

Our vision is to end torture and complicity in torture, upholding our testimony to peace and equality and working towards healing through reconciliation.

### UPDATE by ChasRaws

Briefing No.34 in April reproduced an article by Peter Osborne of The Daily Telegraph which had been drawn to our attention by Justin Welby our Anglican ally. Its title was *Torture casts a ghastly shadow over our country's reputation* and it was a passionate attack on the lack of integrity of successive governments in constantly denying complicity in torture while purporting to promote the UN Convention Against Torture as a cornerstone of foreign policy. This was so close to our thoughts that we wrote to Peter Osborne welcoming his article and asking his opinion on the usefulness or otherwise of an interfaith roundtable on the lines of what we have been planning for some time. His reply was emphatically encouraging and offered practical help in any way we suggested, such as getting a letter or even an editorial piece published. This led to Justin Welby offering to host the interfaith meeting at the House of Lords so we are now working on a date, agenda and potential invitees. As they say, Watch this space!

We often have to remind ourselves that it took over 30 years of work at the turn of the eighteenth century to end the slave trade and a further 26 years to outlaw slavery itself in the British empire. The anti-slavery movement originated in a Quaker committee which soon entered into a fruitful alliance with Thomas Clarkson, an Anglican who abandoned his

vocation to the priesthood in order to concentrate on researching, writing and campaigning. A small network of Quakers remained faithful in spite of the apparent hopelessness of the cause and the Yearly Meeting continued to support them. Of course slavery was endemic in the capitalist system but its cruelty was largely hidden from the population of Britain. A parallel might be drawn with torture in the twentieth century until human rights organisations brought it into the light of public awareness and, at the turn of the century, we were quite suddenly made aware of British complicity in it following its disingenuous re-definition and increasing use by the USA as a component of counter-terrorism. The anti-slavery movement suffered many setbacks and the Quaker committee which functioned largely out of sight of other campaigners must have experienced serious doubts about its effectiveness and the viability of its strategy.

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We have received best wishes from Caroline and Victor Lane now living near their family in the USA. Caroline keeps abreast of human rights issues and writes letters for Amnesty International She draws our attention to Larry Siems's report for Amnesty International: [www.thetorturereport.org/](http://www.thetorturereport.org/) and another blast against "enhanced interrogation" techniques from a former practitioner, Ali Soufan : <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/iraq-war-on-terror/the-interrogator/transcript-7/>

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## Reports of two meetings, the first concerned with victims of torture...

Joanne Adams of the Birmingham branch of Freedom from Torture spoke about Memory Function and Trauma in Survivors of Torture at a joint meeting of Wirral and Chester A.M. and North Wales A.M. on 14.4.12.

Joanne had brought paper copies of her power-point presentation and we used these as there were technical hitches with laptop projection. Despite that she calmly introduced a difficult subject to an appreciative audience. She accepted questions as she proceeded and the informality allowed a range of contributions from us and seemed to meet the differing understandings and concerns of those present.

It was encouraging to hear that some in the U.K. agencies dealing with asylum seekers who are victims of torture are trying to improve their understanding of the effects of torture, but a much greater and more widespread awareness of the pervasive and deeply disturbing effects of torture could help its victims in their difficult struggles to cope.

Since 1985 Freedom from Torture (formerly Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture) has dealt

with 50,000 referrals. The trauma of physical and psychological torture is exacerbated when a refugee victim loses his or her family, home status and some of the sense of identity which went with those, and feels vulnerable and helpless as they seek asylum in the U.K. Victims may have scars, show signs of weakness, poor health, anxiety, fear, self-blame, depression and anger. They tend to avoid people and some situations and to be unaware of their own behaviour. They may have nightmares, flashbacks, inability to recall parts of their trauma, headaches, breathlessness, etc.

Joanne's presentation differentiated normal memory (based in the part of the brain called the hippocampus) from trauma memory (based in the amygdala). Trauma memory is not under conscious control, is static, incoherent and formed of vivid sensory information. A person suffering trauma memory can't control emotions, feels persistent fear, has difficulty with remembering over the short term and in finding words to express thoughts. However new nerve pathways can form in the brain. Psychotherapy, counselling, support from family and friends, better health and living conditions can help victims find ways to manage their symptoms.

'There is no cure for being tortured... Therapy in this context is the development of the capacity to bear the history, rather than being trapped in it and endlessly reliving it.' (Blackwell 2005)

Michael Still

## and the second with those caring for them...

We held a lunchtime meeting at Yearly Meeting on 26.5.12 and our speaker was Andy Branch who is a Quaker Peace and Social Witness one-year Peacemaker at Freedom from Torture. He was keen to tell us about his work and to respond to comments from those present. He is designing a training programme to support the wide group of individuals, doctors, mental health clinicians, lawyers, interpreters, researchers, campaigners, trainers, volunteers, interns, reception staff and fundraisers, all working with material related to torture survivors and their experiences, in order to achieve the goals of Freedom from Torture. While necessary, this exposes all of these individuals and others to the reality of torture. Working with the accounts of clients' trauma, torture statistics, and simply in an environment where torture is the subject of work and conversation, all has a significant impact on staff: namely, vicarious traumatisation – literally becoming traumatised through the actions or experiences of another.

Broadly, vicarious traumatisation is characterised by symptoms such as apathy, exhaustion, disillusionment, an alienated attitude towards clients and feelings of guilt and failure. However in cases that involve torture, reactions can be even more severe with workers developing symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), threatening nightmares and anxiety disorders. The aim is to equip people with skills to identify risks and how to cope.

Once successfully underway with Freedom from Torture staff it is planned to make the training programme available to groups in the charitable, public and private sectors who may be at risk of vicarious traumatisation through the work that they do on a regular basis with individuals who have experienced serious trauma.

It was good to see how valuable to the individual and the organisation a QPSW Peacemaker placement can be and we were most grateful for Andy's time with us.

Jane Laxton

A reminder to keep up to date with developments on our garden at the RHS Tatton Park Flower Show, Cheshire, through the pages headed 'Garden' on our website. You can also find it on the RHS website: [www.rhs.org.uk/Shows-Events/RHS-Show-Tatton-Park/2012](http://www.rhs.org.uk/Shows-Events/RHS-Show-Tatton-Park/2012) where it appears on the Gardens page under the title World without Torture.

Look out for a full report on the Q-CAT garden in our next newsletter. Many thanks to all those who have helped in any way to make this venture possible.

### Justice and Security Bill

You may well have read recently that the present Government has plans, outlined in a green paper, to introduce secrecy to any civil trial, or inquisition, where a minister has decided some evidence is 'too sensitive' to be aired in public.

This has generated intense reactions both from civil liberties groups, human rights lawyers and the committee of MPs scrutinising the paper. The latter, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), unanimously condemned the green paper as unfocussed and unconvincing as well as identifying serious omissions in it.

### A principle of open justice and fairness

A major point made comes down to the denial of the principle of 'open justice'.

Joshua Rozenberg writing in the Guardian, (04/04/12) has the view that the rule of law has to be seen to be open and fair. He contended that the media has to be free to report matters of public interest,

"Open justice lets in the light and allows the public to scrutinise the working of the law, for better or for worse."

Another aspect is its fairness. The Government has proposed that when there is evidence that they say is 'sensitive', then only a judge can have this information, not the non-government people, nor their legal representatives; that is, those challenging the government are barred from such knowledge. Lord Kerr, a supreme court judge believes this is not only unfair, but "Evidence which has been insulated from challenge may positively mislead."

Other eminent lawyers, for example David Anderson, QC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, and Murray Hunt, legal advisor to UK Parliament JCHR believe the proposals are 'deeply damaging', and not just to public confidence, but to the rule of law itself.

In the light of the criticisms some of these proposals have been scaled back.

### Proposals to extend surveillance

However, the Government still plans to extend powers of surveillance to the intelligence agencies, MI5 and MI6, to monitor our emails, phone calls and social media communication. The aim is that intelligence gathered, if thought to be 'sensitive to national security', will be vetted by 'special advocates'. Such information will not be shared with the claimant or their lawyer, even in civil trials.

Advocates working with immigrants in the immigration tribunal system already have experience of 'closed material procedures' and are aware of their inherent unfairness.

Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, writing about the proposed public surveillance, wrote

"Plans for secret justice are even worse than first imagined."

and "Spooks.....want private chats with judges to replace open justice; then total access to all our internet browsing and communication. No scrutiny for them and no privacy for us. Is it time to ask who runs Britain?"

So, so far, how does the Government measure up to reasonable standards of probity? How far can we trust our Government to be just, fair and uphold the law?

### Governments provide a narrative to suit their needs

There is a long history of our Government, of all political persuasions, denying inconvenient behaviour and putting out their own massaged narrative of what happened, so the public see things in a way that suits those in power. Some of this has been minor, some serious.

Governments have also held inquiries for circumstances where their explanations do not cover what is known and they cannot construct a convincing picture. They have the power though to place restrictions on what can be investigated so that the outcomes suit. The Widgery Inquiry, conducted to find 'the truth' of the events of Bloody Sunday, in Londonderry 1972, is an example. It was widely considered a whitewash.

### Publication of 'secret' papers

There is a tradition in Britain that 'sensitive' papers are finally released after several decades. These have sometimes caused shock. Sometimes changing times and changing views cannot excuse past atrocities. It is now known that 50 years ago, in East Africa, many Kikuyus, fighting against colonialism and their lack of land to farm, were tortured, often barbarically by British in charge of the camps. Again there were 'vicious purges' of enemies in colonial Malaysia, as well as a massacre of unarmed villagers by soldiers of the Scots Guards in 1948. Indigenous people from the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean were forcibly re-located. On this matter lies were told to the UN. Generally information made public presented a very different picture. We now know that orders were given to cover up the evidence of the atrocities, so the 8,800 papers are only a fraction of evidence that there was. In 1961 Ian Macleod, secretary of State for the Colonies, directed that the post independent Governments should not get any material that

"...might embarrass Her Majesty's Government" and

"...embarrass police, military forces, public servants or others e.g. police informers."

Such 'sensitive' papers have been found and released earlier, without permission given by Government, as were the papers found in the building of the recently assassinated Colonel Gadaffi. These also shock. Here there was clear evidence of our activity in rendition, kidnapping and transporting people, merely suspected of being terrorists, to countries where they 'disappear', are interrogated and tortured. In 2007 the Council of Europe estimated that more than 1,000 CIA-operated flights passed over the continent. Finally, in 2008 UK admitted flights had refuelled in Diego Garcia. One example, and there are others, is that of Fatima Bouchar. She, pregnant at the time, and her husband, a prominent opponent of Gadaffi's regime, were abducted in Bangkok. They were taped up like flies in a spider's web, and transported across the globe, him to torture. MI6 played a role in this, and other, renditions. Was this related to Tony Blair's visit two weeks later and the £110m deal for gas exploration of the Libyan coast by Anglo-Dutch oil group Shell? Who knows? We may learn in future years. Amnesty director Nicholas Berger wrote

"The abuses occurred on European soil. We simply cannot allow Europe to join the US in becoming an 'accountability-free' zone" and

"... mention of 'need for state secrecy in order to protect national security' must not be used as a screen for impunity."

Unfortunately, the EU failed to hold member states who

had been clearly involved to account. There has been no attempt to deny MI6 involvement in renditions. The minister of the time had to have known and authorised it. Jack Straw repeatedly declines to answer questions. The UK Government has declined to offer an apology to the innocent victims caught up in rendition. The Foreign Office declines to respond to invitations to say anything that would explain UK Government's role in rendition operations.

A statement from the law firm representing Fatima Bouchar contests the Government's view that some evidence is too sensitive to be aired in public.

"Britain's role (in the treatment of Fatima Boucher) must come under the full scrutiny of an open court and not be consigned to a secret chamber."

**Secrecy**

Secrecy breeds lies and cover-ups. It also allows those acting in this way to convince themselves that they are really doing the right thing, for example, for the good of their country. Additionally, they get sucked further in, get used to their actions, and so go further, sometimes thinking it is the right path, other times feeling they have gone too far to turn back. One example is that of Jose Rodriguez, head of CIA's Counterterrorism, who commented he did the right thing when he broke the law destroying the 92 secret tapes of 'enhanced interrogation', including waterboarding. He saw nothing wrong with the interrogation methods, including the repeated use of "drowning in a slow, controlled manner", but thought of the tapes that "...out of context they would make us look terrible - it would be devastating to us." It is interesting that he did not think of those who felt they were drowning again, and again, and again.

Another example is that of those working in the extermination camps in Germany.

People do get used to something previously assumed as not altogether acceptable. They then gradually slip further and further towards things that are absolutely unacceptable, getting used to each step when the context and others around supports this. Secrecy allows this.

Secrecy disallows good Governance. There must be checks and scrutiny. Mistakes known can be rectified, mistakes hidden breed problems.

**Breaking international law**

In our names, officials of our democratic Government have been breaking International law, and for a long time. Unfortunately, this is not a surprise. But breaking a country's laws and international laws is important. There is a critical point here. We must live by a system of law, which, although clearly not perfect and needing to develop, rests on a belief about human relationships, responsibility and fairness. If this is broken our social contract goes. If our Government breaks it - bad. If our Government conceals it - worse.

**Concluding**

To return to the beginning, the proposed Bill on Justice and Security. I agree with the conclusion made by Lord MacDonald, former director of public prosecutions,

"Government wrongdoing in the area of national security is going to be less likely to see the light of day." if this Bill goes through parliament, and

"The Bill still contains much which is offensive to our traditional notions of equal parties adjudicating cases in front of an impartial judge."

It would be useful to lend our voices to the disquiet. Our testimonies of justice and speaking truth to power suggest ways we can do this.

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