



**action**

**by**

**Christians**

**against**

**torture**

Oct/Nov 2008

# 'A Powerhouse of Prayer'

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

Edmund Burke

In this Mailing: -

# Committee Letter

This letter is being written on the Feast of Matthew.

Matthew as we all know was the Tax Collector, the Levite, the one who was despised by other Jews as being 'in with the Romans', yet he was one who was asked by Jesus to follow him, and he did. As well as following Jesus he celebrated, he invited all his friends to a party to celebrate with his new found master Jesus.

When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when Jesus heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

Matthew went on to use his skills to in a positive way to serve his Lord.

The Conference and AGM will be held in Bristol on Saturday, 11th October from 10.30 am until 4.30p.m. It is a chance for members to meet with the Committee and to share with other like minded people similar views on human rights and especially on torture. We have 2 excellent speakers and the day should be very rewarding and informative. However, we need YOU to make it successful, please do your best to come.

The last few Committee meetings have been spent in looking over the activities of the last year, what has gone well, what not so well, what are the strengths and weaknesses of ACAT and how these can be changed to best serve the purpose of ACAT which is to work to alleviate the evils of torture in the world. Each person on the committee brings a different set of gifts and skills and using these together we can be strong. We are looking to strengthen the committee, especially needing different denominational representatives, someone with 'internet experience' and a Chairman who will lead us and keep us on track.

This year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nation Declaration of Human Rights; Eleanor Roosevelt with others used their skills in developing the declaration and getting many nations to 'sign up' for it. We are looking at various ways to mark this anniversary and there is more of this later in this newsletter.

So please, be like Matthew, enjoy life, but remember those who suffer daily as a result of torture and Human Rights abuse in the world and pray for them. We always have appeals in the mailing together with all the information required to write to governments and other parties. Should you feel able to take on more of this work Brother Anselm will be only too pleased to sign you up as a member of the SOS Torture scheme and he will be able to tell you more of this work.

**However**, we may not all be able to write the letters or send e-mails but there is one thing we can and should do and that is to PRAY ACAT's 'strap line' is - ACAT a Power House of Prayer, that is our strength as an organisation and that is what sets us apart from other similar organisations.

Let's all use this strength and gift and pray for us, for the work of ACAT and for all who are experiencing abuse in the world today,

## **APPEALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS ONLY**

### **IRAN - ONE MILLION SIGNATURES CAMPAIGN**

The One Million Signatures Campaign (Campaign for Equality) was launched by Iranian women's rights defenders in August 2006. The Campaign gathers signatures from Iranians opposed to laws, which discriminate against women. The leaders of the Campaign target artists, academics, intellectuals, political parties, policy makers and community and religious leaders. The Campaign has a web site and organises training, seminars and conferences. It recently put on street plays, addressing polygamy and women's unequal rights in marriage. The authorities have harassed them from the start and prevented meetings and peaceful demonstrations. Meetings, seminars and conferences are now banned. Almost 50 members have been arrested over recent months, some while gathering signatures and other when meetings in private homes have been broken up. Some have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

Ronak Safarzadeh is detained and awaiting a trial on a charge of "moharebeh" (enmity with God) which can carry the death penalty. In August 2008 Zeynab Beyezidi, a Kurdish women's rights activist and a member of the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan was sentenced to 4 years imprisonment and internal exile. Kurdish women's rights activist, Hana Abdi, was given a sentence of 5 years to be served in exile "for gathering and colluding to commit, a crime against national security" - she belonged to the Campaign for Equality and a local NGO.

### **SOS TORTURE SCHEME**

We now have 33 writers of appeals in the scheme, which is open to all ACAT members who receive usually two appeals each month in addition to those in the two monthly mailing. This makes it possible for the appeal to reach the authorities concerned much more quickly, and thus increases their effectiveness.

As long as torture persists as a weapon in the hands of the unscrupulous so long will there be a need for Christians to raise a voice for the voiceless victims.

So, we must persevere in the service of the God who was tortured for us so that all God's children might have life.

Anselm

### **60th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

December 10th will mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a very significant event. It came into being on a great wave of optimism and hope after the appalling devastation and loss of human life of the Second World War. The leaders of the world said "Never Again!" Many of the clauses have been reinforced by international statutes, covenants and conventions over the years. The International Criminal Court has been established and is the means of enforcing various of these measures.

Since 9/11 a number of countries have adopted various anti-terrorist measures at variance with the rights and safeguards enshrined in international laws. It is important that we, as ACAT, give thanks for what has been achieved over the past 60 years and remain vigilant to oppose the withdrawal of these rights in many parts of the world.

Prayers, service sheets and a set of display materials will be available from Margaret Russell, 47 Stoneleigh Road, Knowle Park, Bristol BS4 2RH Email : uk.acat@gmail.com and also at the AGM on 11 October.

### **NOTELETS**

**Notelets are still being produced by Mrs Turner. These are printed from original paintings done by Prisoners at Kabwe prison and other Prisons in Zambia. All profits go to ACAT UK and the Prisoners have received payment for this work**

**Contact Mrs M Turner, 29 Darvell Close, Chesham, Bucks**

**Please use this address and NOT the Office address**

## FRANCO'S VICTIMS

The Spanish high court judge, Baltasar Garzon, has taken up the issue of the victims of the civil war between 1936 and 1939 and the subsequent 36 year dictatorship of General Franco, who lie in thousands of unmarked graves. He is well known for his attempts to extradite Augusto Pinochet from the UK and also for pursuing former Argentine army and navy officers for crimes committed during the "dirty war" there. He has sent an official request to various government archives, the Catholic Church, the keepers of Franco's tomb, and the city halls of Madrid, Granada, Seville, and Cordoba for documentation on mass graves. He is asking for names, dates and circumstances of the deaths of victims. This is the first time that any such official action has been taken.

In 2007 the Spanish parliament passed the Historical Memory Law, which has at long last recognised the victims of Franco's regime. It also ordered the removal of Francoist symbols from public places. But it only offered vague support concerning the identification and exhumation of graves. Because of lack of will in the recent past, it has been left to voluntary organisations to begin the work of finding out what happened to some of the victims. The Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, one such organisation, has with its team of volunteer forensic scientists; archaeologists and anthropologists over the past 8 years excavated 120 mass graves containing around 1,200 victims.

Although Baltasar Garzon has now taken up the issue of the victims of the Civil War and the Franco era, he can only assume jurisdiction over the cases if he finds proof of a nationwide, systematic plan to eliminate the regime's enemies. This will be time consuming and difficult.

Historians estimate that from the beginning of the civil war between Franco's Nationalists and the supporters of the Republicans until Franco's death, the Franco forces killed around 150,000 and the Republicans about 60,000, most during the war. The regime recovered almost all the Nationalist dead. It is estimated that around 100,000 Republican victims may still lie in mass graves.

As well as Baltasar Garzon's campaign, families of individuals who disappeared are also taking action in the high court to ascertain where their loved ones' bodies were buried. Actions such as these are bringing to the fore a public debate on the mass graves and other human rights abuses. For so long it was impossible for the families of victims to get any sort of hearing. The consequences of the Civil War and the long period under Franco, have not killed their need to find out what happened to their loved ones and to recover their remains for proper burial. It is significant that over 60 years later the issues, which never did go away, are now at last beginning to be brought into the public domain. Is it too much to hope that some at least of those who committed human rights abuses during the last years of Franco's "reign" may be brought to justice?

**From an article in The Guardian**

## PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

**KAMAL PUN, NEPAL**, tortured and ill-treated by 5 policemen at local police station, following his arrest in August after a drunken brawl; he needed hospital treatment; he has received threats after he filed a complaint against his treatment.

**EMIL MAMMADOV**, son of NOVRUZALI MAMMADOV, defender of the rights of the Talysh ethnic people, arrested in July and held incommunicado, in order to bring pressure on his father; he suffers from long term mental illness; he and his now deceased brother were arrested and tortured a few years ago for the same reason. Novruzali has been sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in a grossly unfair trial and has lodged an appeal; he has been tortured and ill-treated.

**AYATOLLAH SAYED HOSSEIN KAZEMEYNI BOROUJERDI, MAJID ALASTI, MEHRDAD SOURI, MOHAMMAD-REZA SADEGHI**, held in Evin Prison and MASSOUD SAMAVATIYAN, held in Khoramabad, IRAN, for their peacefully held religious beliefs; Ayatollah Sayed, a Shi'a cleric sentenced in August, to 11 years imprisonment is in urgent need of hospital treatment; he has been tortured and ill-treated.

**MAGOMED YEVLOEV, RUSSIAN FEDERATION**, defender of the rights of the Ingush ethnic group, arrested 31 August, admitted to hospital where he died of gunshot wounds; remember his family and pray for those who killed him to be brought to justice.

**ELIZABETH GOMEZ, LUIZ MARINA ARROYABE, YIMMI JANSASOY, FABIO ARIZA, SENAI DA PARRA, CARLOS TORRES, ANDREA ABELLO, EDUARDO MINA** - members of Interchurch Justice and Peace Commission, and ENRIQUE PETRO, community leader, COLOMBIA, receiving death threats because of their support for Afro-descendant communities targeted by paramilitary groups.

**JENNI WILLIAMS and MAGODONGA MAHLANGU, WOMEN OF ZIMBABWE ARISE**, (human rights group), held in Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison, Harare, for 6 weeks, now on bail awaiting trial in October; for all who have suffered and those who have died over recent months; for Morgan Tsvangerai and the leaders of the MDC as they seek to govern Zimbabwe together with the leaders of ZANU.

**JOSE BATISTA AFONSO**, lawyer from the CATHOLIC LAND COMMISSION, BRAZIL. Imprisoned for his work in Para State for landless peasants; pray for an end to the harassment, the destruction of their homes, school, church, and the campaign to criminalize activists; pray for the work of the Catholic Land Commission on behalf of the poor and oppressed in Brazil.

### PRAYER

*Lord, we remember before you those who amid their suffering and its injustice,  
Feel crushed by the silence and indifference of public opinion  
and for whom being forgotten in this way is an experience of living death,  
since nobody seems to care.*

*Lord, you cried out in agony and despair because your Father had forsaken you;  
hear the groans of those who are bereft of hope.*

*Help us to find the words and the gestures which will bring us closer to them  
so that they may know that we are with them in their agony  
and offer them our real and loving support.*

*We ask this for your Name's sake, who died and rose from the dead  
to lead them and us to new life.* **Amen**

from **Hope in the Darkest Night (FIACAT)**

## HUMAN RIGHTS - WORRYING TRENDS

The European Council on Foreign Relations has issued an audit on European influence at the United Nations, which gives cause for great concern for all who believe in the onward march of human rights in world affairs.

The report states that there has been a sea change over the past ten years in the balance of power at the United Nations in favour of China, India, Russia, the Islamic world and emerging nations, which is resulting in the wrecking of European efforts to promote human rights. In addition the EU's rifts with the United States on many human rights issues have weakened both. This has resulted in a failure to win recent votes in the Security Council on Zimbabwe, Burma, and Darfur.

The audit has found that 10 years ago European policies on human rights enjoyed the support of 71% of UN members but that by this year the support had fallen to 48%. China and Russia defend national sovereignty and non-intervention in sovereign countries no matter how appalling the atrocities and human rights abuses committed within their borders and use the veto to block any action.

In the UN Human Rights Council, based in Geneva, there has been an even worse record in winning the battles for rights and freedoms. In the two years the Council has been in existence, the Islamic bloc secured a change of mandate for the Council's Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression in the wake of the Danish cartoons crisis. The Rapporteur is now under obligation to record instances of blasphemy. This alone gives cause for great concern. In the two years of its existence, the 19 European countries on the 47-strong body have been marginalised, after losing more than half the votes taken on human rights issues.

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## **GOOD NEWS!**

### **STONING -IRAN**

Execution by stoning has been suspended and several women have had their sentences commuted. Iran's Penal Code prescribes execution by stoning for adultery by married persons.

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## **FROM KEN WATSON, PRISONER SUPPORT COORDINATOR**

I would like to remind members that I am expecting to take the paperwork into the Bank relating to the next transfer of funds to Kabwe and Kitwe and also Luanshya if we have then found someone to help us there, on 28th November. I should be glad to receive cheques by the 12th at the latest made payable to ACAT No 2 account to give time for them to clear and also for the necessary paperwork to be prepared and signed by Ray and myself.

As you will note in the Newsletter, the Christmas Card List will be ready soon after the beginning of November. This will, as usual, feature some Zambian prisoners. May I remind members that they, their friends and their congregations should only sign their Christian names on cards to these prisoners and you and they should not add addresses to the card or envelope. If you or they are prepared to enter into correspondence and to provide some financial or material support, which will be sought by prisoners in their subsequent letters, then do by all means add your full name and address.

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## REPLIES

**Vasily Aleksanyan**, Russian Federation - in the last Newsletter - August/September, information was given about replies, which had been received by members. Further letters have been sent out which were slightly different from those already sent. Once again Ken Watson arranged to have these translated, which was much appreciated.

**Mohammad Bsharat** - prominent human rights defender, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories-members have also received long replies from the Ministry of Justice (Newsletter December 2007/Jan 2008); the final information given was that he had been released from detention.

**Ezzat Hajli**, aged 10, - Israel /Occupied Palestinian Territories - beaten, ill-treated and harassed by soldiers (Newsletter August/September); one or two members have received a one sentence reply, stating that the Ministry the appeal was addressed to, had no jurisdiction over the case - it did not give any name or details but it will no doubt be in reply to this particular appeal.

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## CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2008

**This year the Committee has agreed not to run a specific Christmas Appeal.**

**However, we would encourage you to send Christmas Cards to Prisoners and to pay special attention to the Appeals in the next few mailings.**

**Should you wish to send a special donation this would be very gratefully received, especially if you were able to Gift Aid it.**

## CHRISTMAS CARD CAMPAIGN

The Christmas Card List, with details of human rights groups, imprisoned Christians; prisoners of conscience, and prisoners in Zambia etc should be ready to be sent out soon

after the beginning of November. The List will be sent out to all members in a separate mailing either through the post or by email, with full instructions.

Do please encourage others to take part in this important Campaign in as far as you are able. As well as bringing encouragement and support to prisoners etc - the prime aim - it also gives ACAT a chance to publicise its work to individual Christians and churches that might not otherwise hear about it.

Leaflets, posters and prayer materials are always available from the office, free of charge, including postage.

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## **Notes from the Membership Secretary and the Treasurer**

What follows may be mundane and perhaps boring but please read it and act on anything which applies to you so that ACAT can operate as efficiently and effectively as possible to do what is important - working and praying to try to eliminate inhumane treatment of our fellow human beings by other humans.

1. Although we do our best to ensure that our membership records are accurate, inevitably we make mistakes now and then. So, if anything we send you has errors in your name or address, please let us know either by post to the ACAT office or by e-mail to [uk.acat@googlemail.com](mailto:uk.acat@googlemail.com)

2. We send about two thirds of these newsletters by post and the rest by e-mail. For the former group the postage costs especially with the rise in rates earlier this year and the printing costs are quite considerable whereas it costs nothing extra to add someone to the newsletter e-mail list. So, if you are one of those who receive it by post and would be happy to get it by e-mail instead please e-mail us to tell us.

3. We have been very encouraged by the number of members who are now paying their subscription and donating by Standing Order as this reduces our administration load significantly. We would appeal to those who don't to consider doing so and so we include a Standing Order form with this mailing.

We would also ask those who already pay by Standing Order and do so to ACAT's National Westminster account to change their payment so that it goes to ACAT's CAF Bank account. The advantage of this account is that we earn interest on it (currently just over 4% whereas we get none on funds in the National Westminster account). If you make the change, please ensure that you cancel the old payment as well as setting up the new and also that you let us know that you have done this.

4. We are also delighted by the number of members who have signed a Gift Aid form, which enables us to claim an extra 28p for every £1 given. However we are sure that there must be some members who are taxpayers and who have not got round to sending us a Gift Aid form. If you are one of these please complete the attached form and send it to us. For very little effort on your part we can benefit significantly.

At the same time we are aware that changes to tax thresholds and personal situations may mean that some of you who have completed Gift Aid forms now no longer pay tax. In

which case please let us know so that we do not try to reclaim tax to which we are not entitled.

We would add that if you have a spouse who pays tax then, if he or she is willing to complete a Gift Aid form, we are entitled to reclaim the tax on anything you give to ACAT

If you have any queries about any of this please do not hesitate to contact us.

With many thanks for reading all this and, if appropriate, acting on it.

Ray Dunnett - Honorary Treasurer and Margaret Russell - Membership Secretary

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## **Celebrating Thirty Years of Working for Peace and Social Justice**

For the first time ACAT exhibited at the National Conference of the National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN) on the weekend 18-20 July.

Held at Swanwick, Derbyshire, the title this year was 'Hear my people cry', drawing together over 350 J & P activists from across England & Wales, with a parallel programme for about 40 under 16s.

Most of us do our campaigning from an urban base. Sr Margaret Walsh explained the centrality of the Eucharist in developing a spirituality up to the task.

Fr Pat Riordon SJ, took us through important texts of Catholic Social Teaching, *'We must allow ourselves to be changed in the light of the gospels. We were reminded that we must "speak prophetically to our society"'*.

John Battle MP spoke powerfully of his experience working with the poor in an inner city constituency.

Many listeners were moved to tears as they listened to Ivanete de Araújo relating her experience of her family's homelessness on the streets of Sao Paulo, Brazil. *"Those who aren't struggling are dead."*

With a wide range of workshops, opportunities for worship (usually with singing, led by Liverpool's Mike Anderson), the 'Just Fair' stalls open throughout the conference, with open-air games & side-shows for the fit and young, there was plenty to occupy and challenge.

See [www.justice-and-peace.org.uk](http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk) for pictures of conference, and much more.

In 2009, 17-19 July, under the title is 'On the Road Together: A-mazed by Migration' we will explore the question: *People on the move. How does the church respond in a changing world?*

**Kevin Burr**

Don't forget our AGM and Conference being held in  
Bristol on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008

A copy of the proposed Agenda is included with this mailing.

Should you wish to see a copy of our Annual Report these are available from  
the Office

If you need directions e mail us and Margaret will supply some information

# 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 your 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,  
To your glory.

## 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.

## SPIRIT OF GOD

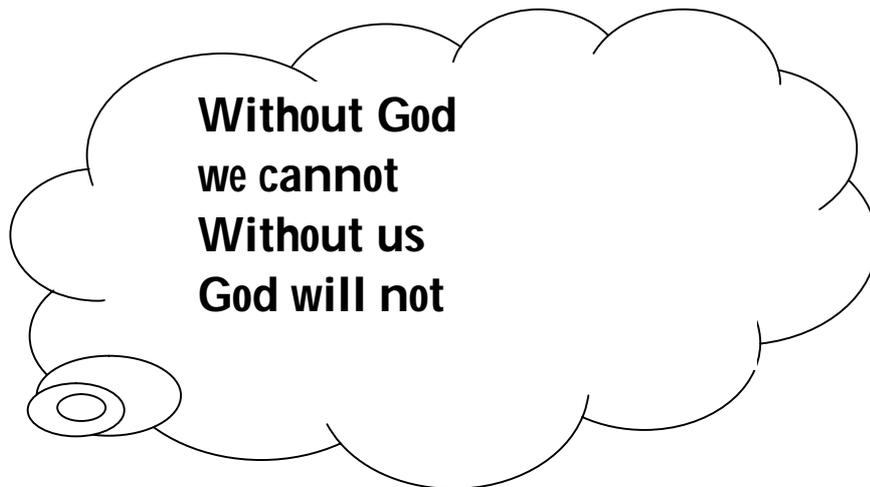
Given by Jesus, active in our hearts,  
You bring us God's love, joy and peace.  
Give us strength to persevere,  
Compassion to stir us,  
And wisdom to guide us

## 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

# 'A Final Thought'



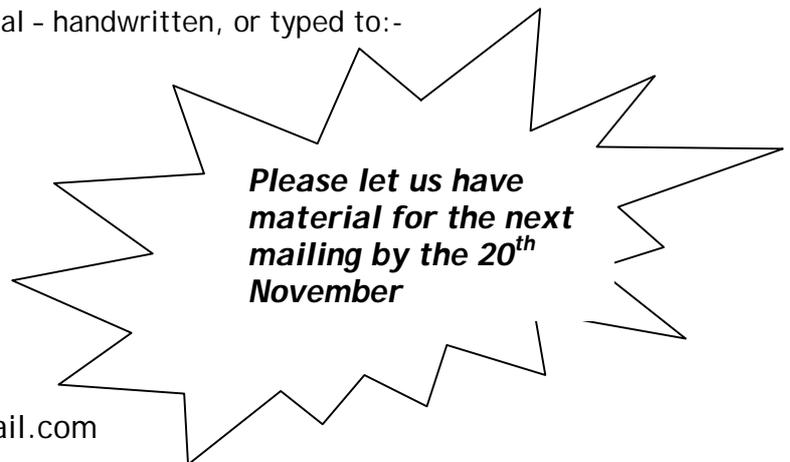
We hope you enjoy this mailing.

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  
47 Stoneleigh Rd  
Knowle Park  
Bristol  
BS4 2RH

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



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