
QUAKER CONCERN FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE

Briefing 2.

August 2009

Thanks to those Friends who have fed back to us the results of writing to their MPs – some formal acknowledgements from Home Office and Foreign Office ministers and other more substantial responses. The conclusion still seems to be that the Government remains in denial of any involvement in torture although emerging evidence makes this position more difficult to sustain and there are now a couple of official enquiries in train. As I write this (28th July), news is coming in of a case brought by Reprieve against the Government based on the experience of a client who was a victim of "extraordinary rendition" on his way to interrogation by torture and whose plane refuelled at Diego Garcia, the British island in the Indian Ocean which was handed over to the USA as a strategic base but remains subject to UK law as part of the British Indian Ocean Territory.

Congratulations to the Friend who sent Gordon Brown a copy of Justin Welby's address on the spiritual significance of the influence of torture on civilised society, as delivered at our April conference. The Prime Minister replied to acknowledge Friends' concerns and said that he was carefully considering the contents of the address.

Our mailing / e-mailing list includes most Friends who have attended our two Friends House

conferences (2007 and 2009) and Yearly Meeting special interest group (2008). If you would like to be added to it, please e-mail the Convenor as below.

RESOURCES:

- * To follow the case brought by Reprieve see www.reprieve.org.uk.
- * The best overall update on the web can be accessed by googling "torture". This will give you the latest postings by the BBC, The Guardian etc.
- * The Road of Hope by F. X. Nguyen Van Thuan (as recommended by Justin Welby)
- * An encyclopaedic coverage of torture can be found in the book Torture and Democracy by Darius Rejali (2007 Princeton – over 800 pages!). Not an easy read but useful for reference and well-indexed and split into thematic sections.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:

WOODBROOKE SEMINAR – 10th April 2010: 'Torture and Spiritual Resistance'.
Open event run by Q-CAT

For over 30 years Britain Yearly Meeting has held a corporate concern on the widespread incidence of torture. Three area meetings have been charged with fostering this concern. After two conferences in Friends House, this day seminar will seek the right way forward for Friends to deal with the issues raised.

What are the particular insights we have to bring to this concern? How can they be effectively communicated within BYM and beyond? You are invited to join us to find constructive answers to these and other questions.

The seminar will be interactive within an overall context of worship. Further details and costs to follow.

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