

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 Chas Raws

The **UN Committee against Torture report** published earlier this year repeatedly expressed concern at the failure of the current UK government to hold those responsible for human rights violations to account. It noted the government's decision to suspend the judge-led inquiry into British involvement in torture and rendition since 9/11 saying that work already done by this inquiry should be published promptly and that a further inquiry should be established without delay "on alleged acts of torture and other illtreatment of detainees held overseas committed by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of British officials". The perpetrators identified by this inquiry should be "duly prosecuted and punished appropriately" and the victims compensated. This was one of four key areas in which the Committee has given the government 12 months to show it is making progress. The report also recommends that British soldiers and intelligence officers receive training that will help them to understand that the use of torture is absolutely prohibited in international law.

Concern was expressed that the secret court procedures introduced by the Justice and Security Act, which came into force in July, could be used to deploy hearsay evidence or evidence obtained through torture.

As usual the government response was to distance itself from all accusations and portray itself as beyond reproach. But this of course covers up deliberate subversion of the Convention on Torture by our security services (MI5, MI6, GCHQ).

The **Intelligence and Security Committee**, which was formerly only answerable to the Prime Minister and whose minutes were issued at his discretion in a highly redacted form, is now answerable to Parliament. However the recent television coverage of the appearance by the intelligence chiefs before this Parliamentary Committee was stage managed to give an impression of accountability which cannot be sustained. Reprieve referred to the hearing as "a damp squib".

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Unless a critical mass of voters is genuinely concerned about the complicity, coverups and lack of transparency this process will continue unchecked: education of the public is a high priority. Those involved in Q-CAT need to increase their efforts to work with the wider Quaker constituency. It would be good to hear of any suggested initiatives.

It was disturbing to read (Guardian 4.11.13) that in the US doctors and psychologists working for the US military violated the ethical codes of their profession under instruction from the defence department and the CIA, to become involved in the torture and degrading treatment of suspected

terrorists\*. Medical professionals were in effect told that their ethical mantra 'first do no harm' did not apply, because they were not treating people who were ill. Any scruples were to be put aside in the interests of intelligence gathering and security practices that caused severe harm to detainees, from waterboarding to sleep deprivation. A full investigation into the involvement of the medical profession has been called for, and that rules be established to ensure doctors and psychologists working for the military are allowed to abide by the ethical obligations of their profession.

\*Report of the Taskforce on Preserving Medical Professionalism in National Security Detention Centres.

### Trustees

After many years of service Margaret Hodson is now retiring as a Trustee and we give her our heartfelt thanks for her unremitting work and her enthusiasm. We welcome two new Trustees who are joining the team: Celia Beeson of Bristol Area Meeting and Barbara Forbes of Central England Area Meeting.

### ACAT – France

**John Cockcroft**

On Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July a group of 12 French Christians from Angouleme, most of them members of ACAT (*Action des Chretiens pour l'abolition de la Torture*)- France, met at Bull Street FMH in Birmingham, under the auspices of Central England Area Meeting Peace Committee. John Cockcroft gave a talk in French about the work of Q-CAT, and answered questions. Members of the French group then spoke about their work and left us some of their literature.

ACAT - France was established in 1974. It is a national body, concerning itself with both French and world-wide issues; the group we met was a local group. Although Christian based ACAT prides itself on being open to all "without ideological distinction, ethnic or religious". They are involved in advocacy, assistance to victims, and campaigning and international action on their concerns around torture, the death penalty and asylum issues. They are currently campaigning (amongst many other things) against the use of torture in Russia, and in support of detainees on death row in the USA.

Their website (simply search for ACAT – France) gives much more detail; although it reads better in French, a very passable English translation is available on line.

## **Freedom From Torture visits Woodbrooke**

**Jane Laxton**

Freedom from Torture West Midlands held a meeting at Woodbrooke in August. Jane Laxton spoke to the group about Q-CAT and its concern particularly with UK Government's complicity in torture. She told them about the "Britain Tortures Too Conference" held in February (see Newsletter 12) and summarised the severe problems in having a government that is implicated in torture: it breaks international law; it warps civil society; the secrecy involved is dangerous and undemocratic; it is not effective; and it is spiritually corrupting and shameful.

The main purpose of her being there was to introduce the members of the group to the part of the "World Without Torture" garden from the Tatton Show which is now at Woodbrooke. A sketch map of the full garden helped to put this in context.

People were most interested in and appreciative of our work.

## **Report on Menai UNA meeting in Bangor 5.11.13**

**Michael Still**

Keith Best, Chief Executive of Freedom from Torture (FfT) started by drawing our attention to the 1984 Convention on Torture and that it prohibits the practice however renamed. Trial by ordeal did not work, nor does torture and the 'ticking bomb' scenario is invalid – its false assumptions cannot justify an inhuman practice.

Since 1985 50,000 people have been referred to FfT. Keith Best quoted a victim's description of torture as 'killing without taking a life'. It takes trust and personality away from victims.

Because of the difficulties of getting to the UK most of the 21,000 asylum seekers coming to the UK each year are young men. It is probable that 2000 or more of them have been tortured but of these FfT only sees about half. It is difficult for them to talk about being tortured let alone convince UK officials that they have suffered torture. The Istanbul Protocol sets out how to report medical evidence of torture. Based on forensic information presented to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, some countries could be held to account including Sri Lanka, DR Congo and Iran where sexual abuse of detainees is both culturally humiliating and common. A person detained by police in Saudi Arabia can expect to be tortured.

A short video of FfT's work was shown [see FfT website]. We were encouraged to use this video to publicise their work. Victims do go to groups to speak about the work of FfT but when they do they give accounts of the experiences of others – never their own, as that would be too painful for them.

Discussion touched on how state bodies can come to use brutal practices, the difficulties of resisting complicity in torture, the moves to abolish it and the comparison with the long struggle to officially abolish the Slave Trade.

### **Briefings**

It is planned to start a new series of Briefings in the New Year which will be sent to people on our emailing list. They will appear at about 6 – 8 week intervals and will include coverage of a specific topic each time in addition to items currently in the news and possible points for practical action.

**Q-CAT website**

You can see all back numbers of our newsletters and briefings on the website: [www.q-cat.org.uk](http://www.q-cat.org.uk)

**Amnesty International Stop Torture Campaign 2014**

Many of us are also involved with Amnesty International and will be pleased that Q-CAT's work is running in parallel with AI's major campaign for 2014.

Amnesty is calling on all governments to implement a 12-point programme to show their commitment to end torture and to work for its eradication worldwide. The programme sets out to prevent the torture of people in government custody or otherwise in the hands of agents of the state.

1. Condemn torture and other ill-treatment
2. Ensure access to prisoners
3. No secret detention
4. Provide safeguards during detention and interrogation
5. Prohibit torture and other ill-treatment in law
6. Investigate
7. Prosecute
8. No use of statements extracted under torture or other ill-treatment
9. Provide effective training
10. Provide reparation
11. Ratify international treaties
12. Exercise international responsibility

Further information at [amnesty/stoptorture](http://amnesty/stoptorture)

**DONATION TO Q-CAT (Charity No. 1093757)**

To the Treasurer: Juliet Morton,  
43 Embankment Road, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1LA

Please accept the enclosed cheque/CAF voucher for  
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If you are a taxpayer you can increase the value of your donation to Q-CAT by 25% at no cost to you. Please complete the Gift Aid Declaration (not applicable to CAF vouchers).

I would like my donation to be treated as Gift Aid. I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer, resident in the UK for tax purposes, and that I am paying an amount of income/capital gains tax at least equal to the tax the charity claims on my donation in the relevant tax year.

Signed.....

Dated.....

To receive newsletters by email contact Jane Laxton [from.qcat@hotmail.com](mailto:from.qcat@hotmail.com) and include your Local and Area Quaker Meetings if appropriate.

To receive newsletters by post please fill this in and send it to Jane Laxton, 79 Wellington Rd., New Brighton, Wirral CH45 2NE

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