

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

**Briefing 24**

**June 2011**

**The Gibson Inquiry's senior lawyer has promised that it will investigate rendition, contrary to recent rumour. Now known as The Detainee Inquiry it will begin proceedings when the last criminal investigation of past detainees is concluded and terms of reference finally agreed.**

**British intelligence guidance 'exposes detainees to torture' Ian Cobain - Guardian 28/6/11**

A battle over the legality of instructions issued to British intelligence officers attempting to obtain information from prisoners held by countries with poor human rights records has opened in the high court. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is arguing that the instructions – which were redrafted and published last year on the orders of David Cameron – fail to meet the UK's obligations in both international and domestic law.

Government lawyers say the instructions ensure that British intelligence officers can maintain their relationships with their counterparts in such countries without falling foul of the law. Both MI5 and MI6 insist that those relations are vital in the post 9/11 world if they are to fulfil their responsibility to protect UK interests and British citizens.

But the EHRC told the court: "The guidance ... is unlawful. It exposes detainees to a risk of torture for which the UK is legally responsible and which might have been prevented had domestic and international law been properly applied."...

**Leading questions: Keith Best, Freedom from Torture Jane Dudman - Guardian 21/6/11**

**The charity just changed its name. Why?**

For 25 years, we have been the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. That described our clinical services, but it was very lengthy. I wanted a name that was short and snappy. Our new name shows our double aspiration: to free people as much as possible from the effects of the torture they have suffered, and to see a world free from torture.

**How did you get involved?**

I have a background as a barrister and an MP. I have been a director of the charity Prisoners Abroad and for the past 16 years I ran the Immigration Advisory Service. This job came up last year. I wanted to continue to use my experience in a field I find fascinating. I could never see myself running an organisation that could be termed cuddly or popular – that wouldn't get me out of bed in the morning.

**What do you like best about the job?**

The direct correlation between what you do as a chief executive and rebuilding the lives of very damaged, vulnerable people, to help them use their suppressed talent. It brings home to you a sense for a need of humility - and a residual sense of anger.

**What has been the biggest challenge?**

This was an organisation with extraordinarily committed, highly intelligent people that had become rather introverted. I want us to do more research and be known as the fount of knowledge about dealing with victims of torture. But the real challenge is why should we only reach those who manage to get to the UK? It would be better if we could get to those who can't get to us.

**Aung San Suu Kyi's unhappy birthday Walhnin Pwint Thon - Guardian 19/6/11**

... Aung San Suu Kyi may have been released, and is free to celebrate her birthday, but about 2,000 political prisoners remain in jail, and are treated worse than in the past. Many, including my father, have been moved to remote prisons to make it harder for family members to visit. More than 150 are being denied medical care for illnesses, a cruel form of torture that causes suffering and even death. And they are serving much longer sentences than before, with many set to stay in prison for 65 years.

Recently political prisoners protesting about their conditions were thrown into "dog cells", prison cages for dogs where they are forced to act like dogs and beg for food and are often not even allowed to talk.

At the same time Thein Sein has stepped up attacks against ethnic minorities in Burma's border areas. Amnesty International and Burma Campaign UK have received reports of Burmese army soldiers mortar-bombing villages, gang-raping women and executing and torturing people.

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary general, must appoint a new UN envoy to Burma and restart UN efforts to secure political dialogue between the dictatorship, Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic groups... When it meets later this year, the UN general assembly should establish a commission of inquiry into possible war crimes and crimes against humanity. We know from experience that when real pressure is applied the dictatorship is forced to respond. A UN inquiry is likely to reduce human rights abuses, and encourage Thein Sein to start dialogue, because he'll be afraid of real consequences if he doesn't...

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