

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

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Sadly, torture has become a daily theme in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, practised before, during and after national uprisings by both sides – further evidence that torture inevitably becomes endemic.

The alleged torturing to death of Essam Atta on Thursday triggers public outrage over recurring human rights violations by Egypt's military rulers <http://english.ahram.org> Hatem Maher, 28/10/11

□ The death of Essam Atta, who was reportedly tortured to death in Cairo's Torah Prison on Thursday, is sure to further encourage popular discontent with Egypt's ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). □ According to the Cairo-based El-Nadeem Centre for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, police officers punished Atta for smuggling a mobile-phone SIM card into his cell by inserting hoses into his mouth and anus, which reportedly led to bleeding and caused his subsequent death. □ The 24-year-old was arrested on 25 February in relation to the illegal occupation of an apartment and, after being tried by a military court, sentenced to two years in Tora Prison, in which a number of former Mubarak regime figures are currently being held. □ Members of Atta's family, who had been preparing to appeal the court verdict, said that Atta had contacted them on Wednesday to say he had been mistreated by prison guards... □

Many had hoped the departure of Mubarak, under whom police torture had become routine, would see an end to such practices. Almost nine months later, however, such optimism appears to have been misplaced, with many activists and political observers going so far as to question the SCAF's intentions. □ The military council, for its part, has vowed to hand over executive power to an elected, civilian authority, although it has so far failed to set a definite timetable for highly-anticipated presidential elections. □ The SCAF has already come under fire for referring some 12,000 civilians to military courts and imposing restrictions on media coverage. □ Egypt's interior ministry, meanwhile, has thus far refrained from commenting on his death – a silence that could end up tarnishing its already-battered image. □

Moussa Koussa denies Libya torture alleged on BBC Panorama - PA - guardian.co.uk, 26/10/11

Former Libyan intelligence chief Moussa Koussa has denied involvement in the torture of political detainees or in the 1996 massacre at the country's notorious Abu Salim prison. He issued a statement through his lawyers in response to allegations made on Monday's BBC's Panorama programme that he personally tortured prisoners with an electric rod.

Koussa, who made a high-profile defection to Britain in March as the Gaddafi regime began to crumble, accused the programme-makers of making false allegations, adding: "I have never tortured anyone nor been involved in torture. Neither was I present at the massacre at Abu Salim prison." Koussa left Britain following an EU decision to lift sanctions against him, meaning he no longer faces travel restrictions or an asset freeze. He was the head of Gaddafi's intelligence agency from 1994 and a senior intelligence agent when Pan Am flight 103 was blown up over Lockerbie in 1988, killing 270 people.

Wounded Syrian protesters being tortured in hospital, claims Amnesty

Luke Harding - guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 25/10/11

Protesters wounded in anti-government rallies in Syria have been tortured and abused inside hospitals, and in some cases deliberately refused medical treatment, according to a damning report by Amnesty International. The human rights group said there was compelling evidence that the Syrian government was using hospitals as "instruments of repression" in its ongoing efforts to crush opposition. The report said medical staff, nurses and security officials had all physically and verbally attacked patients. Seriously wounded demonstrators suspected of taking part in anti-government rallies had been carted off from hospital to military jails, Amnesty added. The report paints a picture of human rights violations in four government-run hospitals, in the cities of Banias, Homs and Tell Kalakh, with the military trawling wards in search of the opposition. The situation has grown so bad that wounded protesters are now seeking treatment in makeshift field hospitals instead, it says. Security officials have also accused doctors of siding with demonstrators – arresting them and taking them away. Other Arab states seeking to crush their own uprisings have used similar methods of intimidation. Last month 20 medics in Bahrain were jailed for five to 15 years for treating activists wounded in anti-government protests, prompting international outrage.

"It is deeply alarming that the Syrian authorities seem to have given security forces a free rein in hospitals and that in many cases hospital staff appear to have taken part in torture and ill treatment of the very people they are supposed to care for," Amnesty's Middle East researcher Cilina Nasser said on Tuesday... The report cites several examples of treatment being denied, in contravention of medical ethics. In one case a patient, 28, who was shot in the foot on 16 May, was told by a doctor at Homs military hospital: "I'm not going to clean your wound ... I'm waiting for your foot to rot so that we can cut it off..."

Death and the Maiden's haunting relevance. Ariel Dorfman - guardian.co.uk, 14/10/11

"The play I wrote 20 years ago about Chile's torture and trauma has a painful, global relevance today"

It happened yesterday but it could well be today. A woman awaits the return of her husband as the sun goes down. The dictatorship that plagued her land has just fallen, and everything is uncertain... It is sobering to realise that humanity has not managed to learn from the past, that torture has not been abolished, that justice is so rarely served.

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