



# Action

by

# Christians

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

# Against

# torture

May - June 2014

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# Chairman's Letter

Dear friends

It has been a turbulent few months for me personally as I have had to have the best part of my kitchen refitted due to carelessness on my part and a near fire the details of which I will not bore you with.

The reason for telling you this is simply that the constant banging, hammering and drilling from workman and the initial smoke was what I can only describe as being tortuous.

A fairly glib phrase, but immediately you get the picture of what I mean. Constant pressure of noise which you cannot escape from and the feeling of suffocation which is completely outside of your control phrases we have read and heard about in connection with torture.

Again, as with so many things this set me to thinking about the reason I work for ACAT-UK.

What do we actually mean by the word 'torture'? Is it the mediaeval pictures of racks, hideous machines or being burnt at the stake? Modern day torture is not dissimilar. It involves the infliction of pain on one person by another, using various devices, tools or physical action. But times are changing as you will read in this paragraph from the Fiacat website.

*"Police forces that inflict torture are anxious not to leave any tell-tale marks behind and are therefore making use of increasingly discreet and "professional" tools, such as electric current that can be used at a distance.*

*Torturers are thus relieved from the burden of guilt, since they are caught up in an objective process that attenuates their responsibility. In any event they would claim that they are not torturing but merely "interrogating".*

*Psychologists and psychiatrists advise prison authorities on what will have the greatest effect on prisoners' minds: isolation, the*

*manipulation of light, physiological rhythms, emotions and senses, the administration of drugs, It is incredulous to think that etc.”*

I can only wonder how people can actually do this to their fellow human beings but also what the mind of the person who deliberately thinks up new and devious ways of inflicting torture that leaves no mark and enables the inflictor to remain hidden and anonymous.

One thing is for certain. Nothing is hidden from God; for what is written in the opening verses of Psalm 139 applies to us all, and all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

One thing we can be certain of is that Christ, himself tortured by ordinary people who nailed him to the cross, will at the final resurrection ask us all to give an account of ourselves, and his words in Matthew 25 will echo in our ears. ‘In that you did for the least of these, you did it for me’. What have we done? We may not have tortured, or inflicted pain on others, but have we looked the other way?

Richard Dent further in this mailing talks of how one course of action, by giving talks about ACAT, brings people’s attention to the evils of torture.

Thank you all for what you have done, and are doing. Please keep praying, keep writing and keep campaigning and bring other’s attention to the very important work that Christ has called us to, for his sake and for the sake of others.

As Richard concludes his article with

IF WE DON’T WHO WILL?

And by the way, the kitchen has been finished and peace and quiet in the Russell home has been restored.

With blessings to you all

Margaret Russell

Chairman

## **PLEASE SEND APPEALS ON BEHALF OF JOHAN TETERISSA, INDONESIA**

Johan Teterissa (or Teterisa) is an Indonesian elementary school teacher, and member of a small separatist, but banned, group which advocates independence for the southern Molucca islands from Indonesia. It is a mainly Christian group which was originally set up in the 1950s up to support the continued rule of the Moluccas by the Netherlands. In June 2007 as leader of a peaceful protest, he managed to get past heavy security when Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia's president, visited the island last June and unfurled an independence flag in front of him.

The police and presidential guards responded by taking away Teterissa and others, punching them and beating them with rifle butts once they were out of sight of the President. The activists were then tortured by police during their detention and interrogation. They were beaten, forced to crawl on their stomachs over hot asphalt, whipped with electric cables and had billiard balls forced into their mouths. Still no independent investigation has been carried out into the allegations of torture and no police officer has been held to account. Teterissa was charged with subversion. On 3 April 2008 he was convicted of 'plotting against the state' and sentenced to life in prison, the maximum sentence or such a 'crime'. In their sentencing the judges told him that he had "embarrassed the people of Indonesia in the eyes of the world." They also told him that, as leader of the protest, his sentence was particularly harsh because he had shown no remorse for his actions.

In November 2008 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared that he had received an unfair trial, and that he was only imprisoned for expressing his political views and that imprisoning him for the protest violated his right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

In fact on appeal his sentence was reduced to 15 years. He has been moved to numerous prisons, always far from his family, and often with no access to clean drinking water. After his latest move to Batu Prison

on Nusakambangan Island in July 2013, guards reportedly whipped him with electric cables until he bled. On 31 December 2013 police and military personnel ransacked cells in the prison. He was stripped to his underwear and forced to sleep half-naked on a concrete floor for at least a week.

His prison conditions have now improved, but there are still reports of overcrowding, poor sanitation and a lack of access to adequate medical treatment

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO:-**

Amir Syamsuddin, Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Jl. H.R. Rasuna Said Kav No. 4-5 Kuningan, Jakarta Selatan 12950, INDONESIA

Copies can be sent to:

His Excellency Teuku Mohammad Hamzah Thayeb, Indonesian Embassy, 38 Grosvenor Square, London W1K 2HW

**SUGGESTED DRAFT LETTER: JOHAN TETERISSA**

Dear Sir (Minister) or Your Excellency (Ambassador)

It is with considerable concern that I have learned of the continued imprisonment of Johan Teterissa in Batu prison. Although he was convicted of plotting against the state, there seems to be no evidence that he used or advocated violence during the protest. In November 2008 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared that he had received an unfair trial, and that he was only imprisoned for expressing his political views. Imprisoning him for the protest violated his right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, something enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which your government signed in 1998.

I am concerned about reports that he was tortured and faced other ill treatment not only in the period following his arrest in 2007, but also last June after he was moved to Batu Prison and again at the end of last year when it appears that most of his clothing was taken from him and he had to sleep semi-naked on a concrete floor. None of these have been investigated as far as I am aware or, if they have, nothing

has been published. I am also concerned of reports that he is not receiving adequate medical attention and that his prison conditions are far below accepted international standards I respectfully ask that he should be unconditionally released immediately to fulfil your country's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that an urgent investigation be made into Johan Teterissa's claim to have been tortured and that the result is made public with appropriate action taken against any individuals concerned if his allegations have some basis. I would also ask that he be allowed immediate independent medical attention.

Yours respectfully or Yours faithfully

*[Note: much of this information is taken from a recent Amnesty appeal but we have included it as we felt that it was one which merited as wide a circulation as possible.]*

## **Extract from the Vatican News 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE HOLY SEE'S REPORT ON THE CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE**

Vatican City, 15 April 2014 (VIS) – The director of the Holy See Press Office, Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., responding to questions from journalists, today declared that next May, the Holy See – along with Cyprus, Lithuania, Guinea, Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Thailand and Uruguay – will present its Initial Report on the Convention Against Torture (CAT) to the relevant Committee.

“It is a standard procedure adhered to by all States party to the Convention”, said Fr. Lombardi. “Considering the types of obligations included in the Convention, the Holy See signed the Convention in 2002 exclusively in the name of and on the part of Vatican City State. For this reason, the Holy See continues to fulfil its obligations on the part of Vatican City State and to present periodical reports, in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Convention”.

## **APPEAL ON BEHALF OF FOUR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND 17 OTHERS IN CUSTODY - AND ALSO A TEENAGER WOUNDED AND DISAPPEARED IN CAMBODIA**

Cambodia has long been dogged by land grabs, rampant deforestation, impunity, stagnating wages and widespread corruption. But things have come to a head since the resurgence of a political opposition party who, since disputed elections last July, have been boycotting parliament. This year, after months of protests, human rights in Cambodia have seriously deteriorated.

On January 2<sup>nd</sup> there was a violent crackdown by police and military on those taking part in a demonstration by workers (demanding an increase in the minimum basic wage) being held on National Road 4 in Phnom Penh outside a garment factory. Among those taking part in the demonstration were **Vorn Pao**, President IDEA, an association which works for the promotion of worker's rights, land and housing rights, **Then Saveurn** Coordinator of the Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), **Chan Puthisak** a well-known land rights activist, and **Sokun Sombath Piseth**, who works for the Centre for Labour Rights. All four were arrested along with **six other individuals**, and on the following day **13 more workers and bystanders** were arrested near Canada Industrial Park when more clashes between protesters and security forces spiralled out of control, leaving at least four shot dead in what has been called the worst state violence against civilians in 15 years.

During the same violent crackdown by security forces, a 16-year-old boy, **Khem Sophath**, disappeared. He was last seen on 3 January 2014, lying on the ground on Veng Sreng road at the Canada Industrial Park, with blood pouring from what appeared to be a gunshot wound to his chest. More than two months later his whereabouts remain unknown, and the authorities reportedly neglected to conduct any investigation.

The 23 individuals arrested were all charged with 'intentional violence and property destruction' and taken secretly to 'CC3' -a remote prison 158 kilometres from Phnom Penh normally used only to incarcerate convicted criminals under harsh conditions. It was not until January 8 that local human rights monitors located them and, after persistent

demands, they together with family members, and lawyers were finally able to see at least some of the detainees. Also, medical professionals gave preliminary treatment to those suffering from injuries inflicted by security forces and illnesses arising in custody\*, but since then bail has been denied to all but two of those detained and the injured and sick do not appear to have received further medical treatment.

\*These include Pao who had undergone kidney surgery previous to his arrest and was not allowed to go for a check-up due in February, Piseth whose left hand was reportedly broken when he was detained during the protests on 2 January, and Puthisak who is reported to be suffering from swollen legs as a result of not being allowed to go outside for exercise for almost 20 days.

On 14<sup>th</sup> March the investigating judge announced that he had completed his work and passed the file to the court. It appears that he has reduced the charges against the four human rights defenders to less grave ones which refer to ‘incitement to commit a felony’, punishable with six months to two years of imprisonment. But the charges against the other detainees remain unchanged. According to our latest information, no date for a hearing had been set. Furthermore, on 24 March, the Court of Appeal again denied Vorn Pao bail.

PLEASE SEND YOUR APPEAL to one or more of the following:-

Mr. Hun Sen, Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Email: [leewood\\_phu@nida.gov.kh](mailto:leewood_phu@nida.gov.kh), (Dear Prime Minister)

Mr. Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Co-Minister of Interior, Ministry of Interior, 275 Norodom Blvd, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, Email: [moi@interior.gov.kh](mailto:moi@interior.gov.kh) (Dear Deputy Prime Minister)

Mr. Ang Vong Vathna, Minister of Justice, No 240, Sothearos Blvd. Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia. Email: [moj@cambodia.gov.kh](mailto:moj@cambodia.gov.kh) (Dear Minister,)

Copies to

H.E. The Ambassador to the United Kingdom, The Royal Embassy of Cambodia, 64 Brondesbury Park, London NW6 7AT (Your Excellency)



- Mr. Om Yentieng, Minister & President of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee, Office of the Prime Minister, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, (Dear Minister)

### **Suggested Draft Letter**

I have been greatly distressed to learn of the arrest and detention of twenty-three individuals - and also of the wounding and subsequent disappearance of a 16-year old boy, **Khem Sopeth**, - during and after the demonstration by garment workers outside the Yak Jin factory on National Road 4 at the beginning of January this year.

According to my information, the youngster was last seen on 3 January lying on the ground on Veng Sreng road, at the Canadia Industrial Park, with blood pouring from what appeared to be a gunshot wound to his chest. More than two months later his whereabouts remain unknown, and the authorities reportedly have neglected to conduct any investigation. I appeal to you most fervently to see that an urgent investigation is put in place without further delay.

I also wish to express my deep concern about the ongoing detention of - and, reportedly, failure to provide adequate medical attention for - the 21 protesters, including four men prominent in their activities in the field of human rights. I refer to **Vorn Pao**, President IDEA, **Then Saveurn** Coordinator of the Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Community (CCFC), **Chan Puthisak** a well-known land rights activist, and **Sokun Sombath Piseth**, who works for the Centre for Labour Rights. I would respectfully remind the Cambodian authorities of UN Human Rights Council resolutions 19/35 and 22/10, stressing that “peaceful protests should not be viewed as a threat, and therefore [...] all States [should] engage in an open, inclusive and meaningful dialogue when dealing with peaceful protests and their causes”.

It seems that the detention and charging of these individuals is aimed at sanctioning the peaceful exercise of freedom of association, assembly and expression. I therefore call on the Cambodian authorities to:-

- guarantee at all times the physical and psychological integrity of all 21 protesters and to grant them immediate access to adequate medical care;

- immediately and unconditionally release all of them and to drop the charges against them;
- give clear instructions to security forces to refrain from using force against protestors and to act in accordance with human rights standards, notably with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms;
- guarantee the respect of human rights and the fundamental freedoms throughout the country in accordance with international human rights standards.

I thank you for your urgent attention to these matters.

Yours sincerely

## Prayer Vigil

As in previous years it is our intention that ACAT- UK should join with other ACAT's in prayer for the tortured and ill treated.

We are currently awaiting information from ACAT France from which we will be able to prepare a short service and prayer materials for your use.

The date of the vigil will be on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June.

It would help us immensely if you could indicate if you would like to receive prayer materials for this event.

## Please send appeals on behalf of Human Rights defenders under threat in Sri Lanka

On 13 March, **Balendran Jeyakumari**, an outspoken activist against enforced disappearances in Sri Lanka, was arrested with her teenage daughter in Kilinochchi in the North of the country by the Terrorist Investigation Department.

Both of them had taken part in demonstrations demanding information about Balendran Jeyakumari's son, Mahindan, who disappeared in 2009, after surrendering to government forces. Mahindan's mother and sister have also actively encouraged other women to come forward with complaints about their disappeared loved ones.

Following these arrests other women, demanding accountability for alleged enforced disappearances, fear for their safety after receiving threatening phone calls from the police.

Two other prominent human rights defenders, **Ruki Fernando**, human rights adviser to the INFORM Human Rights Documentation Centre in the capital, Colombo, and Father **Praveen Mahesan**, a catholic priest and the former Director of Jaffna-based Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, tried to investigate Balendran Jeyakumari's arrest and to trace her daughter. Both of them were arrested on 16 March, but were released after international pressure.

Sri Lanka has failed to take effective steps to deliver justice for the victims of its civil war, which ended in 2009. Instead, it has launched an aggressive campaign against those who advocate for accountability and an end to impunity for human rights violations.

Allegations have been made that, during the final stage of the armed conflict, government forces intentionally shelled civilians, blocked food and medicine from reaching communities and executed prisoners. Meanwhile witnesses say their armed opponents, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), recruited child soldiers, used civilians as human shields, and killed those who tried to escape.

Since the end of the conflict, human rights defenders, activists, journalists and civil society members who are critical of the government have regularly been threatened and harassed.

These arrests have coincided precisely with the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva considering a resolution calling for an international investigation into alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka.

**Send appeals to:-**

President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Presidential Secretariat, Colombo 1  
Sri Lanka

Copy to:

Dr Chris Nonis, High Commissioner for UK, High Commission of Sri Lanka, 13, Hyde Park Gardens, London W2 2LU

**Suggested Draft Letter**

Your Excellency,

I have been informed of the arrest, on 13 March, in Kilinochchi, Northern Sri Lanka, of **BALENDRAN JEYAKUMARI**

This human rights activist had appeared prominently at demonstrations against enforced disappearances, demanding information about her son Mahindan who went missing in 2009 after surrendering to government forces.

Her teenage daughter, who was arrested with her, was later turned over to the Department of Probation and Child Care Services. Balendran Jeyakumari is reportedly being held at the Boosa Detention Centre where an extensive use of torture has been documented.

Two other internationally respected human rights defenders, **Ruki Fernando** and **Father Praveen Mahesan**, who were arrested after seeking to investigate Balendran Jeyakumari's arrest and ensure her daughter's welfare, were finally released without charge, but they still face harassment and restrictions on their rights.

Despite your Government's stated commitment to improving respect for human rights, and instead of taking steps to ensure justice for the victims of human rights violations, the authorities of your country appear to be waging a campaign against human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and civil society activists advocating for

accountability for alleged war crimes committed during Sri Lanka's internal conflict.

In order to restore Sri Lanka's damaged international credibility, I call on your Government to:

- guarantee that Balendran Jeyakumari is protected from torture and other ill treatment and given full access to her lawyer, family and any medical attention she may require pending her prompt release if she is not charged with any crime ;
- ensure the safety of Ruki Fernando, Father Praveen Mahesan, and all other human rights defenders in Sri Lanka, and remove restrictions on their legitimate activities ;
- cooperate fully with the investigation by the UN Human Rights Council into allegations of human rights violations by all sides to Sri Lanka's civil war.

I thank you for considering my appeal.

Yours sincerely /respectfully



## PLEASE SEND APPEALS ON BEHALF OF THULANI RUDOLF MASEKO and BHEKI MAKHUBU - SWAZILAND

We have been informed by reliable sources about the release of Mr. **Thulani Rudolf Maseko**, a prominent Swazi human rights lawyer and senior member of Lawyers for Human Rights Swaziland and the Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, as well as of **Bheki Makhubu**, a columnist and Editor-in-Chief of *The Nation*, considered as the sole independent newspaper of the country.

According to the information received, on April 6, 2014, High Court Judge Mumcy Dlamini set aside the warrant of arrest that was issued by Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi against the two human rights defenders and the charges.

We welcome the release and the end of the judicial harassment against Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu, and thank all the persons, institutions and organisations who intervened in their favour. However, we note that the two were arbitrarily detained for nearly 20 days.

### **Background information:**

On March 17 and 18, 2014 respectively, both men were arrested on the basis of a warrant issued by Chief Justice Michael Ramodibedi, on charges of “scandalising the judiciary” and “contempt of court” following the publication of articles criticising the judicial system.

The charges arise from articles written by Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu in February and March 2014 in *The Nation*, in which they questioned circumstances surrounding the arrest of government vehicle inspector, Bhantshana Vincent Gwebu and criticized the lack of impartiality of the Swazi judicial system

On March 18, 2014, Maseko and Makhubu, who were expected to appear in court, were subjected to a private hearing in the Chief Justice Ramodibedi’s chambers, in violation of Section 21 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland, which guarantees the right to a fair trial. The accuseds’ lawyers were not informed that the hearing would take place in the Chief Justice's chambers and were only present by chance.

They were kept in custody until the second hearing, which took place on March 25, 2014. They appeared before the High Court of Mbabane assisted by their lawyers. Their detention was extended until the next hearing, which took place on April 1, 2014.

In April 2013, Makhubu had already been sentenced to a fine of 400,000 Lilageni (approximately £22,700) on charges of “scandalising the court” by the High Court for publishing articles that criticised the judiciary of Swaziland (an appeal is pending) and in 2009 Mr. Maseko was charged with contravening the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act (the case was never brought to trial).

On April 1, 2014, Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu appeared before the High Court of Mbabane assisted by their lawyers. Their detention was extended for the third time until the next hearing, scheduled for April 8, 2014. The decision to extend the custody of the two human rights defenders was taken by Chief Justice Mpendulo Simelane, who is also the former High Court Registrar mentioned in the articles published in *The Nation* for which the two defenders are currently prosecuted. Since he might be summoned to testify in their case, the defence lawyers for the men informed him of their intent to file an application to demand his recusal.

On April 4, 2014, the accused, through their lawyers, filed an application at the High Court where they were seeking a declaratory order on the grounds that the warrant of arrest issued by the Chief Justice was unconstitutional, unlawful and irregular.

## **PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO**

King of Swaziland, Head of State, MSWATI III, Royal Palace, Mbabane, Swaziland. Email: [hello@kingofswaziland.com](mailto:hello@kingofswaziland.com)

Prime Minister Mr. Barnabas Sibusiso DLAMINI, Cabinet Offices, Hospital Hill P.O. Box 395, Mbabane, SWAZILAND.

Minister of Justice, Senator Mr. Sibusiso SHONGWE, Ministry of Justice Building, 5th Floor, Mhlambanyatsi/Usuthu Link Road, P.O.924, Mbabane, SWAZILAND

Copies to

Mrs Dumsile T Sulata, High Commissioner, Swaziland High Commission, 20 Buckingham Gate, London SW14 6LB

## **SUGGESTED DRAFT LETTER**

Please write to the authorities in Swaziland, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of. Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu, as well as all human rights defenders in Swaziland;
- ii. Put an end to all acts of harassment - including at the judicial level - against Thulani Maseko and Bheki Makhubu, and more generally against all human rights defenders in Swaziland to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their activities without any hindrances;
- iii. Conform to the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998.
- iv. Respect the Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland adopted in 2005, notably Article 24 which protects freedom of expression and opinion, including freedom of press and other media, defined as “freedom to hold opinions interference; freedom to receive ideas and information without interference; freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference; and freedom from interference with the correspondence of that person”.
- vi. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international human rights instruments ratified by Swaziland.

Thank them for their kind attention to the letter

Yours sincerely/ yours faithfully



## To remember in your prayers

**JOHAN TETERISSA, INDONESIA** arrested and badly tortured along with others for taking part in demonstrations in support of independence for his area of Indonesia.

**FOUR HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND 17 OTHERS IN CUSTODY - AND ALSO A TEENAGER WOUNDED AND DISAPPEARED IN CAMBODIA** arrested for participating in demonstrations to have the basic minimum working wage for their jobs

**HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN SRI LANKA - BALENDRAN JEYAKUMARI, RUKI FERNANDO, FATHER PRAVEEN MAHESAN** arrested for seeking information about family members imprisoned and ill treated following the civil unrest.

**THULANI RUDOLF MASEKO and BHEKI MAKHUBU - SWAZILAND** both men underwent many trials and stays in custody following their work as Human Rights defenders.

**THE WORK OF FIACAT** who are Submitting a report on the Death Penalty to The United Nations and for all countries who currently have the Death Penalty that they may reconsider their political position.

**THE WORK OF ACAT UK** and especially that a new Chairman may be found and new blood for the Committee will appear.

## *PRAYER*

*Loving Lord Jesus  
You see the pain and anguish of families torn  
from  
their loved ones by cruel and evil men.*

*You weep for them.  
We lift up to you the families of the  
disappeared, those held  
Incommunicado*

*and those whose loved ones have been tortured  
and murdered.*

*We commend them in their suffering into your  
loving arms,*

*bring them consolation, comfort and peace.*

*We give you thanks for all who fight to reveal  
the truth  
about disappearances and massacres,  
for all who campaign for justice for their loved  
ones.*

*We ask this for your Name's Sake. Amen*

## Replies to Appeals

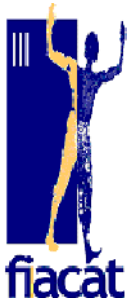
**Bilal Alias Mullah - Pakistan-** many members have received a brief letter from The High Commission for Pakistan stating that the accusations against the Pakistan Rangers is false, and Bilal died in hospital. We await further enquiries.

**Conflict in South Sudan** The Department for International Development has sent the same letter to many members setting out the UK policies regarding peace talks. They agree that there needs to be a process of genuine national reconciliation carrying true accountability for all who are found guilty of human rights abuses and violations. Diplomatic efforts and mediation are ongoing.

As advised in the last mailing Margaret Russell as Chairman wrote to the Leaders of the main political parties but has only received a reply from the Prime Minister's Office. The letter is almost the same as the ones sent to members from the Department for international Development.

**Please continue to send replies from appeals to the Office, c/o 19 The Square, Knowle Park, Bristol, BS4 2ST which is Margaret Russell's home address.**

*Due to Charity Law requirements ACAT-UK, can only fight for the abolition of torture and not against the death penalty as campaigning for the latter is regarded as a political act. However we felt the information here might be of interest to members.*



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Synopsis of the FIACAT submission for the forthcoming  
report by the United Nations Secretary-General  
on the death penalty

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31 March 2014

The International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT), set up in 1987, is an international non-governmental organisation for the defence of human rights which fights for the abolition of torture and of the death penalty. The Federation is an umbrella organisation for some thirty national associations, the ACATs, in four continents.

By referring the concerns of its members working on the ground to international bodies, FIACAT's aim is to encourage the adoption of relevant recommendations and their implementation by governments. FIACAT works towards the application of international human rights conventions, the prevention of torture in places of detention, and an end to enforced disappearances and impunity. It also takes part in the campaign against the death penalty by calling on states to abolish capital punishment in their legal systems.

This document aims to inform the United Nations Secretary-General about the application of the death penalty since April 2013 in certain African countries where members of the FIACAT network are active.

## **BURKINA FASO**

During the second cycle of the universal periodic review (UPR) in April 2013, Burkina Faso accepted Belgium's recommendation that it bring the Burkina Faso criminal code into line with Article 5 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which prohibits the death sentence being imposed on minors.

The Minister of Human Rights and Civic Promotion, Mrs Julie Prudence Somda/Nigna, stated on 18 September 2013 when the report of the UPR working group was adopted in plenary, that her

country could unfortunately not at this stage accept the recommendations on abolishing the death penalty. However, she said that her Government was working unstintingly to gain the consent of the various social entities on this issue.

A commission has been set up to revise the criminal code and bring it into line with international commitments that the country has entered into. In view of the progress of this work, it is not certain that the death penalty will be withdrawn from the draft code, even though the Burkina Faso representative at the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) stated in October 2013 that abolition was possible within the context of revision of the criminal code.

## **CAMEROON**

When the ACHPR last considered Cameroon in 2009, the Commission recommended that the Government should "Take the necessary and urgent measures towards the abolition of the death penalty in Cameroon". Cameroon has ignored this recommendation; merely responding in its third periodic report that "Cameroon has been observing a de facto moratorium since 1997".

Cameroon is currently revising its criminal code. As part of this reform, abolition of the death penalty has been debated. There would seem to be a consensus for maintaining the death penalty in the forthcoming criminal code, in order not to displease public opinion.

## **CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

FIACAT and Côte d'Ivoire's ACAT met the Ministry of Justice and, the Foreign Ministry to inform them of their concerns. The two ministries expressed their intention "to take the necessary measures to ratify and incorporate in its internal legislation (...) the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on abolition of the death penalty"..

In addition, a committee was being set up to adapt the criminal code and the code of criminal procedure so that they comply with Côte d'Ivoire's international commitments, deleting all references to the death penalty therein.

## **LIBERIA**

In connection with the celebration of World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10 October 2013, Liberia's ACAT requested the Ministry of

Justice to authorise them to visit the Monrovia central prison, and particularly the prison's death row.

By letter of 27 September 2013 the Ministry rejected the ACAT's request, notably "to protect the right to privacy and dignity" of prisoners sentenced to death.

## **MALI**

The human rights situation in Mali was considered by the Council on Human Rights as part of the UPR in January 2013. In June 2013 Mali rejected the recommendations for ratification of the Second Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights because the current context (transitional government and internal crises/) was not favourable for its ratification. On the draft law for abolition of the death penalty, the Government considered that public awareness campaigns would be needed to facilitate acceptance by the public. For this reason the Government was rejecting the recommendation concerning this, pending a more receptive public response to abolition of the death penalty.

After the August presidential elections and the December legislative elections in 2013 and the establishment of a stable government, an awareness campaign targeted on opinion-formers, especially religious leaders, appears to be the best way of moving towards abolition of the death penalty in Mali.

## **CHAD**

Chad is committed to revising its criminal code and code of criminal procedure so as to comply with its international commitments. A draft criminal code has been drawn up and is currently awaiting adoption by the Government. Unfortunately the text maintains the death penalty.

Thus Article 17 of the draft criminal code states: "The following shall be classified as crimes: offences punished by the death penalty, life imprisonment or a sentence of long-term deprivation of liberty with a minimum of more than ten years". Under the terms of Article 19 of the draft code: "The main punishments shall be (a) the death penalty, (b) imprisonment, (c) fines".

Article 22 of this text clearly states: "Persons sentenced to death shall be executed by firing squad. The bodies of the executed persons shall be delivered to their families, if they claim them, requiring the families to have them buried without any ceremony".

## PRISONER SUPPORT NOTES



Members will be aware that for many years our prisoner support work has been concentrated on Zambia. The committee has decided that we should now turn our attention elsewhere, and the possibility of establishing a prisoner support scheme in Zimbabwe has been discussed.

This would run on the same lines as the scheme serving Zambia, but **would not** involve the provision of financial support although we would encourage people to campaign more for their prisoner.

We have details of several organisations involved in human rights affairs in Zimbabwe which could probably provide details of prisoners in that Country who would welcome the idea of exchanging letters with someone here in the UK, but before we take the matter further we would like to see the level of support among ACAT members for what we have in mind.

Could I therefore ask anyone who would be interested in becoming involved with the planned scheme to contact me by letter or e-mail by the 1st of July, so that we can discuss the situation at the meeting of the committee to be held later in that month.

Ken Watson, Co-ordinator.

34, Wantage Road, Reading, RG30 2SF  
e-mail: [ken335@btinternet.com](mailto:ken335@btinternet.com)

*PS Please note this is not a continuation of the Christian Support for Overseas Prisoners scheme which was closed at the last AGM but a fresh look at the campaign which has been in existence for many years.*  
(Editor)



## From the Treasurer

A couple of pleas:

1. If you pay your subscription by cheque please think about paying by standing order (bank details below). Not only does this mean that you do not have to remember when your subscription is due and have to have pay postage on sending it but we do not incur the postage costs of reminding you should you forget. You have complete control of standing orders and we cannot alter them in any way (unlike a direct debit for which the recipient can alter the amount paid).

2. For some years we have been running two bank accounts, one with National Westminster and the other with CAF Bank. Nowadays virtually all transactions are done through the latter for various practical reasons. In fact we only keep the National Westminster account open as quite a number of you pay your subscription into it by standing order. We would like to close this account and would therefore ask that, if you do this\*, you cancel the payment to our National Westminster account and instead set up a payment to our CAF Bank account (details below).

Reminder: subscriptions are £20 if you are working but £10 if you are not and £50 for groups.

Many thanks

Ray Dunnett

\* If you are not sure which account you pay into please contact me (details at the end of the newsletter).

Bank details:

CAF Bank Ltd 25 Kings Hill Avenue, West Malling, Kent ME 19 4JQ.

Sort code: 40-52-40

Account number: 00007187

Account name: Action by Christians Against Torture (ACAT-UK)



## **Help needed at Justice & Peace Conference!**

ACAT has a display stand at the National Justice & Peace Network Conference in Swanwick, Derbyshire from Friday 18 July to Sunday 20 July.

For ACAT to get the best out of this opportunity, we need to show a face at the stand, at least for some of the time.

If you are going to the NJPN Conference and would like to offer some time during the breaks in Conference proceedings, please contact Kevin Burr at [kevin@the-burrs.co.uk](mailto:kevin@the-burrs.co.uk).”

## **Help also needed next year in Exeter**

For the last few years ACAT -UK has had a stall at the Christian Resource Exhibition, 2 years ago in Exeter and last year in Bristol.

We have decided to attend the exhibition to be held in Exeter at Westpoint Exhibition Centre in February 2015 on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11th but will need help to man it during the 2 days of the exhibition, We will be able to set up and dismantle the stand but the help will be needed during the day.

Several members who live locally kindly helped us 2 years ago and we are hoping that we can get similar assistance in 2015. Most of our Committee live in the East so it is impractical for them to come to help.

If you feel able to assist please contact me at the office email or postal address.

Margaret

## Talking to Churches

You probably know the song 'I talk to the trees'. The second line I seem to remember is 'But they don't listen to me.'

Believe me, you will get far more of a response from church groups when you talk about the work of ACAT, if it's only a whole load of questions.

I talked to a local church group recently (it wasn't a sermon!) and I can see why some members of ACAT-UK might be shy of doing the same thing in a nearby church. I wasn't sure of the response I would receive, how long I should speak for, how much detail I should give, and would I be able to answer any questions they might ask?

But, as the talk progressed, these worries subsided. The group (of 7 people) were interested, asked questions (during the talk and not just at the end), and I hope, will form a new group of letter writers.

### History and Aims

I mentioned the history and aims of ACAT-UK, its association with FIACAT and the fact that the organisation has active branches in over 38 countries. This was quite a surprise to some of the listeners. 'I thought you were only a small charity', said one. I told them of the vast number of members in France and said we had quite a way to go to compete with them!

Our main leaflet sets out our aims and the relationship between our Christian faith and the evils of torture. That's really all you need when giving a talk. There's no need for a high tech 'Powerpoint Presentation' unless you want to, and know how to do it. In fact, it's probably more 'listener friendly' if you just talk about ACAT, and refer to our main leaflet and to the other literature that is readily available, if you don't already have it.

It helps to mention actual appeals that are in the Newsletter and of any appeals you know of. In this way you can make your talk more personal and individual.

## **Encouragement**

So, I would encourage all our members to offer to talk to a small group at their local church.

Deep down many Christians, I believe, are pleased to feel their faith can be put into some form of action which has a real relevance to and benefit for the world. Talking to a group about the work and witness of ACAT can help to channel that interest into a real, positive way of using their faith to help victims of torture and ill treatment.

Prayer is an essential part of our witness and a short time of quiet and prayer for the tortured and torturers at the end of the meeting will, one hopes, help to concentrate minds on the essential humane work we try to do.

To sum up, therefore:-

1. Pray for guidance in setting up a meeting about ACAT.
2. Take as much literature as you can use.
3. Encourage questions both during and after your talk (if you cannot answer a question, say so, but add that you will try to find out the answer. (Please feel free to contact me if this does happen - my email is [richard.dentdent@btinternet.com](mailto:richard.dentdent@btinternet.com)) although I may not know the answer either!
4. Don't be shy! People who come will be genuinely interested in what you have to say.
5. Finish with a time of quiet and prayer.

Above all, be assured you are doing God's work, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We urgently need more members, to pray, to write appeal letters, and to expand our work.

**IF WE DON'T DO IT, WHO WILL!**

Richard Dent

## AGM and Conference

This year the AGM and Conference will be held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October in Bristol. The venue as in previous years will be Broadmead Baptist Church, Union St, Broadmead, Bristol.

We will have several vacancies on the already very small Committee. Margaret will be stepping down as Chairman having stayed a year longer than originally anticipated, although is standing for committee membership again, also another long serving member of the committee may be retiring. In any case there is space for more members.

We now need to have new committee members as we are an ageing committee and we simply will be unable to continue long term with the numbers we have on it.

There are several suggestions for speakers at the Conference so watch this space.

Paperwork related to the day will be available in the next mailing.

### SOS TORTURE



We are celebrating the Great Event which makes sense of the work of ACAT, and especially SOS's work of faith - the death of Jesus as a victim of atrocious torture, and his vindication by God as the one whom death could not destroy.

With this in mind and heart, we labour on!!!

Anselm SSF

## Talk to Bishopston Methodist Church Ladies Group

I also have been busy speaking about the work of ACAT -UK and approached the talk in a very similar way to Richard.

However, being a little more computer literate I did the talk with the help of a lap top and data projector using a Power Point presentation.

In this way I was able to put various illustrations up for the ladies to see and make the talk more user friendly.

I introduced the history of ACAT and the aims and objectives of ACAT-UK. I then talked about how the work is very closely linked to the Christian faith as we follow a man who was arrested, brutally treated and tortured to death following an unfair trial.

We looked at various cases and how the facts of the cases were misleading and unfair.

Then finally I talked about the Power of Prayer being part of our work, which sets us apart from other Human Rights Groups as prayer is actually part of our mandate.

The ladies were very interested and asked lots of pertinent questions.

It was good to have a cup of tea with them afterwards and equally good that they are intending to join us and campaign for the ill treated and abused.

I must have done something right as they have asked me to return in September to talk about another activity of mine - DOG AID which is a charity helping me to train my little dog as a support dog for myself!

Margaret Russell

*NB as Richard said in his article a data projector is not completely necessary to give a talk but sometimes it is a great aid. If you would like to borrow the ACAT-UK data projector please contact the Office and if possible we will get it to you. You need the use of a laptop or desk top computer to go alongside it*

## *PRAYER AND MEDITATION*

‘What is’t you read?’ asks Polonius of Hamlet. ‘Words, words, words!’ is the Prince’s answer.

A friend and I were discussing a church service we both attended recently. ‘There are just too many words’ she said. ‘Is it perhaps because people who worship just can’t think of what to say for themselves when they pray?’

Whatever the answer, I thought our prayers and meditation this time should contain fewer words and more time for realising (i.e. ‘making real’) God’s presence.

Take time, therefore, to be still in both body and mind. Allow the Holy Spirit to work in you; realise you are loved, are worthy and of great value to God. He has a purpose for you and His love for us all will reveal that purpose.

Give thanks for that love and that purpose you have and ask for it to be channelled into a way that strengthens your own faith and helps other people.

Only then, I think, pray in words directed to specific people or needs. Use few words and intersperse them with periods of quietness of mind. Allow the Holy Spirit to do the work, not you!

It might help to have a picture in your imagination of a prisoner or a possible torture cell when praying particularly for ACAT and the people we try to help.

We cannot travel to the detention centre or cell and unlock the door to set the tortured free, but prayer knows no boundaries.

Think broadly, pray specifically and TAKE TIME.

‘Holy Spirit of God, you strengthen our faith and give direction to our prayer; help each of us to do your will, in your way, and in your time. We ask this for Jesus Christ’s sake’, your resurrected and ever-living Son. Amen’

Richard Dent

# A final Thought '

*"The rights of every man  
are diminished when the  
rights of one man are  
threatened."*

*J F Kennedy*

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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Bristol, BS4 2ST

By 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014

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