

Q-CAT

QUAKER CONCERN FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE

DECEMBER 2017

NEWSLETTER No.30

Charity No 1093757

The Religious Society of Friends declares itself to be utterly opposed to the use of torture and determined to spare no effort to bring it to an end...
Hamilton Declaration 1976

In the News

Sadly, the Guardian continues to have cause to report on torture, both historical and current. These matters can be followed up at www.theguardian.com/law/torture.

Historical

10/10 Further details of the horror of the torture regime in 2002/3 at the CIA's Cobalt facility in Afghanistan – a regime designed by psychologists Mitchell and Jessen (referred to in the September newsletter) that proved futile and was later rejected by the CIA but not until after appalling suffering had been inflicted.

9/11 A 'long read' feature on CIA/MI6 collaboration after 9/11 and showing how far MI6 went to please Libya's ruthless intelligence agents, including helping to kidnap the dictator's enemies, who were returned to torture.

28/11 A report that 35 claimants, former fighters for EOKA, are suing the UK government over alleged human rights abuses in Cyprus in the 1950s, in a case similar to that brought successfully by a group of Kenyans.

Current

11/10 Victims of torture are not allowed to be held in UK immigration detention centres. The Home Office redefinition of torture in 2016 to refer only to violence carried out by official state agents has led to the detention of some asylum seekers who are victims of torture by traffickers, terrorists or other non-governmental forces. A recent high court judgement of a case brought by Medical Justice and seven torture victims has overturned this narrower definition and this is expected to give rise to dozens of claims for unlawful detention.

24/10 A Bahraini refugee in UK who fled torture for his human rights work feels betrayed by the UK government for lack of action about the detention and torture of other members of his family in Bahrain.

16/11 A Russian alleges kidnap and torture in Chechnya's 'gay purge'.

We have ways of making you talk

This was the eye-catching title of the "long read" feature by Ian Leslie in the Guardian of 14th October. It concerned the research into interrogation methods by Laurence Alison, professor of forensic psychology at Liverpool University and Emily Alison a professional counsellor.

Ian Leslie points out that for years the prevailing thinking about effective interrogation has been a belief in coercion and an acceptance that interrogators get the job done by intimidating, demoralising and brutalising their subjects. One of US military's most experienced interrogators told him that unfortunately this is not just popular perception but politicians, policy-makers and senior military

Q-CAT Trustees

Juliet Morton, Convenor

David Mellor, Treasurer

Jane Laxton, Newsletter Ed.

John Cockcroft

Michael Still

43 Embankment Rd, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1LA

23 Ebberston Road West, Rhos on Sea, Colwyn Bay, LL28 4AP

79 Wellington Road, New Brighton, Wirral CH45 2NE

Barbara Forbes

Michael Hutchinson

juliet@mortonpq.plus.com

janelaxton@hotmail.co.uk

Shazia Jamshed

Website www.q-cat.org.uk or www.qcat.org.uk

officers are convinced that is how it works. This is an idea very hard to shift, particularly since high-level interrogations take place in secret, and are not available to objective researchers

For part of their work Laurence and Emily Alison, funded by the US Government agency High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group, whose purpose is to ground interrogation in science, worked on 181 taped interviews of terrorist suspects carried out by the UK national counter-terrorism unit, totalling 878 hours. Every aspect of interaction between interviewer and interviewee was classified in great detail and scored, 150 variables in all. This was then statistically analysed, the most important relationship measured being that between the 'yield' (information elicited from the suspect) and 'rapport' (quality of the relationship between the two parties). For the first time, as Ian Leslie says 'a secure, empirical basis was established for what had, until then, been something between a hypothesis and an insider secret' i.e. the idea that building rapport with a suspect is the best way to elicit the information required. He goes on to say 'Today most experienced interrogators agree' and gives examples from statements by US interrogators who had worked in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Alisons' work also aimed to understand what creates and destroys rapport. They have designed, in partnership with the police, the Alcyone course, an intensive 6-day workshop to train interviewers, which has proved most successful.

The results of their work need to be widely known, by public, politicians, police and military worldwide so that the use of torture or other methods of coercion as a method of extracting information is thoroughly discredited.

Raising awareness and prompting action

Freedom from Torture's petition to the Prime Minister calling on her to reaffirm the UK's commitment to opposing torture in all its forms, wherever it takes place, will be handed in at No.10 Downing Street on 11th December. It has nearly 30,000 signatures.

Q-CAT matters

New Trustee: We welcome Shazia Jamshed as a new Trustee, appointed by North Wales Area Meeting.

10 Questions Workshop: A successful evening's discussion on torture was held at Doncaster Quaker Meeting on 7th October. This tied in well with the work the meeting is doing with asylum seekers.

Trustees Meeting: Normally these are held in Liverpool or Birmingham but the meeting on 27th November took place at Friends House, so that we could include Clare Wood, our link person on QPSW, and Michael Booth, Church Government Adviser for Quakers. They were most helpful in their advice and encouragement. With Michael we looked at questions on the constitutional relationship between Q-CAT and the rest of Britain Yearly Meeting, which will assist with the redrafting of our constitution. Clare helped us to look at our planning for the future and how we might be most effective. The next meeting is to be on 19th February 2018 in Birmingham.

Status confirmed: At Meeting for Sufferings on 7th October Q-CAT was registered as a Linked Recognised Body. A Recognised Body is 'an independent group of Friends (and others) who explore a common interest, seek affirmation or carry out witness. It wishes to be recognised as a Quaker organisation because its Quaker roots are important to its identity'. Linked Recognised Body status confirms that we are part of the formal structure of BYM.

To receive newsletters and briefings by email contact: from.qcat@hotmail.com and include your Local and Area Quaker Meetings if appropriate.

To receive them by post if emailing is not possible for you: Jane Laxton, 79 Wellington Road, New Brighton, Wirral CH 45 2NE

The next Briefing is due out towards the end of January and the next Newsletter at the beginning of March.