report with regard to the widespread use of torture, the Mexican embassy in London and the Mexican Undersecretary for Human Rights responded by outlining measures which they say were taken around that time. The main points are as follows:

- On 2.12.2012, the day after the current President took office, the government and main parties in the 'Pact for Mexico' agreed to set a wide ranging set of priorities and structural changes for development over the following six years. In point No. 32 they agreed to strengthen the legal framework to deal efficiently with torture, brutal and degrading treatment and forced disappearances. They also approved changes to the Federal Law to prevent and punish acts of torture in line with the Inter-American Convention (1985) and a Convention against Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (1984).
- On 9.1.2013 a law to support victims was published. This included setting up a committee specifically to deal with victims of torture as part of the Executive Victim Support Commission and with the aim of providing an integrated and co-ordinated service throughout the country. The Undersecretary for Human Rights, who specifically referred to the 'Pact for Mexico' (in point 32), also stated that 'defending human rights was state policy' and that a programme would be set up to consolidate this throughout the country.
- In addition the responses mentioned two legal conferences which took place in 2012 before the new president took office. In May 2012, at the 27th National Justice Conference, it was agreed to co-ordinate efforts in the whole country in line with the Istanbul Protocol involving medical and psychological specialists in possible cases of torture. In August

2012, at the 12th Meeting of Higher Courts and Justice, a number of measures was agreed to bring this about in the 16 areas of the country.

- Finally, on 21.2.2013, the Red Cross agreed to advise on strengthening human rights relating to the use of force in line with international standards in the 'Law of the Use of Public Force' and also to advise on the creation of a protocol to deal with cases of the disappeared and their families.

Following the ACAT-UK mailings of February/March and April/May 2016 and a letter about the Razo Casales case (February/March, pp. 8-10) – which also asked for an update to the letter received three years ago and was copied it to the London embassy – a very swift reply arrived from the embassy. The reply made no mention of the Razo Casales case but states the government's absolute determination to improving human rights with the following measures:

- By June 2016 the new system of penal reform will be in force in all areas. There will be better laws, better officers and training, appropriate structures and the consolidation of a culture of legality. In the 12 states where this new system is already operating 15, 000 people have avoided 'preventive' detention which would have happened in the old system.

- New measures include: the immediate registration of all detainees; no confession to be accepted if obtained by force or torture; no confession to be accepted unless a defence lawyer is present; a legal advisor will offer support to the detainee throughout the process; there will be right to a public trial.

As for the prevention of torture, and following a visit from the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture in 2014 who reported that his recommendations were already being implemented, the 23rd National Justice Conference approved a protocol to investigate torture (19.8.2015). This was set up with the help of experts in the area, of international bodies and of civil society groups. To guarantee justice for victims of torture and accountability, the Attorney General published on 27.10.2015 a document about the setting up of a 'Specialised Unit to Investigate Crimes of Torture' which would be linked to the Specialised Unit dealing with Federal Crime. This will supervise investigations where

officials, as well as other autonomous individuals or groups, are the alleged perpetrators. The unit will also keep victims' families regularly informed about progress in any investigation. And they will work with the Attorney General's Office, the National Human Rights Commission and Human Rights NGOs to bring all this about.

Anne-Marie concludes that we may hope and pray for progress. The will for reform seems to be there, but it is presumably a case of enforcing change in every police station in every area. A search for 43 Mexican student teachers who disappeared after they were attacked by cartel gunmen and corrupt municipal police officers in September unearthed the bodies of at least 129 other murder victims (reported 27.7.2015 in *The Guardian*).

Mr Raimundo dos Santos Rodrigues, Brazil

Mr Raimundo dos Santos Rodrigues and his wife were environmentalists working in the Amazonian region of Brazil who had denounced illegal logging carried out by landowners and timber industries. Following a series of death threats (on which, despite being reported, no action was taken), he was murdered and his wife seriously injured in a vicious shooting and machete attack in August/September 2015.

ACAT-UK members wrote to the authorities requesting them to investigate the killings and take measures to guarantee the safety of land rights defenders in Brazil. In April 2016 the Brazilian environment ministry responded to the appeal by regretting the incident, undertaking to inform the appropriate legal authority of the need to ensure support for Mrs Rodrigues, and listing 'a series of actions' which have resulted in the closure of around 20 'irregular sawmills' and the arrest of those who ordered the killings (there is no mention of prosecutions or convictions). It is acknowledged that much remains to be done to ensure nature conservation in the region.

Many thanks to ACAT member Tony Bramley for forwarding us a copy of the response.

REPORT ON THE 6th WORLD CONGRESS AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, 21-23 JUNE 2016

From 21-23 June I attended in Oslo the 6th World Congress Against the Death Penalty which was organized by the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and the French NGO, Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort. Over 1000 delegates participated from all over the world, representing NGOs, charities (including members of European and African ACATs), politicians and lawyers.

During the opening ceremony there was a video message from the Pope who said that rendering justice "does not mean seeking punishment for its own sake, but ensuring that the basic purpose of all punishment is the rehabilitation of the offender." Moreover the system of penal justice must allow the guilty party's reinsertion in society, because: "Punishment for its own sake, without room for hope, is a form of torture, not of punishment."

The Pope had in fact earlier this year proposed that Catholic government leaders make "a courageous and exemplary gesture by seeking a moratorium on executions during this Holy Year of Mercy." This idea was reinforced at the conference when it was announced that there would be a United Nations General Assembly Resolution in the autumn for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty. The resolution, if passed, would not be legally binding but would be a form of moral pressure. There have been such resolutions in the past which have failed but this one might receive more support.

A number of ministers of justice from different countries spoke at the opening ceremony against capital punishment. Most notable was Robert Badinter who had been the Minister of Justice in France and had abolished the death penalty (the guillotine) in 1981. At that time the majority of French people supported the use of the death penalty, but after its abolition they changed their minds and did not want it reinstated. He observed that this was a pattern of public thinking that

could be observed in other countries which had abolished the death penalty in the face of popular opposition.

Throughout the conference speakers emphasised that there was no empirical evidence to show that the death penalty is an effective deterrent. However there was concern that, although some countries such as Pakistan, Nigeria and Chad had imposed a moratorium on the death penalty, they had recently reintroduced capital punishment after terrorist attacks, despite the fact that, as the terrorists generally wanted to die as martyrs anyway, the death sentence would not deter them. Speakers emphasised how the death sentence dehumanised all involved in carrying it out. Moreover, it is irreversible and kills innocent people. Indeed perhaps the most moving parts of the conference were the accounts by people condemned to death but found to be innocent. Sunny Jacobs was one of these.

In 1976 Sunny aged 28 and her boyfriend were accused of shooting dead two policemen in Florida, USA and wrongfully convicted. They were both sentenced to death. She spent five years in solitary confinement before her sentence was commuted to life (12 years in prison). Meanwhile her boyfriend had also been wrongfully convicted and executed (in the electric chair which malfunctioned, taking just over 13 minutes to kill him). Later the real murderer confessed. In 1992 Sunny was freed, aged 45. She started campaigning against the death penalty for Amnesty International. This took her to Ireland where she met Peter.

Peter Pringle had also been wrongfully sentenced to death in Eire (where capital punishment was only abolished in 1990). He was put into solitary confinement. In his cell the guards often spoke to each other as if he was not there. Once he heard them discussing whether they would participate in his execution and if so whether they would get extra pay for it as it was not part of their regular duties.

Later his sentence was commuted to 40 years in jail. He studied law and eventually won his appeal, having spent 15 years in jail. He heard that

Sunny was giving a talk in Galway. He went to listen, spoke with her afterwards, corresponded, fell in love and married her. The couple now live in Ireland where their home is a sanctuary for others who have been treated like them.

It was so moving to listen and afterwards talk to this charming couple, who both have a great sense of humour and zest for life.

Perhaps the saddest story was that of Hideko Hakamada who spent most of her life in Japan campaigning for her younger brother, Iwao, now 81 (she is 83). He was arrested when he was 30 and sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. He is the world's longest serving death row prisoner, having been on it for 47 years. During this time he withdrew into his own world and seemed to lose touch with reality. (This case is one for which ACAT-UK Death Penalty wrote appeals in December 2013.) In 2014 Iwao was released, following a decision to reopen the case. He is now living with his sister but has to go through the retrial. He was too frail to travel to the conference but she did and spoke through an interpreter.

There were many other interesting and informative sessions. One concerned the problem of using mental illness as a defence in the case of murder. It appears that in a number of developing countries there are so few forensic psychiatrists that it is often impossible to defend properly an insane prisoner.

However, despite some grim facts, there are some hopeful signs as the world trend is against the death penalty. In 1945 there were only eight countries that had abolished it. Today there are 104 such countries and hopefully soon more to come.

At the end of the conference everyone was invited to a meeting in the august Oslo City Hall (where the Nobel peace prize is awarded). After the closing speeches we marched down the main avenue in Oslo, carrying banners demanding the abolition of the death penalty and waving aloft one of our hands gloved in much bigger red Styrofoam hands. This apparently was first used by an organisation called Hands

off Cain (who murdered Abel). Ahead of us rode Norwegian mounted police and we were led by some talented African drummers as we chanted "Abolish the death penalty, now, now, now". A lady, clearly a tourist, came up to me with a puzzled look and said "Excuse me, I didn't know that Norway still had the death penalty".

However, although the message of the march might not have been clear to all, the conference message was: that the death penalty is not a deterrent to murder. It is barbaric, kills innocent people and denies the basic human right to life and the opportunity to reform.

Audrey Wells

FIACAT INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL 2016

Below is a brief summary of the main outcomes of the International Council of FIACAT (International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture), of which ACAT-UK is a member and which took place in June 2016. At the time of writing these results are still to be officially confirmed.

The following were elected to the International Bureau:

Paul Angaman (Ivory Coast), President
Massimo Corti (ACAT-Italy)
Claire Doran (ACAT-Canada)
Jean-Bernard Marie (ACAT-France)
Emilie Petitguyot (ACAT-Belgium)
Jean-Daniel Vigny (ACAT-Switzerland)

ACAT-Sweden was formally elected as an affiliate of FIACAT.

The Council also confirmed a **strategic plan** for 2016 to 2019. Significant objectives in the plan include: enhancing FIACAT's presence and ensuring representation of national ACATs at the United Nations; increasing its representation at African institutions; and developing its activities at European Union and Council of Europe levels. It will also work towards abolishing the death penalty in Africa, promote collaboration among national ACATs, and bolster these by forging relationships with national churches, institutions and religious communities. The plan also envisages stabilising FIACAT's finances: for the year ending 2015 an income of 459,135 euros and expenditure of 484,277 euros resulted in a deficit of 25,152 euros, while a projected budget for 2016 projects a surplus of 38,416 euros.

A MEDITATION AND PRAYER

The following meditation consists of extracts from Chapter 2 of Lucy Winkett's book *Our Sound is our Wound* (the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book 2010).

The sound of lament is heard throughout Scripture. It is both a protest against the pain of the present time, and also a timeless expression of the weeping voice of God, in whose image and likeness we are made. It is contemporary because, in the midst of lament, all that exists is the searing pain of the moment. It is also eternal, in that our tears join the lament already begun before the ages by the blood of Abel crying for vengeance from beyond the grave. Human beings cry for the loss of life, for the loss of a future, for the loss of hope.

It's in the prophecy of Jeremiah that we hear the lament of Rachel echoing down the centuries weeping for her children: "Thus says the Lord: a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more" (Jeremiah 31:15).

In his inspirational commentary on Jeremiah, Walter Brueggemann comments: "The sound comes out of the ancient past; Mother Rachel grieves over the generations, for all the lost children who are so vulnerable and so brutalised. ... The weeping of the un comforted mother easily traverses the generations, for all the lost ones are the same to this mother, regardless of their generation."

In July 2005, after the bombs had exploded on the Underground and on the bus in central London, not only victims' relatives were interviewed: the mother of one of the bombers was asked to comment by a journalist. She said: "I do not know how to grieve for my son. Instead I will grieve for the victims, for the dead and injured."

In her voice, numb with grief and bewilderment, it was plain that the sound of suffering does not come only from the mothers of the innocent.

An artist told me in conversation that he had visited a convent and talked with one of the sisters there about what Mary, mother of Jesus, would have done on the evening of Good Friday. They imagined together that she would have gone to visit the mother of Judas. He painted this scene: two women sitting talking together about their terrible, terrible day, the un comforted mothers of sons at the heart of the story of salvation. [The scene is one of the Seven Episodes from the Life of Mary painted by Mark Cazalet for the Lady Chapel in the church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Wanstead.]

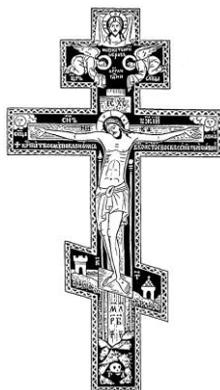
A prayer for all in prison

Dear Heavenly Father, we ask your love and mercy for those who are imprisoned and pray that your love might reach them through whatever means you choose to use. You see our brothers and sisters in prison as your beloved children. You knew them before they were born, you saw them in the secret place within their mother's womb. We pray that you will defend them from threats and acts of violence. We ask you to protect their bodies, minds and souls.

We pray also for the families of those in prison. Encourage and strengthen them. Hear their prayers, and comfort them each time they turn to you.

And Father, just as Jesus did, we pray for the perpetrators of violence and torture. Help them to know that they too are made in your image. Turn them aside from causing pain and terror to their victims and show them a better path.

We make all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Risen Saviour and Lord.



Final Thought

There is no dichotomy between man and God's image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being, abuses God's image.

Archbishop Oscar Romero

We hope you find this mailing stimulating and thought-provoking.

Articles for future mailings are always welcome.

Especially, it would be good to hear about individual or group activities, any good news about prisoners or any queries or comments you may have about the work of ACAT-UK. Please send any material – handwritten or typed – to the following office address for inclusion in the next available edition.

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