

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

Torture and torture survivors continue to feature large in the media. The latest headlines concern Moazzam Begg, one of the speakers at Q-CAT's 2010 conference, who asked in The Guardian of 13th October, "Why is Canada acting like a Guantánamo Bay camp guard? I just became the first former Guantánamo prisoner to step onto North American soil as a free man – and be denied entry". He lists the countries round the world where he has addressed audiences on the realities of Guantánamo and then describes his experience at Montreal airport:

I was taken off the aircraft in full view of all the passengers and escorted by these armed men to immigration, in order to be told that I was being refused entry to Canada because I'm "a terrorist". The reasons stated were that based on "open source" information that I "was detained by the United States from 2002 until 2005 in Guantánamo", and that I signed a confession during that time that I was member of al-Qaida and the Taliban, even if it had been under duress.

I argued that even the Canadian government recognised officially that the US practised torture and that the implications of this decision mean that Canada, a signatory of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, is acting on information that is obtained by torture and abusive treatment and, crucially, which is devoid of the rule of law. While they recognised that I said the statement

may have been given under duress and that after being interrogated by the world's leading law enforcement and intelligence agencies, I have not only never been charged or tried for any crime but have rather been the recipient of compensation from the British government for what happened and praise from US government officials for my work since my release, their decision had already been made.

On the domestic front, there are exciting plans to have a Q-CAT-themed garden at the RHS Tatton Flower Show next year, an initiative which arose from Dori Miller, a member of Wirral and Chester Area Meeting, who designed and created the Gold Medal-winning Oxfam garden in this year's show. Even without the resources of OXFAM this should provide an opportunity for Q-CAT and more general Quaker outreach and the Quaker Tapestry based at Kendal has already become involved. The design, which contains some really imaginative features, will be submitted to the Royal Horticultural Society in December and the show itself is in July. Meanwhile, Q-CAT has been invited to provide the main item for the joint meeting of North Wales and Wirral & Chester Area Meetings in April at Wrexham

Finally, our plans for a small national consultation of faith leaders on an approach to the Government to acknowledge past complicity in torture by our security services still await initial responses. We see such an acknowledgement as a pre-requisite for achieving credibility in our much-vaunted policy of adherence to the terms of the UN Convention Against Torture and encouragement to other nations to uphold it.

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Q-CAT AT YEARLY MEETING GATHERING 30th JULY – 6th AUGUST, 2011

Q-CAT had a stall at the Groups' Fair and a forty-five minute session among the options on offer at Friday lunch-time.

At the Fair we displayed paper copies of the last two Briefings and the last two Newsletters together with several hundred copies of the most recent Q-CAT folded leaflet. All of the Briefings and Newsletters were distributed to enquiring Friends and a considerable number of the leaflets. Besides being good publicity themselves the leaflets' listing of the Q-CAT website address was a useful reference, especially when the other material had run out. An encouraging number of Friends said that their Meetings had had a collection for Q-CAT. Just a few who passed the stall mentioned that they found the leaflets too disturbing to take.

A dozen Friends came to the lunch-time option session which we started and closed with periods of silent reflection. After we had settled we considered how the Quaker insight of there being that of God in each person, however obscured it might be, led Q-CAT to consider both the plight of the tortured and that of the torturer. The contagion of practice

was illustrated when one of the group told us that he had counselled a friend who heard from a close acquaintance that he had interrogated people being tortured. We discussed Q-CAT's hope that a gathering of representatives of various faiths would be held, to consider how to address the evil and its effects on national life. We also talked about:- the damage done to a victim's thinking which both makes any statements elicited under torture often unreliable, and also hinders the victim's recovery and return to independent living; the limitations of the Gibson/Detainee inquiry; and the ways concerned Friends might work to reduce the evil of torture. Again the website was recommended as a useful source of information.

It was good to hear from Oliver Robertson of Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva, of their work in this matter and their willingness to cooperate with Q-CAT.

The session was a useful exchange amongst concerned Quakers.

Michael Still

q-cat.org.uk

Have you looked at the website recently?

It has been updated and now includes text of our Newsletters and Briefings along with other information.

If you have any suggestions about additions and improvements, please send an email to Chas Raws who will liaise with our website organiser.

THE INTERROGATOR GLENN CARLE (Nation Books, 2011) £17.99

You may balk at paying the hardback price for a book of which a fair percentage of the text is blacked out, or "redacted" to use today's security services jargon, but the sight of pages presented in this way is an education in itself, another aspect of our society in which the defence of our values may involve detention without trial or trial without sight of the charges or of prosecution witnesses, even confession under torture as long as it was not elicited by our own officials. Glenn Carle dedicates his book "To my father and mother, who taught me to question everything, to accept nothing because others do, to be willing to change my mind – and that right and wrong are independent of authority or convention". Not, perhaps, the ideal candidate to work for the security services, even though the parental influence took some time to assert itself. As he begins the book: "I was a spy. I broke laws. I stole. I lied every day about almost everything: to my family, to my friends, to my colleagues, to everyone around me..." That counted as normal for a middle-ranking CIA officer. Enlightenment came when he was assigned to the Counter-Terrorism Centre and, after a little initial training, to the interrogation of a high-profile terrorist suspect. This was in 2002, in the aftermath of 9/11, and the book shows the realities of a "War on Terror" from the inside of the US security services. Perhaps the most chilling thing about it is the expectation that, as a loyal US citizen, the author will produce the desired confession by whatever means necessary and regardless of his own perception of the innocence or guilt of the victim. In fact, as his conviction hardens that the victim is innocent, his superiors' attitude to him changes from seeing him

as naïve and innocent to being disloyal and unpatriotic. The concept of investigating the truth gets lost along the way.

In a sudden and unexpected development the author and his interrogation subject are moved to an ultra-secure centre which is regarded with fear even by CIA employees in other departments. Its Soviet-style environment makes no difference to his growing certainty that his victim is innocent and that the whole post-9/11 Global War on Terror is based on a tissue of lies. He summarises the effects of this on the individual in the following assessment of himself: "One simply does not write an assessment that says, in effect, *Our assumptions are wrong, our policies flawed, the results obtained paltry, misleading, or harmful to our own interests.* "Instead, one writes something like, *We responded vigorously to a grave threat. The measures were carefully reviewed. We have had significant successes in protecting our nation. Our officers are selfless. We continue to refine our actions, to respect our obligations, to uphold the law, and to fulfil our mission.*"

Not surprisingly the book has provoked a hostile backlash in the USA and, as in this country, the question has been raised even among "moderates", How do we protect ourselves against the minority of extreme and suicidal Islamists? One thing of which Glenn Carle is certain is that torture can never be the answer, or part of the answer. Not only does it contradict the values on which our civilisation is based but it does not produce the truth – as Q-CAT has repeatedly been told. Chas Raws

TORTURE AND COMPLICITY IN IT

Q-CAT's primary focus is the abolition of torture. This article focuses on people complicit in torture; people involved in the chains of decisions and action that mean a person is taken and tortured, the rendition agents, air pilots, warders, MI6 interrogators, doctors, psychologists, for example, and the politicians agreeing that this is to be done.

Inhumane treatment of others:

How can humans act so inhumanely to their fellows? Think of Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan, Syria and the atrocities that are still taking place around the world. Thousands suffer. Torture is one part of this suffering. It is recognised as abhorrent and is also contrary to international law, but it is often carried out, and in secret.

Are those knowingly implicated in torture somehow different from other people? Are the doctors that check on whether the detainee can survive more brutal interrogation? What about the psychologist who advises interrogators on the detainee's mental weak spots? Might anyone act this way, or is it only some people who are 'monsters' who do monstrous acts? Are those members of MI6 who '*cheerfully assisted in the rendition of a suspect, along with his wife and children*' (quoting from the Guardian, Tuesday 6th September 2011) to inevitable torture, somehow different from us?

Individualism or context?

Once it was thought that only people who were already cruel, depraved or misguided were capable of sadistic acts such as torture. Guards manning the extermination camps during the second world war were judged as having been somehow different from 'ordinary, decent folk'. Surely there had to be something 'pathological' about them, for example, extreme 'authoritarian personalities' with 'psychopathic tendencies'? If so, that would make them different from 'us'. It would also allow us to believe that tyranny and oppression were the preserve of people unlike us; those who had a deep craving for order, who see others who are different as a threat, and who defer in an unthinking way to authority. But is that the case? It seems not.

Brutality brutalises:

There is evidence that people who have been forced to act in appalling ways are likely to continue to act in this way. Think of the child soldiers of the Lords Liberation army in East Africa. It seems that many of these youngsters became numb to any feelings after they had been involved in terrible personal tragedies, such as being forced to kill members of their own families. Doing what was ordered and becoming numb to feeling, meant they survived, and then continued to kill and maim others.

The impact of our social world:

But do ordinary people act inhumanely to other humans if they have not undergone such traumatic experiences? The answer seems to be 'yes'. Given

certain conditions we do.

You are likely to be aware of one of Milgram's experiments on 'conformity', conducted in the US at the beginning of the 1960s. In his best known investigation Milgram led subjects to believe they were giving an 'innocent learner' increasingly strong electric shocks whenever the learner, actually an actor, made an error. A few, a very few, refused to continue to give shocks to the 'learner' when they began to protest, but most of the subjects continued despite the increasing intensity of the shocks, right up to the level of a supposedly lethal dose. Seeing the 'innocent learner' first protest and later shriek with pain did not bring a halt. This experiment has been replicated with variations, with similar results.

In the 1950s and 1960s there were other researchers, as well as Stanley Milgram, who, like him, were challenging the prevailing view of the primacy of individual 'volition'. These researchers were systematically exploring the consequences of varying social conditions on human behaviour. Their work revealed that

'when you vary the worlds people live in you can transform the way they behave'

(Reicher S.D & Haslam S.A. The Psychologist, 2011)
One example is Muzafer Sherif's investigations which took place in Boys' Camps in the United States. He worked with youngsters, considered 'the cream of the crop' by their communities. Under certain conditions these boys behaved in vicious and disturbed ways towards others in different groups, and yet when the conditions were changed they began to co-operate with the others. Context powerfully influences our behaviour, and our conformity or disobedience.

How and why?

What is now understood is that the social situation we are immersed in impacts powerfully on us. As yet there are no answers as to the 'whys and wherefores'. We still do not understand why 'average citizens' can wreak so much damage to others.

An earlier explanation for this was that people in these situations judged that the 'expert' or authority figure was responsible for the consequences of what they themselves were doing, and that they were merely 'an instrument' carrying out the wishes of this other. This allowed them to follow orders to the best of their ability. This is no longer accepted as a valid or sufficient explanation.

There are a few, incomplete, clues as to what might be involved. Professor Burger (Burger J.M., The Psychologist, 2011) has commented that recent research may have provided some pointers.

- i. People respond to small requests. Responding once makes it easier to do the same thing again, maybe more intensely, and again, and again....
- ii. Humans prefer to be consistent rather than inconsistent. Having acted in one way several times promotes similar actions.
- iii. Acting in a certain way impacts on a person's idea of themselves. Referring back to the example of child soldiers; having killed your sister you see yourself as

someone who, in order to survive, can break bonds of love and previously unthinkable taboos. This too promotes similar action in the future, "I must be the kind of person who....".

- iv. Inhumane behaviour is perpetuated when personal responsibility is felt to be absent.
- v. People are not likely to help someone in need as long as they can diffuse responsibility for taking action to others.
- vi. In novel situations people may not have ideas about what they should or should not do. Do people then turn to others to see what they might do? In one investigation, using a similar situation to Milgram's experiment, after seeing another person react strongly and refuse to inflict further pain on the 'learner', many participants also refused to continue to shock their 'innocent learner'. However, when participants saw another person only quietly refused to inflict further pain, it was noted they did not follow their example.

Professional involvement in torture:
Caring professions have explicit ethical guidelines about the welfare of those whom their professional practice brings them into contact with. The most well known is the medical doctors' Hippocratic oath, the gist of which is that medical doctors should strive for the good of a patient/client, and not do harm. Other professions have similar ethical guidelines.

One of the prefacing remarks in the British Psychological Society code of practice is that often decisions need to be made '*in difficult, changing and unclear situations*'. This is followed by a comment that while the code '*can only be guidelines for thinking about decisions*' judgements made '*must be based on rational principles which serve as criteria*'. Another point made is that '*ethics is related to the control of power*' and that there often will be a power differential between client and practitioner. When deciding on a course of action the practitioner is required to '*evaluate the rights, responsibilities and welfare of all clients and stakeholders*' and '*establish a cost/risk benefit analysis to include both short- and long-term consequences*'.

Implications for interrogation under duress:

So if these professions have these ethical guidelines how can some of them be complicit with torture? It is possible to see that there can be a wide interpretation of whose care and needs are paramount in those statements about '*stakeholder rights*' and '*short- and long-term consequences*'. When the media or politicians portray that terrorism is at large about to strike at the heart of a country, it is possible to imagine an atmosphere biasing decision making. This could mean sacrificing an individual for the safety of others, ignoring knowledge that says information under duress is unreliable and underestimating how secrecy and breaking international law undermines civic society.

It is also possible to see how in any organisation, say, a prison camp, a military set up, the security department of a Government, conditions can arise over a short space of time that are similar to the social situations researched in the 1950s and 1960s, described above. It would be possible for those involved to see nothing 'wrong' or 'abnormal' to be complicit in chains of action that result in profound cruelty to another human, rendering them knowingly to torturers.

Conclusion:
My argument is this then - that certain social conditions can promote and support continued inhumanity and the ignoring of suffering. I do not believe that either professional ethical codes or International law are adequate barriers - but we cannot do without them.
It is also clear that different social conditions promote rewarding relationships and strong demonstrations of disagreement can trigger compassion and conscience and lead to the courageous refusal of individuals involved to obey unethical practice.
'Speaking truth to power' comes to mind.

J M Morton

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