



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

Edmund Burke

Action by Christians Against Torture

June/July 2011

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Jesus said: 'Anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me' (Matthew 25 v. 40)

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

We always begin our national committee meetings with a reading, some silence and a prayer.

At the meeting in May I read the passage from St. Matthew about Jesus' 'illustration' of what things will be like 'when the Son of Man comes in his glory'. Among other things he said the words written at the top of this page.

In his book 'God has a Dream' Archbishop Desmond Tutu gives an equally graphic illustration. He writes:

'There is a church in Rome with a statue of a Christ without arms. When you ask why, you are told that it shows how God relies on us, His human partners, to do his work for Him. Without us, God has no eyes, without us, God has no ears; without us, God has no arms. God waits upon us, and relies on us.'

Without you, the members of ACAT (uk), and all those members of ACAT's throughout the world, who would stand up against the torture of innocent people, who would be prepared to challenge governments, army chiefs, and secret police about their acts of cruelty and persecution? Who would befriend the ill-treated and tortured?

I guess the answer would be 'very few'. Torture is not a pleasant subject: it is one which is so often swept under the carpet as not only 'nasty' but also irrelevant to those who are privileged to live so-called 'civilised' lives.

All the more important, therefore, that we keep up our letter-writing and campaigning to secure, eventually, the abolition of torture in every country. If we are truly trying to act as the ears and arms of Christ I firmly believe the Holy Spirit will not only guide us in our chosen task, but will also strengthen, encourage and enable us.

At present we have, compared with many charities, only a small membership. But, if we take to heart the words of Jesus, by 'doing something, however humble, for one of our brothers (and sisters) here', then we shall have our 'Father's blessing'. And with that blessing we cannot fail. The size of our membership, in that sense, becomes irrelevant.

That, of course, doesn't mean we should not attempt to increase the number of people who agree to campaign for the abolition of torture. Every new member means more letters written, more appeals answered and more prisoners helped.

If we surround our efforts with prayer and a genuine seeking of the Holy Spirit's power we shall discover and be part of a greater force and influence than we had believed possible.

May that same Holy Spirit guide and encourage all your efforts to make God's world a kinder and less abusive place, free from ill-treatment and torture.

With every Blessing.

Richard Dent.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

BAYRON RICARDO GONGORA, COLOMBIA, human rights lawyer with the Corporacion Juridica Libertad; he works with 65 families in the Medellin area whose relatives have been killed by the security forces; an armed group is actively plotting to murder him .

CATALINA MUCU MAAS, ALBERTO COC CAL, SEBASTIAN XUC COC, GUATEMALA, student campaigners for indigenous peoples' land rights and their student friend, AMILCAR CHOC from the Quebrada Seca Maya Q'eqchi community; their bullet ridden bodies were found in a river after they disappeared in February.

MOHAMMAD RAFIQI ISLAM, BANGLADESH, 41, salesman from Dhaka, arrested by members of the Rapid Action Batallion on 15 February; the authorities deny all knowledge of him; there are fears that he has been murdered by members of the RAB.

ILIE CAZAC, TRANSNISTRIA, 25, tax inspector for city of Tighina, arrested 2010, tortured and ill-treated, sentenced in February to 14 years in a strict regime correctional colony on charges of grand treason and espionage, following a secret trial.

MARYAM BEHREMAN, member of the Million Signatures Campaign and activist for women's rights, IRAN, held in incommunicado detention, and MAHBUBEH KARAMI, now serving three and a half years in Evin Prison; she is suffering from acute depression; also remember all who have been arrested, many of them tortured and ill-treated, in the recent crackdown.

Loving Lord

For our sake you became the suffering servant, despised and rejected.

You were beaten and flogged and crushed with suffering for our sins.

Your body was broken for us,

And your blood poured out for us on the cross.

Grant, Lord, that your love will shine in the worst of the torture chambers.

Look with pity on those who suffer now the barbarity of the torturer;

those who endure physical and mental suffering to break their will.

Receive into your loving arms, those who will die before morning.

Have mercy on those who will betray family and friends

and who will have to live with what they have done for the rest of their lives.

Loving Lord, you know the name of each one.

Hold them in your loving arms and bring them your peace and comfort

even in the midst of their fear and suffering.

Give them healing of mind, body and spirit and an end to their suffering.

We ask this for your Name's sake.

S O S TORTURE SCHEME

It's good to report that our urgent appeals continue to remind those who persist in persecuting, harassing, imprisoning, torturing people on account of their race, faith, or on account of their activities on behalf of others - that they are under the observation of the international community.

We should remember that in the case of countries where there appears to be no effective government, the appeals to diplomatic representatives are the more important.

And, we are about forty SOS writers so there's room for more. If you are a paid up ACAT member but not in the SOS scheme, do think about going that extra mile - write to Brother Anselm, SSF,

St Mary at the Cross,

Glasshampton,

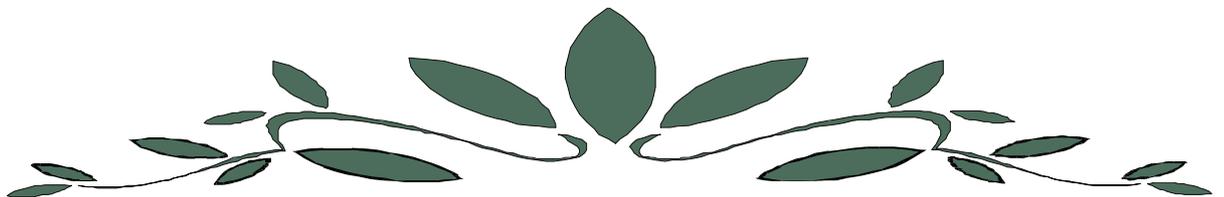
Shrawley,

Worcester WR6 6TQ

or, e mail anselmssf@franciscans.org.uk

and you will receive instructions, and, subsequently, about two appeals to write each month.

Brother Anselm SSF



PRISONER SUPPORT SCHEME

In a recent issue of the Newsletter information was given about the setting up of a separate charity Christian Support for Overseas Prisoners. This Scheme as many of you will be aware is now operational and the prisoners from Zambia have been transferred from ACAT UK's Prisoner Support Scheme to the new organisation, with Ken Watson in charge of it and in charge of handling donations, correspondence etc.

ACAT hopes that publicity can now be given to information about a small number of prisoners of conscience and political prisoners it is hoped that groups and individual members might be willing to "adopt". It is suggested that some members might be encouraged to send cards and later letters to a particular prisoner on a regular basis. A considerable number will have sent such cards to prisoners, whose names have appeared on the Christmas Greetings List.

It is very unlikely that such prisoners will reply, although a member of a church group received two letters from an Algerian political prisoner some months ago - whose name and address was given in the 2009 List. Prisoners will not write back for many reasons - they have no writing materials or money for them or for postage; they are not given the cards or letters; they cannot understand English and have no one to translate; they write a letter but the guards do not see that it is sent off. But the sending of cards and messages of support is very important - there is considerable evidence that the prison authorities do improve conditions in many cases - some years ago a rumour went round a notorious prison in Pakistan that a letter of support had arrived for a prisoner from a woman in the United States. As a result of that one letter conditions were improved for those held in a whole section of the prison. Correspondents are also unlikely to receive requests for financial help.

Do please consider adopting a prisoner if you are a member. It costs little to send a message once a month. Such support can mean so much to a prisoner - usually held in very poor conditions, sometimes in solitary confinement, with little or no access to family or friends, never knowing when or if ever he/she will be freed.

What can you do if you run a group or are a member of a group? What about adopting a prisoner, sending cards and also campaigning on their behalf? The Saltash and Neath Groups have already done this - the Neath group a woman political prisoner in Thailand and the Saltash Group a prisoner in Egypt held for many years, despite court orders for his release. We can supply all the information about each prisoner, together with names and addresses of Government officials etc, and advice on how to go ahead.

ACAT with Margaret Hodson as the inspiration and dedicated co-ordinator, ran a very large and important Prisoner Support Scheme for a considerable number of years with many members and groups taking part supporting prisoners from a number of countries such as Chile, Turkey, Philippines. It is now far from easy accessing details and addresses of particular prisoners but we do have a small number whose cases groups might consider supporting.

If you would like to adopt a prisoner or want more information do please write to the ACAT Office.

Eleanor Newland

TRANS-DNIESTER - INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND HISTORY

(From BBC News)

HISTORY

Moldova, between Romania and Ukraine, became an independent republic following the collapse of the USSR in 1991. It is made up of an area previously known as Bessarabia. It was annexed by the USSR in 1940 following a carve-up of Romania in the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia.

The industrialised territory to the east of the Dniester, generally known as Trans-Dniester or the Dniester region was formally an autonomous region within Ukraine before 1949 when the Soviet Union combined it with Bessarabia to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The area is mainly inhabited by Russian and Ukrainian speakers, whereas two thirds of Moldovans are of Romanian descent and have a common cultural heritage with Romania. They became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of closer ties with Romania at the end of the Soviet era and possible reunification of Moldova with Romania. A 1989 law which made Moldovan an official language added to the tension and in September 1990 Trans-Dniester proclaimed its independence.

INDEPENDENCE

Fierce fighting followed the declaration of independence, with over 700 dead. The violence ended with the introduction of Russian peacekeepers in 1992 and a demilitarised security zone established manned by Russian troops already stationed there. The west is concerned about the Soviet-era arsenal in the territory. The presence of the Russian troops has been a stumbling block in peace talks. A pull-out began in 2001 but was later halted. In 2004 a Russian-brokered plan which would have made the presence of Russian troops permanent, sparked mass protests in Moldova and was shelved. Conflict resolution talks involving Moldova, Trans-Dniester, Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE - Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe resumed under Russian mediation in 2008. It remains in a tense stand-off with Moldova.

Trans-Dniester's independence has not been recognised by any other country and the region has existed in a state of lawless and corrupt limbo ever since 1990. It is plagued by organised crime and smuggling and has been accused of taking part in illegal arms sales and money laundering. It contains most of Moldova's industrial infrastructure but its economic potential is limited because of its isolation. It has its own currency, parliament, flag and anthem. Russia provides financial aid and funds monthly payments to the region's pensioners. There is widespread poverty.

The Trans-Dniester's President was re-elected for a fourth five-year term in December 2006. He has said he will stay in office until the country's independence is recognised by the international community. There is strict control over the media with many outlets owned either directly by the government or by business groups with close links to those in authority. The press provides a spread of political opinion, although the main dailies are government owned.

INFORMATION ON PREVIOUS CASES, RELEASES ETC

DR BINAYEK SEN, INDIA (April/May Newsletter) there was a huge outcry internationally over the sentencing of Dr Binayek Sen to life imprisonment. The authorities have now freed him on bail, pending a review. This is very good news! Some members received letters from the Law Division, National Human Rights Commission, India in connection with his case and an invitation to attend a meeting!

SHABAZ BHATTI, PAKISTAN - the High Commission sent a number of two page obituaries to members following appeals over the assassination of the Minorities Minister.

DR OSCAR BISCET GONZALEZ (Christmas Greetings List 2010) President, Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, serving 25 year sentence and held under appalling conditions, was recently released and given permission to stay in Cuba - other released prisoners were sent into exile.

DR AAFIA SIDDIQUI PAKISTAN/USA, Fiacat Prisoner of the Month, there are reports that members of her family and supporters have been threatened and harassed.

CAMP ASHRAF, IRAQ Over the past two years phone calls have been received at intervals from the legal advisor in Iraq for the 3,500 refugees from Iran who fled during the Iran/Iraq war asking for appeals on behalf of the residents. Now that the UNHCR has removed from Iraq and the US forces have pulled out, the residents of the Camp are in a very vulnerable position. They live in constant fear of attack by the Iraqi army and of being forcibly returned to Iran, where they would face certain imprisonment and probably execution. There have been a number of attacks on the Camp, the last recently when 34 were killed and about 200 injured. The Iraqi army refused to allow the injured to be taken to hospital. This attack hit the headlines of a number of newspapers.

Appeals were sent on behalf of the residents of the Camp when the news was received. A few days later a phone call came from the legal advisor - it was a great relief to hear his voice and know that he was not one of those killed or injured.

BRADLEY MANNING, USA - the alleged source of WikiLeaks - imprisoned under appalling conditions, amounting to prolonged ill-treatment and torture - appeals were sent calling for humane treatment; following an international outcry, he has been moved and is now being properly treated. Once again publicity and a concerted campaign have been successful.

JUSTICE AT LAST

Augustin Bizimungu, a former head of the army and one of the primary architects of the Rwandan genocide, which took place between April and June 1994, has been sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity by the international criminal court tribunal for Rwanda. Augustin Ndindilyimana, an ex-military police leader was also sentenced to 30 years in the same trial at Arusha, Tanzania. These men are two of the most senior figures to be sentenced by the court. The court ordered the release of Augustin Ndindilyimana in a judgement which said his command over the police was limited; he had consistently supported reconciliation before 1994 and opposed the massacres. He had already spent 11 years in prison following his arrest in Belgium in 1990.

Some members will have seen the film "Hotel Rwanda" - Augustin Bizimungu was the general who was a regular at the Mille Collines Hotel which gave refuge to hundreds of Tutsis fleeing from almost certain death.

REMINDER

THE INTERNATIONAL PRAYER VIGIL,
“YOU ARE PRECIOUS IN MY SIGHT ... AND
I LOVE YOU”

WE CALL ON ALL MEMBERS, GROUPS AND THEIR
CHURCHES TO TAKE PART IN THIS EVENT WHEN
WE REMEMBER THE TORTURED, THEIR FAMILIES
AND THE TORTURERS IN PRAYER

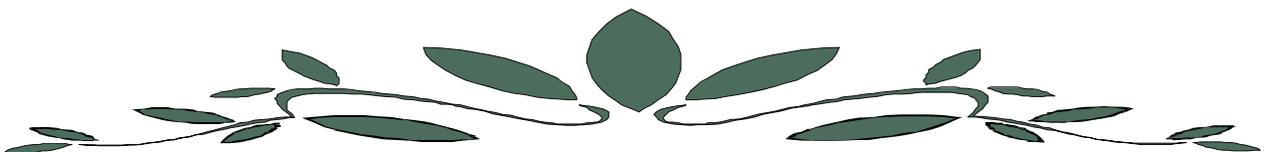
THE VIGIL WILL BE HELD ON THE NIGHT
OF 25/26 JUNE

YOU ARE ASKED TO PRAY FOR THE
TORTURED SOMETIME DURING THAT
EVENING OR NIGHT - OR AT
INTERCESSIONS AT SUNDAY SERVICES OR
AT SERVICES DURING THE WEEK PRIOR TO
THE VIGIL.

WHAT ABOUT ASKING A FRIEND TO PRAY
WITH YOU FOR A FEW MINUTES?

IF YOU HAVE NO ONE TO JOIN WITH YOU,
YOU CAN STILL LIFT THE TORTURED TO THE
LORD.

Information about the Vigil together with a list of names of those in need of prayer and prayer materials produced for the Vigil are available free from the Office and can be sent by post or email.



INTERNATIONAL PRAYER VIGIL 25th JUNE 2011

ACAT UK has produced material for the Vigil, which you may find useful. This is available free from the office

- A5 Service** with names and the lighting of candles
- A5 Prayers** for Individual or Group Use and for Intercessions
- A5 Prayer sheet -** with 3 prayers and names of individuals - this is for handing out
- A5 Prayers -** for the tortured, their families, persecuted Christians, human rights defenders
- A5 List of named individuals -** can be used with other material
- A4 Service** of Prayer and Meditation for Group and Individual use with lighting of candles and names included in the service

- A4 Prayer and Meditation** for Group or Individual Use - includes some names and situations

Flyers advertising this event are available by post from:

Action by Christians Against Torture
8 Southfield
Saltash
Cornwall PL12 4 LX

Tel. 001752843417 EMAIL: uk.acat@gmail.com

Hopefully, material in English will be included on the International Vigil website shortly.

May we encourage you, your group and/or your Church to take part in this great wave of prayer for the tortured and their families. Do contact the office if you want more information or have any queries.

MEMBERSHIP

Our Chairman, Richard Dent spoke in his letter at the beginning of this mailing about ACAT (uk) being a small charity compared to others, but that our size becomes irrelevant if what we do is for one of our brothers or sisters.

HOWEVER, just think what more we could do if we were just a little bit larger? More letters, more prayer, more support, more Prisoners helped, and the evil of torture eradicated somewhat.

HOW CAN WE DO THIS? How can we grow just a little more? The answer is simple. Just recruit one more person from your Church membership, your friends, your neighbours or your family. In this way ACAT(uk) could double its membership and help more people suffering torture in the world today. We could become a greater force for campaigning in the UK and in the world.

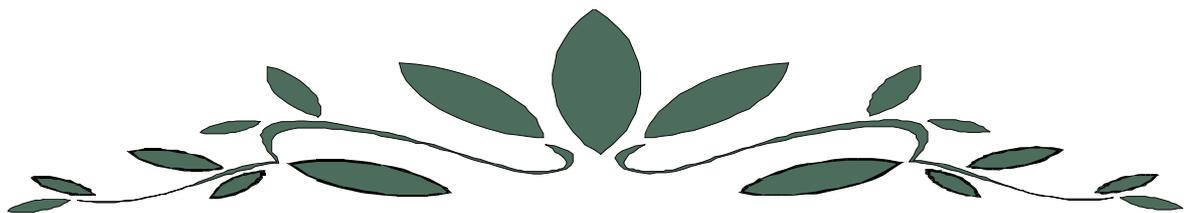
Just contact me, or the Office for further information which you could then pass to people you know who could then be encouraged to join us. Leave literature in your church or chapel so that visitors can read it. Put a small article in your church magazine (we can supply these). Or publicise the Prayer Vigil and other campaigns which ACAT (uk) hold on a regular basis.

Help us to help those who cannot help themselves.

Margaret Russell - Membership Secretary

Canon Edward Robertson

Sadly Canon Robertson who was one of our long standing members died recently. We extend our condolences to his widow and to his family. His support will be missed



REMINDER

OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and CONFERENCE

will be held in Bristol

at

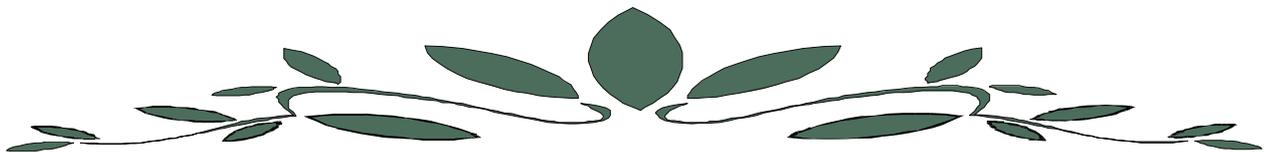
Broadmead Baptist Church, Union St

on Saturday 8th October

Final information, election documentation and details of speakers will be available in the next mailing.

Please do make every effort to attend as some years we are only just quorate and when important decisions need to be made this presents us with problems. In addition, when we have visiting speakers it seems somewhat unfair to expect them to come long distances when only a few people attend.

If you need information about how to get to the venue just contact Richard Dent or Margaret Russell who will be pleased to give you directions



Prayers and Meditation

CREATOR GOD

At your word we came to be

As did all being.

Your will is that all being should come
to perfection.

Work you will for all whose fullness of
being is diminished by torture.

Bring them relief.

Illuminate their darkness.

Heal their hurts.

Bring your work to completion in
them,

REDEEMER GOD

In Jesus you suffered torture at the
hands of the greedy, the fearful, the
perverted.

Forgive us our greed, our fears, our
lusts

And bring repentance and healing to
all torturers

Both those who wear the masks and
wield the weapons

And the rest of us who pass by on the
other side

A PRAYER TO THE TRIUNE GOD

SPIRIT OF GOD

Given by Jesus, active in our hearts,

You bring God's love, joy and peace.

Give us strength to persevere'

Compassion to stir us,

And wisdom to guide us.

HOLY TRINITY

Father, Son and Spirit

Your life of mutual interdependence
and harmony

Is to be mirrored in the life of
creation.

Use us in our weakness as we work to
bring this about

For in Christ we are strong

AMEN

Pause for thought

God has no eyes,
without us, God has no
ears; without us, God
has no arms. God waits
upon us, and relies on
us.'

Desmond Tutu. God has a dream

We hope you will find this mailing stimulating and challenging! We welcome contributions from members - from your own experience or your recent activities in ACAT or other human rights work.

Contributions, written, typed or e-mail to:-

Margaret Russell
ACAT UK
8 Southfield
SALTASH
PL12 4LX

E mail uk.acat@gmail.com

Please send to arrive by 17th July 2011

Web www.acatuk.org.uk

President: *Rev. Dr. Paul Oestreicher*

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