

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

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In the past month Libya, Pakistan and Cambodia have produced news related to torture, notably Libya and Pakistan in connection with UK complicity.

The Gaddafi connection. In a typically hard-hitting article (Guardian 10/3/11) Gareth Peirce demonstrated the folly of relying on 'memoranda of understanding' (MOUs) with torturing regimes as a supposed guarantee of good behaviour. She suggests that any Libyan suspects returned under such an arrangement when Colonel Gaddafi was seen as a reformed character would have been tortured and ultimately killed in the present circumstances. She concludes:

"Of the urgent steps that should be taken as a result of this appallingly deluded adventure, at the very least the present government's still ongoing policy of deportations with MOUs to torturing regimes, its continuing imposition of control orders and its reliance on secret courts should be frozen pending proper scrutiny of the Libyan affair: an open, transparent inquiry, ruthlessly conducted until a clear picture is available. Only then could the direction our own body politic took under the last government be said to have changed."

Musharraf hints that Britain tacitly backed torture (Guardian 14/3/11) "Pakistan's former president Pervez Musharraf has claimed he was not told about Britain's disapproval of torture, and has no recollection of being told that his country's intelligence agency, the ISI, should not torture British subjects. "Never. Never once, I don't remember it all", he says in an interview to be broadcast on Monday night. He adds: "Maybe they wanted us to continue to do whatever we were doing; it was a tacit approval." ...

"Sir David Omand, the government's former security and intelligence adviser, tells the programme: "I am very clear we are not and have not been complicit in torture and I'm in no doubt that all the countries concerned including Pakistan and the United States were very well aware of what British policy was, (that) we don't do this and we don't ask other people to do it.

"The Security Service, MI5, and the Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, strongly deny that they 'outsource' torture to other countries, or take any part in promoting it. However, they do act on information passed to them even if it could have been obtained by torture in what they describe as "passive" involvement. In a recent judgment, the appeal court stressed that using such information for intelligence purposes was one thing. But it could not be used as evidence in a trial'..."

Khmer Rouge torture victims seek justice in appeal. *Michelle Fitzpatrick (Agence France Presse – 30/3/11)*

PHNOM PENH — Survivors and relatives of some of the 15,000 people who died in a Khmer Rouge prison listened as its torture chief Duch pleaded for absolution on the last day of his appeal on Wednesday. "I still maintain my position to ask for forgiveness for the souls of the victims... and for the families of those victims to accept my apology," he told the hearing, which also saw a last attempt by those affected to win increased reparations.

Cambodia's UN-backed court sentenced Duch in July to 30 years in jail for war crimes and crimes against humanity for overseeing mass murder at the notorious prison Tuol Sleng -- or S-21 -- in the late 1970s. Reading from a handwritten note, the bespectacled 68-year-old, who is seeking acquittal, told the court he only survived the brutal regime "because I respectfully and strictly followed the orders", even if at times he felt "very depressed".

Their appeal followed those of the defence and the prosecution earlier this week and marked "the last moment for civil parties to get justice", Brice Poirier from Avocats Sans Frontieres France, which represents some of the victims, told AFP... A ruling on the appeals is expected in late June.

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