

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

Briefing 20

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THE GUARDIAN has continued to give in-depth coverage to the subject of torture – e.g:

Faith in the darkest of moments (Shoshana Garfield - Guardian 12/2/11) I work to help people recover from torture, whether in childhood or by a government. I have found, in over 20 years of clinical work, that reconnecting (at the right time) with the reality of the torture is critical... The person being tortured is alone. Torturers steal all that is good in the world, so that even the sun is blackened into darkness and malice. The core sense of one's self can be experienced as tattered, one's very being as irreparably shattered as a thrown porcelain vase.

When there is a crowd doing the torturing, as in those that stoned Saint Stephen, those that lynched in America even up to the 1960s, or those that stoned women for adultery even this year – there is a similar aloneness. In those forever-moments of torture, either there is nothing good in the world, or goodness is simply impotent and too far away. Unless that goodness is held within. This can be either in faith in oneself, in loved ones awaiting, or in God. And so this is where faith steps up or can be utterly lost... *For more see: www.guardian.co.uk/profile/shoshana-garfield*

George Bush: no escaping torture charges (Katharine Gallagher - Guardian 8/2/11) Sooner or later, Bush will step into a country where he will be prosecuted for authorising the abuses of the 'war on terror'... Late last year, former US President George W Bush recounted in his memoir, *Decision Points*, that when he was asked in 2002 if it was permissible to waterboard a detainee held in secret CIA custody outside the United States, he answered "damn right". This "decision point" led to the waterboarding of that person 183 times in one month. Others were waterboarded, as well...

The USA is under an absolute obligation under the Convention Against Torture (CAT) to investigate, prosecute and punish torturers. And yet, here was the former president of the United States admitting he authorised torture. And nothing. The *raison d'être* of the Convention Against Torture is to eradicate torture. And one of the primary tools for preventing torture is to prosecute and punish those who are found to have tortured. In failing to prosecute – or even investigate – George W Bush following his admission, the USA failed to uphold its obligations under CAT...

The prosecutor will also now not be confronted with the International Committee of the Red Cross's stark conclusions about this programme (pdf): "This regime was clearly designed to undermine human dignity and to create a sense of futility by inducing, in many cases, severe physical and mental pain and suffering, with the aim of obtaining compliance and extracting information, resulting in exhaustion, depersonalisation and dehumanisation." The case against Bush for torture will not be taken up in Switzerland this week. But one day, this case will be heard. *For more see: www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/feb/08/torture-george-bush*

Journalist's brush with torture. (Robert Tait - Guardian 9/2/11) A hail of vicious punches and kicks rained down on the prone bodies next to me, creating loud thumps. The torturers screamed abuse all around me. Only later were their chilling words translated to me by an Arabic-speaking colleague: "In this hotel, there are only two items on the menu for those who don't behave – electrocution and rape." Cuffed and blindfolded, like my fellow detainees, I lay transfixed. My palms sweated and my heart raced. I felt myself shaking. Would it be my turn next? Or would my outsider status, conferred by holding a British passport, save me? I suspected – hoped – that it would be the latter and, thankfully, it was. But I could never be sure. I had often wondered, reading accounts of political prisoners detained and tortured in places such as junta-run Argentina of the 1970s, what it would be like to be totally at the mercy of, and dependent on, your jailer for everything – food, water, the toilet. I never dreamed I would find out. Yet here I was, cooped up in a tiny room with a group of Egyptian detainees who were being mercilessly brutalised. *For more see: www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/09/egypt-torture-machine-mubarak-security*

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