

Our vision is to end torture and complicity in torture, upholding our testimony to peace and equality and working towards healing through reconciliation.

### In the news

Over the last months the press has revealed more information relating to British and US involvement in the use of torture, the use of secret trials, and unwarranted detention.

..Our Government had claimed that British relations with the United States would be damaged if a Pakistani citizen, Yunus Rahmatullah, was allowed to sue for damages in court. Mr Rahmatullah has brought this case because of what happened to him following his detention in Iraq and having been handed over to US troops. Over the following 10 years he was tortured until he was released without charge. In his recent ruling, Mr Justice Leggatt maintained that British courts would have failed in their duty should Mr Rahmatullah's claims not to be dealt with in a court of law and so dismissed the government's claim.

This ruling will influence how three Iraqi men, who claim they were abused by British soldiers at detention facilities in Iraq, will be treated.

..Many people believe that prolonged solitary confinement could be considered a form of torture. Quakers in the United States believe it to be so and have developed 'packs' for prisoners who are isolated in this way, to help them survive such brutal conditions. An item of news that is a cause for rejoicing is that America's longest-serving prisoner incarcerated in 'solitary' has had his conviction overturned. This has been made on the basis of racial bias. Albert Woodfox was convicted of killing a prison guard in 1972, a judgement that is seen to have been secured through racially discriminatory means. Woodfox, who has always protested his innocence, has been held in solitary confinement for almost 43 years, except for a three year 'break' in a general prison. For those long years he was held in a cell that was 6 feet by 8 feet. He was held in there 23 hours a day with one hour of solitary exercise in a concrete yard. The ruling does not yet mean he will be released, but he is closer to it.

..Last year the U.K. government paid out £19.9m to 5228 Kenyans who suffered torture at the hands of the colonial administration during the Mau Mau uprising, its first official

acknowledgment of serious abuse committed during Britain's messy withdrawal from Kenya in the 1950s. It has now been reported (the Guardian 29/10) that a further 40,000 Kenyans are attempting to sue the British government for compensation.

..The highly contentious issue of a person's right to open justice versus secret trials in the 'interests of security' was again under question (see reference on p.2). The court of appeal has imposed unprecedented arrangements for the re-run of a trial of a man, Erol Incedal, who has been charged with plotting terrorist attacks in London. The prosecution had demanded that the entire trial be held in secrecy, and this had been agreed to by the judge, Sir Andrew Nicol. In response, a group of media organisations then appealed against this, on the basis of the need for open justice, it being the core principle of our system of justice. The court of appeal ruled that some parts of evidence were to be heard in open court, while others would be restricted. Restrictions were of two levels of severity. Some of the court's time would be spent behind locked doors. During those sessions the jury were to be warned that they could go to jail if they ever divulged what was heard. In other sessions evidence could be heard by a group of journalists who subsequently would not be allowed to report proceedings.

..Moazzam Begg was a speaker at our Q-CAT conference in 2009. Part of an editorial in the Guardian at the beginning of October about British people travelling to war zones in the Middle East read, "Moazzem Begg, the former Guantanamo Bay detainee who was released this week after a series of terrorism charges against him were suddenly dropped, points out to the Guardian that his trips to Syria were - in one sense - in keeping with Britain's official anti-Assad policy at the time. The treatment of Mr Begg, who was held in detention awaiting trial for more than seven months, is beginning to look dangerously like state harassment....It has now emerged that - as Mr Begg always claimed - he had kept MI5 informed of his activities training anti-Assad fighters in Syria and it was the disclosure of that evidence, not previously known to the police or the CPS, that resulted in the charges being abruptly dropped.

### Q-CAT Trustees

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David Mellor

### Trustees

We welcome to the team David Mellor, from Colwyn Bay meeting, as representative from North Wales Area Meeting.

### The Friend

Hopefully you saw the article in *The Friend* of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014 by the trustees of Q-CAT, under the title *Secret Trials*. Surprisingly there was no response from readers. If you have any comments do let Juliet Morton know.

### Website

Frank Sharman, who has very ably managed our website ([www.q-cat.org.uk](http://www.q-cat.org.uk)) for a number of years, is now retiring. We are so grateful to him for this service to Q-CAT.

We welcome Rosalind Mitchell of Swarthmore Meeting, who is taking over from Frank, and wish her well in this important work of making material available to us and the outside world.

### News from fellow organisations in Wales

We were saddened to hear that after many years dedicated work, Christians Against Torture a campaign of churches in Wales has been laid down though doubtless individuals will carry on its aims.

Good news is that a Freedom from Torture branch is opening in Aberystwyth (contact Sue Jones-Davies at [sue.jonesdavies@googlemail.com](mailto:sue.jonesdavies@googlemail.com)). There are also plans afoot to start one up in Llangollen.

### Quaker Election Guide

When your Meeting receives this in January look out for the section on Torture supplied by Q-CAT, including questions to your candidates (and yourself).

### Atlas of Torture ([www.atlas-of-torture.org](http://www.atlas-of-torture.org))

This project was mentioned in the October Briefing, so some further details might be useful. The Atlas of Torture website is a project of the *Human Dignity and Public Security* team at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (BIM) in Vienna, Austria. It intends to provide an objective overview of the situation of torture and ill-treatment around the world and the content is provided by a team of researchers. The project's purpose is to

- ..raise awareness of the legal framework governing the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment;
- ..compile information on states' (non-)compliance with their obligations under international law to prevent, criminalise, investigate and prosecute cases of torture and ill-treatment;
- ..analyse the underlying structural causes contributing to the continuing practice of torture.

The four main parts of the website are Country Situations, Topics, News, and Things You Should Know. The first of these, with a brief overview of the political and historical context, a synopsis of the most recent official documents and a compilation of relevant documentation, is complete for some countries but not so far for the U.K.. Only official documents are included here and for *Background Information* and *Situation on Torture* a comment reads "Content will be provided shortly". Can we hope this will be enlightening? The News section is well up to date, with items from the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November. This website contains much of interest and importance and is well worth exploring.



*Quakers against Torture*

To receive newsletters by email contact Jane Laxton [from.qcat@hotmail.com](mailto:from.qcat@hotmail.com) and include your Local and Area Quaker Meetings if appropriate.

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