

QUAKER CONCERN FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE (Q-CAT)

Briefing 17

November 2010

Intelligence and Security Committee. Following recommendations from the House of Commons and the House of Lords, eight of the nine Members of the Committee have now been appointed. As of November 2010, the Committee consists of: The Rt.Hon.Sir Malcolm Rifkind, KCMG QC MP (C. Kensington) – appointed for the life of this Parliament; Hazel Blears (Lab. Salford and Eccles); Sir Menzies Campbell (LD. North East Fife); Mark Field (C. Cities of London & Westminster); Paul Goggins (Lab. Wythenshawe & Sale East); George Howarth (Lab. Knowsley North & Sefton East); Julian Lewis (C. New Forest East); Lord Butler of Brockwell. The name of the final member has yet to be announced.

Shaker Aamer - Amnesty International urged Britain and the United States on Monday to free the last British man held in the US-run Guantanamo Bay camp from what it described as "arbitrary detention". British Foreign Secretary William Hague raised the case of Shaker Aamer, who was born in Saudi Arabia but is a British resident, when he visited the United States last week, urging Washington to return him to Britain. Amnesty International's UK director, Kate Allen, has now written to Hague calling for a clear timetable for his release after being held for almost nine years in the camp. "In the absence of charges or a proper trial we now need to see Mr Hague and the US authorities agreeing a specific timetable for Shaker's release," she said in a statement. "Dealing with what the government calls 'legacy issues' in the 'war on terror' must mean ensuring justice for Shaker. William Hague should make it a priority that he is returned to his family in Britain." Allen said Aamer also alleged that he had been tortured "virtually under the noses of UK officials" and demanded his case be investigated. Last week, the British government announced it had agreed compensation for former British detainees of Guantanamo Bay who alleged that British agents had been complicit in their torture by foreign security forces since the September 11 attacks. The deal paved the way for an independent inquiry into the allegations, which is expected to begin by the end of the year. The British government and the head of the foreign spy service MI6 insist they do not use torture. "When it announced financial settlements for former Guantanamo detainees last week the government said it wanted to 'draw a line' under cases involving detention and alleged abuse overseas, yet Shaker Aamer is still languishing in a cell at Guantanamo," Allen said. Copyright © 2010 AFP.

Travel Warning for Book Tour by Scott Horton (Harper's Magazine) London's Tory mayor, Boris Johnson, has some strong words of caution for former president George W. Bush: if you come to Europe to promote your book, pack heavily and be prepared for a long stay. In fact, you may "never see Texas again." As he sees it, Bush's book and statements he has made in efforts to market it constitute admissions of serious crimes. Initial reports about Bush's autobiography did not go over well in Europe, and Britain's new Conservative government was particularly eager to push back against suggestions that their conservatism had any resemblance to the Bush variety. Bush insisted that his decision to use waterboarding and other torture techniques kept Britain safe. But British Conservatives are having none of it. In the case of the three men waterboarded on Bush's orders, British ministers are not aware of any valuable information they gave about plots against Heathrow, Canary Wharf or anywhere else. All the policy has achieved is to degrade America in the eyes of the world, and to allow America's enemies to utter great whoops of vindication. It is not good enough for Dubya now to claim that what he did was OK, because "the lawyers said it was legal".

As Johnson sees it, the torture debate is ultimately about America's claim to leadership in the world and the Bush team's sully of the nation's reputation: How could America complain to the Burmese generals about the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, when a president authorised torture? How can we talk about human rights in Beijing, when our number one ally and friend seems to be defending this kind of behaviour? I can't think of any other American president in my lifetime, who would have spoken in this way. Mr Bush should have remembered the words of the great Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, who said in 1863 that "military necessity does not admit of cruelty". Damn right.

Support OMCT's International Campaign for the Absolute Prohibition of Torture
Sign the Manifesto: <http://www.omct.org/international-campaigns/campaign-prohibition-torture/>

Convenor: Chas Raws, 38 The Mount, Heswall, Wirral CH60 4RA

chasraws@onetel.com