

QUAKER CONCERN FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE

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The most significant development this month in relation to torture has been the publicity surrounding the decision in the High Court to allow Kenyan victims of savage ill-treatment by British soldiers during and after the independence movement by Mau Mau tribesmen to sue the British government. This has also led to media attention to other examples of colonial and post-colonial brutalities and their linking with today's complicity in extraordinary rendition and the whole illegal Guantánamo outrage. This confirms our determination that recent UK complicity must not be allowed to be swept under the carpet. Truth will out!

Reporting Britain's atrocities in Kenya *Letter - Guardian 20/07/12*

It has taken 60 years for the Kenyan victims of torture and ill treatment in detention camps of the 1950s to have their cases heard in London's high court (Report, 18 July) and for the stories told by Gitu wa Kahengeri and Jane Muthoni Mara to be aired this week on Channel 4, supported by a former colonial officer, John Nottingham.

Prof Caroline Elkins, who spoke on that programme, deserves much credit for stubbornly digging in the British archives and insisting in her book that deaths of camp detainees were much higher than admitted. But your paper should take some credit also for publishing stories in 1963 of the atrocities committed during the Mau Mau emergency.

One story I wrote as the paper's Africa correspondent alleged that members of the Kenya Regiment drove a truck full of captured forest fighters out on a remote road and summarily executed them. I was at once invited by the minister of Karen Church, who was also the regiment's chaplain, to meet the colonel and adjutant. After an hour's interrogation in the rectory of my knowledge by the colonel, he finally said: "I am afraid our people were a little less than kind." The leaders of Moral Rearmament threatened to sue the Guardian for another story I wrote about how MRA had hired and paraded prostitutes outside the wire of a detention camp, to remind the detainees of the joys they were foregoing. After checking the truth of the story, they withdrew the suit.

My main source for such stories was the selfsame John Nottingham, now in London with the Kenyans. In the mid-1950s he was district officer in North Tetu, in the thick of the Kikuyu uprising, and when asked to serve in a detention camp he firmly refused. He shared his house in days before independence for a time with Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, who had been held in 14 detention camps and who became the author of *Mau Mau Detainee* (Oxford University Press, Nairobi, 1963); and John was obviously the book's midwife. Josiah became an independent Kanu MP after uhuru – too independent, for his body was found executed in the Ngong Hills. John also authored, with Carl Rosberg, an American professor, *The Myth of Mau Mau* (Praeger, New York, 1966), a refutation of many of the wilder assertions made about the nationalist movement in Kenya. A modest man, Nottingham can take some satisfaction that his friends' case is at last being more widely heard. □
Clyde Sanger □ Ottawa, Canada.

Police interview Libyans over claims of UK-authorized rendition

Rajeev Syal and Ian Cobain - guardian.co.uk, 20/07/12

Two Libyan opponents of Muammar Gaddafi who claim they were the victims of rendition and torture because of the actions of a British minister and an MI6 officer have been interviewed for the first time by Scotland Yard detectives.

Sami al-Saadi and Abdel Hakim Belhaj were forcibly flown back to Libya in 2004 with their young families in what they allege was a security service operation authorised by the then foreign secretary, Jack Straw. This weekend, they met British police officers in Tunisia for several hours accompanied by their representatives...

Jack Straw, foreign secretary at the time of the renditions, has been accused in court papers of authorising the operation. It is not known whether Straw has been interviewed by the Met. Keir Starmer, the director of public prosecutions, and Lynne Owens, the Met assistant commissioner, said at the time that the cases appeared "so serious that it is in the public interest for them to be investigated now."

Documents found in Libya allegedly show that their rendition was only possible because MI6 lured them to Hong Kong on the pretext of an interview at the British embassy... Saadi, a leading opponent of the Gaddafi regime, says that he suffered years of torture and was sentenced to death before finally being freed in 2010.

Revealed: Syria's torture centres *John Burn-Murdoch guardian.co.uk, 03/07/12*

Human Rights Watch has mapped 27 Syrian detention centres where torture is alleged to have taken place. The locations are taken from the testimonies of more than 200 individuals who either witnessed or suffered torture.

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