



**action**  
**by**  
**Christians**  
**against**  
**torture**

*‘A Powerhouse of Prayer*

,

**acat - opposing torture - promoting compassion**

*Oct/Nov 2007*

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- **APPEALS: PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, PHILIPPINES, ERITREA, IRAN, PERU**
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Dear friends,

Think of a person for whom you have an enormous love. Imagine one day that this person is no longer around; they are not where you would expect to find them and no one can (or will) say anything to help you find out where they might be.

In effect, your love one has 'disappeared.'

Sadly, as we know from the news, it happens - all too frequently. And often the first step to a person being tortured is their sudden disappearance and a blanket of silence surrounding the circumstances of that disappearance.

On 6 February 2007 - 57 countries signed the "International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance." Since then a number of other countries have signed. However, for such a treaty to have any effect, it is essential that the countries who signed it ratify it as soon as possible, because the Convention, which was adopted on 20 December 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly in New York, needs to be ratified by 20 countries before it can come into force.

According to FIACAT:

*Forced disappearance now constitutes a crime, and may even be an element of a crime against humanity. Victims, or their families, are recognised as having the right to know the truth, and as entitled to protection and reparation. Countries have an obligation to take preventive measures, by increasing safeguards in connection with detention, and in particular by imposing an absolute ban on secret detention. The crime of forced disappearance still unfortunately has great contemporary relevance in various regions of the world, even under democratic regimes. This day provides an opportunity to remind countries of their human rights and humanitarian law obligations towards people who have disappeared and their family members.*

According to The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Triesman): *"the UK was active throughout the negotiations to draft the UN International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and we supported its adoption last year at both the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly."*

However, as yet... the UK hasn't signed this yet.

I leave it to you as to whether or not you wish to raise questions with your own MPs as to why the UK hasn't even signed (let alone ratified) this Convention. As you do this, let me remind you of our title as an organisation. It is not "Discussion by those who are aware of the existence of someone called Jesus Christ who are in some way not particularly happy about the way some people treat other people"... but Action by Christians Against Torture.

As someone once prayed, "May the peace of God thoroughly disturb you."

Best wishes to you all,

**Tom Bayliss**

## ABORTION - ACAT'S POSITION

A number of our members will have learned in recent months of Amnesty's change of mandate, which now includes campaigning in favour of abortion in certain instances, particularly rape and incest. As you may also have heard the Pope has stressed the right to life and urged all Roman Catholics to stop supporting Amnesty. We understand that a number of Roman Catholics have decided, as a result, to discontinue their support for the human rights organisation. Members of the Committee have been asked for ACAT's stand on this issue by Roman Catholic members and by Justice and Peace organisations and statements have been sent out from the office.

ACAT campaigns for the abolition of torture, the threat of torture, extra judicial executions, those subjected to death threats and "disappearances". This is a narrow mandate compared with that of Amnesty, which is not governed by charity law. It can alter its campaigning to take in other issues as the membership and its governing body decrees.

ACAT, on the other hand, is governed by charity law. It is not allowed to campaign on an issue, which could seek to change a country's law or policy (including the UK). This is why the death penalty campaign, for example, is run by ACAT (Abolition of the Death Penalty) which is non charitable. ACAT (UK) cannot therefore campaign on abortion issues nor would it want to do so.

ACAT (UK) is not linked with Amnesty and is not affiliated to it, although it is often a source of information and cases. We are affiliated to the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture. FIACAT, as far as we are aware, does not have a policy on abortion. Its Charter is solely concerned with torture. It bases its work on Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning torture, ill treatment, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Charter states, "Our associations unite Christians of all traditions in common action. They are independent of political parties, governments or any sectarian organisations."

Do please contact the office if you still have concerns or need further clarification.

*Eleanor Newland*

## FOR YOUR PRAYERS

### **LOBSANG THOKMEY AND RONGGYE A'DRAK, TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION, CHINA**

Lobsang Thokmey, a Tibetan nomad, from a village in Lithing Province was arrested on 19 August at a guesthouse in Chengdu, Sichuan Province - he has "disappeared".

Ronggye A'Drak was arrested on 1 August when speaking about the importance of the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet at the annual Lithing horse racing festival; he is held incommunicado at the local Public Security Detention Centre.

**FRANKLIN LABIAL, PHILIPPINES**, peasant leader and President of United Farmers Association and other similar groups; he was gunned down in front of his home in Bukidnon Province, Mindanao because of his work defending the rights of local farmers and indigenous people against big business; pray for other leaders and human rights defenders in these areas under threat of death.

**LEUL GEBREAB, PASTOR OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH AND CHURCH MEMBERS, ERITREA**, arrested on 12 August and held incommunicado; also members of the Full Gospel Church arrested on 19 August in Asmara and also held incommunicado; there is terrific persecution of pastors and members of the evangelical churches in Eritrea; 2000 are in detention under horrific conditions.

**MANSOUR OSANLOO, HIS WIFE, PARVENEH OSANLOO AND HIS SISTER, IRAN**; Mansour, president of a trade union, was abducted and badly beaten in July; he is held in Evin Prison, where torture is common; his wife and sister have been harassed and threatened.

**FAMILIES OF SIX YOUNG PEOPLE, INCLUDING A 12 YEAR OLD**, shot and stabbed to death by soldiers outside the Presbyterian Church, in Callqui, an Andean village in Peru 1984 - they were attending a prayer and praise meeting - 2 have been charged with murder but 3, including the Captain in charge of the unit, were included in the indictment but not charged. Pray for an end to impunity for this and so many other human rights abuses and massacres in Peru and other countries.



## LOVING HANDS

I had a sorrow so deep that human love could not penetrate its deepest recesses.  
I stumbled through the valley of suffering in my mind, down down into the depths of darkness.

And there in the tearless pain beyond pain I saw two hands outstretched.  
Two pierced hands - that was all I could see - two pierced hands held out to me.

I knew my sorrow was shared to the uttermost,  
that I did not stand alone in the darkness,  
that every part of my pain was understood.  
Two loving hands - that was all I could see - two pierced hands held out to me.

I felt no lessening of pain.  
the stark reality of sorrow was still there, to be faced and lived with.  
But I was not alone.  
In healing silence two pierced hands had held mine in the depths of that darkness -two sharing hands - that was all I had seen - two sharing hands held out to me.

# INFORMATION ON EXECUTIONS AND THE DEATH PENALTY

## EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

There has been an increase in Iran over the past 2 months in the number of executions. Many of them carried out in public. It is considered that this is in response to the alleged a US backed plot to topple the Iranian government and to create a climate of intimidation within the country.

The Government launched a campaign targeting murderers, sex offenders, drug traffickers and others seen as a threat to "social security". There followed a wave of arrests in working class areas of Tehran and other cities. Detainees were often paraded in humiliating poses in public. The Government has insisted that it is targeting "thugs" and dangerous criminals but at least three of those recently executed in public were political activists. There has also been a crackdown on student activists and academics, accused of fomenting "soft revolution" with American support.

### PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

The most high profile public execution for five years took place recently in Tehran. Majid Kavousifar and his nephew, Hassan Moghaddas, were hanged from cranes high above Tehran's business centre, outside the judiciary department headquarters, for the murder of a notorious hard-line judge, Hassan Moghaddas. The location was near the Australian and Japanese embassies and was witnessed by many middle class Iranians, who would not normally have witnessed executions.

Other executions have been carried live on state television, including the public executions in Masshad of 7 men, guilty of kidnap, rape, theft and committing "indecent acts". Last month state television broadcast footage of the execution in Evin Prison of 12 men, found guilty of "rape, sodomy, and assault and battery". Homosexuals were among those who have been executed.

### INCREASE IN EXECUTIONS

Iran ranks second only to China in the number of executions carried out. The rising death toll has brought the number of executions so far this year to over 170. It also has the world's worst record for executing defendants for crimes committed when they were under 18. Two people were stoned to death last year despite the 2002 moratorium on stoning. Others remain under sentence of stoning to death. Last September Iranian human rights defenders launched a campaign to save nine women and two men sentenced to death by stoning and to secure the abolition its abolition.

Human rights organisations are concerned over the rising number of executions since President Ahmandinejab took office two years ago. There are however some signs of official disquiet over the recent rise in executions and in public executions. Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, the relatively moderate judiciary chief, has criticised the President's government on a range of issues. He has also ordered an investigation into claims by student activists that they were tortured recently in Evin Prison. However it is unlikely that the wave of executions will be stayed or reduced. The hard line chief prosecutor for Tehran sought and obtained death sentences against 17 men classed as "hooligans"; they were executed at the beginning of September.

*Eleanor Newland*

## TO BE SUED IN UK OVER TORTURE.

The news that MI5 and MI6 are to be sued for the first time over torture is indeed news.

A British man who was held in Guantanamo Bay has launched a landmark civil action against MI5 and MI6 over the tactics they use to gather intelligence, according to 'The Guardian' newspaper.

Tarek Dergoul, 29, claims he was repeatedly tortured while held by the US in Afghanistan and Guantanamo, and that British agents who had also questioned him were aware of the mistreatment.

If Mr. Dergoul succeeds it would mean that MI5 and MI6 could not interrogate British nationals while they are being held and tortured abroad.

He was released back to Britain in 2004 without charge.

Mr. Dergoul said ' This action comes at a time when people all over the world need protection from torture and abuse by governments which say they represent and uphold human rights'

His lawyer, Louise Christian, said ' We seek to establish the absolute ban on torture means it is wholly unlawful for the UK security services to take advantage of torture carried out by other states.'

This case should be a great encouragement to all ACAT members to continue the campaign to end torture worldwide.

### **Final Reminder**

The ACAT AGM and CONFERENCE is on 13<sup>th</sup> October at Broadmead Baptist Church, Union St, Bristol. 10.30am to 4.30pm

We have two excellent Speakers:

Craig Murray, who will talk about his experiences as UK Ambassador in Uzbekistan

and

Andrew Hogg, Publicity Officer at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

Both Speakers will have much to say on torture and its effects on the lives of people.

**This year the day will be free of charge please do find the time to come.**

**It will be worth it.**

## SUNNY STOCKPORT !

The sun didn't shine very much but the people were most welcoming!

My recent visit to Wycliffe Congregational Church, Stockport to take a service and to speak about ACAT was a delight. It was particularly good to meet Alan John Davies, who was released from prison in Thailand and returned to the UK in May. He had been in various jails in the country for 17 years for offences that he did not commit, and quite apart from his own pains of imprisonment, had witnessed much suffering and cruelty.

The congregation at Wycliffe were very interested in our ACAT (UK) literature and I hope there will be a good influx of new members as a result.

Thanks particularly go to Ann and Alan Everett for their kind and generous hospitality during my stay.

Don't forget that ACAT (UK)'s aim is to have a group of members and letter writers in every church in the land. We have a way to go but are keen to get there.

*Richard Dent*



### **Urgent request from the Treasurer**

I have had a major problem with my computer whilst I was submitting a Gift Aid claim. This resulted in data being lost for some members. These members are those who gift aid and receive their mailing by e-mail. It is quite specific.

If you think you fall into this category I would be very grateful if you could contact me with details of your membership. I.e. your renewal date (if you know it) and any payments you have made from January this year.

The problem has been fully resolved I believe, and I am really just needing to tidy up some shortfalls in information held.

Thank you for your understanding and assistance.

Computers are not always reliable!!

Margaret



# NEWS

## *From around the country*



### St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol

Widening the ACAT letter-writing circle at St. Mary Redcliffe (SMR), Bristol

Until 15 July this year, the ACAT SMR group comprised about 6 individuals or couples who wrote regular letters of appeal. That number more than doubled as a result of an "ACAT SMR re-launch" as Simon Taylor, SMR Priest in Charge styled it. Rev Richard Dent spoke about ACAT's aims and actions and drew attention to specific appeals in the June/July Newsletter, which Simon had re-formatted, into individual A5 leaflets for concerned parishioners to read and act upon.

7 new couples/individuals signed up to write a letter every two months. Follow-up phone calls by the ACAT SMR co-ordinator found that the recurring reason for their doing so was "It's one small way of doing something for the prisoners."

Clearly the re-launch was not cataclysmic - yet. The group is still very small and currently limited to letter writing but our aim is to keep ACAT popping up into SMR consciousness.

Last Christmas about 30 parishioners sent cards in response to the ACAT Christmas appeal and of course they made the connection when hearing Rev Dent's address 7 months later on 15 July. This Christmas we shall repeat the card appeal and next year invite another speaker so that more and more parishioners want to "do something for the prisoners."

**Angela Hogg**

### **Bristol**

The first Sunday in August was the day of the Amnesty Garden Party. As always the Bristol people had a stall there to raise money for ACAT selling various bric a brac items. The weather up to Saturday had been pretty bad and it was with some reservations that I packed my car full of tables, chairs, boxes and other paraphernalia for sale. (Goldney Gardens where the Garden Party was to be held is very pretty but there is no shelter from the elements).

Anyway, it was a beautiful day, the sun shone and the people were out, keen to support all the charities and we were able to tell people a little of our aims and objectives and at the same time to raise awareness of all Human Rights issues along with the other groups. It was so nice I actually had some sunburn.

After a very busy afternoon we counted the money raised and it came to a very credible £140 give or take the loose change. A very good afternoon's work and I know it will be put to good use.

Thank you to Richard Dent and David Loveridge a stalwart Bristol and Broadmead Baptist Church Group member and to everyone who came along to support us.

**Margaret Russell**

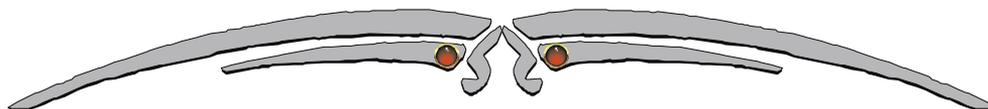
## News from Sister O'Carroll

Sister Catherine from the Convent of Mercy in Clevedon has written

"I recently conveyed information regarding ACAT in our Bi-Monthly newsletter which is sent to all our convents to stimulate interest in the work of ACAT. So it would have a readership of approximately 150 people. Hopefully, it will bear some fruit.

Although we will be moving from our convent here in Clevedon in the not too distant future, I hope to continue to promote interest in the very edifying work of ACAT.

I always find your Newsletter so interesting and I am in admiration of the research that you do".



## Reminder from the Treasurer

Membership subscriptions increased this year and in the January mailing I did ask that members who pay by Standing Order contact their Banks to adjust their Mandate, or to contact me for a new Mandate. Unfortunately, many members have not done this. This creates a fair amount of additional work and cost to us.

Please would members who pay by Standing Order check their subscriptions have been amended. To those who have already done this I would like to thank you as it does make a difference to the work involved.

I am putting reminders regarding Subscriptions in with this mailing. If you need to find out if you pay by Standing Order just check the label on your mailing 's' = Standing order, 'g' = gift aid. For those who receive the mailing by e-mail, contact me and I will let you know.

With many thanks for your continued support of ACAT.

Margaret

(NB, copies of Gift Aid forms and Bank Mandates can be downloaded from our Website [www.acatuk.org.uk](http://www.acatuk.org.uk), or obtained from me)

### New Byrne Family CD.

Patrick Byrne, a former President of FIACAT, and his family have produced a new CD. Their last CD ' Crossing Borders' sold very well. The new one contains 16 tracks of similar songs and instrumental pieces made by the talented Byrne family, young and old.

All proceeds will go to support post-war reconstruction projects in Kuhala, Congo-Brazzaville led by the local branch of Caritas, the international humanitarian aid organisation.

*(I would recommend this disc...Margaret)*

## NEWS FLASH.

The proposed World Day of Prayer for a Moratorium on Executions in China, which was set for 10th October, has been postponed.

It will now be held in 2008, nearer to the start of the Olympic games in China.

We are still asked to pray, of course, for an end to executions in China of which there are many.

## Membership Information

As you have read earlier in this mailing I have had problems with my computer.

Some membership information was lost (never to be seen again). Along with the subscription records some addresses also went.

I have managed with the help of past records and contacting some members to build the records again but it may be that some addresses are either old, or slightly incorrect.

If this is the case, please do let me know and I will amend as necessary. Thank you for your help in this matter.

It has taught me to always keep a back up file!!

Margaret

# *Prayers and Meditations*

**(Pause after each petition and call to mind a country where such conditions obtain or an individual whose case you have heard of.)**

**We pray** for those who are suffering now. For those in prison, maybe in solitary confinement, for their opposition to an oppressive regime.

For those detained without trial, unable to contact relatives, lawyers or a doctor. For those being tortured at this very moment.

Lord, be with them in their desperation. Assure them of your presence. Use our prayers to help them.

**We pray** for families who have lost someone - a mother or father, a sister or brother, a child.

For those awaiting news of a relative held hostage. For young people whose minds have been damaged by conflict. For men and women in exile from their native land. For asylum seekers and refugees in this country

Lord, in a world of divided families and homeless wanderers, give your comfort to all those who know no security, who do not have anywhere to sleep at night and who may not get a meal for days.

**We pray** for those who commit violence, who shoot, bomb and torture.

For regular soldiers and pressed recruits. For irregular militias serving corrupt masters and warped ideologies. For interrogators ignoring mercy and compassion. For suicide bombers abandoning their humanity.

Lord, recall them to common values, untangle their knotted and distorted hearts and help them to recognise the divinity in themselves and in those they abuse.

**We pray** for those who make the laws and enforce them, who give the orders and direct the violence. For those who need to hear the voice of love and truth. For those who distance

themselves from the suffering they cause. For those who have espoused the heresy of redemptive violence in defending the values of peace and security.

Lord, speak to them through their consciences and hold before them your example of sacrificial love. Open their eye that they may see the suffering for what it is, a denial of humanity on their part.

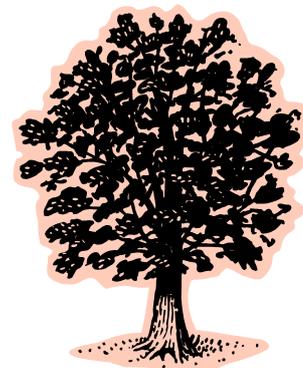
**We pray** for the people on whose behalf we are writing, whose plight we have learnt of from this newsletter. For each victim as we name him or her. For the government of their country, that it may come to recognise the error of its ways. For the effectiveness of our prayers and letters.

Lord, encourage and strengthen them and us as we seek to build bridges of love between us.

**We pray** for the international community, which so often stands by as evil strikes, or steps in too late or too feebly. Open the ears of world leaders to the cries of the oppressed. Inspire them with the ideals of the United Nations and bless that organisation in its labours. Empower all those groups who work for human rights and gospel values.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ whose words and works give us heart and hope.

**Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.**



# 'A Final Thought'

If many little people  
In many little places  
Do many little deeds  
They can change the face of the  
Earth

*African Proverb*

We hope you enjoy this mailing.

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

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

Margaret Russell  
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**Please let us have  
material for the next  
mailing by the 20<sup>th</sup>  
November**

Or e-mail [uk.acat@googlemail.com](mailto:uk.acat@googlemail.com)

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