

Q-CAT

QUAKER CONCERN FOR THE ABOLITION OF TORTURE

DECEMBER 2018

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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

Sri Lanka (www.theguardian.com/law/torture 17/11/18)

It was reported that the newly appointed prime minister is Mahinda Rajapaksa who, when he was president, presided over mass torture and enforced disappearances. Freedom from Torture's chief executive said that "probably no person on earth is more responsible than Rajapaksa for the broken lives Freedom from Torture attempts to fix at our treatment centres in UK. Last year we provided care to more than 230 Sri Lankans, the vast majority of whom were tortured under Rajapaksa's rule." She calls for a moratorium on removals from UK back to Sri Lanka which would be a simple step for the UK to take now to ensure that we do not deliver anyone into Rajapaksa's lethal hands.

Palestine (www.theguardian.com/law/torture 23/10/18)

Human Rights Watch have published a report showing that within Palestine the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza are targeting each other's supporters, and those in detention by security forces are routinely taunted, threatened, beaten and forced into painful stress positions for hours at a time. The HRW calls for a number of steps to be taken. (see www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23)

Labour queries US pressure over torture and rendition inquiry

(www.theguardian.com/law/torture 7/10/18)

Labour has raised fears that pressure from the Trump administration is delaying an announcement on whether a judge-led inquiry will investigate the UK's involvement in torture and rendition overseas. The shadow attorney general, Shami Chakrabarti, and shadow foreign secretary, Emily Thornberry, have written to the prime minister expressing concerns that the government has missed its deadline for announcing whether it will hold an inquiry. They ask for urgent clarification on whether she or any other government official have received representation from the Trump administration on a potential inquiry, and a commitment that under no circumstances will the government's decision be influenced by pressure from Trump administration officials or the president himself. There is no word so far of a reply.

Q-CAT Trustees

Juliet Morton, Convenor	43 Embankment Rd, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1LA	juliet@mortonpq.plus.com		
David Mellor, Treasurer	23 Ebberston Road West, Rhos on Sea, Colwyn Bay, LL28 4AP			
Jane Laxton, Newsletter Ed.	79 Wellington Road, New Brighton, Wirral CH45 2NE	janelaxton@hotmail.co.uk		
Barbara Forbes	Michael Hutchinson	Shazia Jamshed	Sue Jenkins	Michael Still

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

States that have signed up to the **Convention against Torture** are required to report to the UN on their progress towards implementing the treaty **every four years**. In April 2019, the UK will be reviewed by the UN Committee against Torture as part of its sixth periodic review.

REDRESS is coordinating and facilitating a **joint civil society shadow report** to the Committee against Torture to provide an alternative, fact-based view of the measures taken by the UK to implement its obligations under the Convention against Torture. Q-CAT contributed to this, under the heading of Legislative, Administrative and Judicial Procedure by referring to the Intelligence and Security Committee's report *Detainee mistreatment and rendition*, highlighting the admission that the ISC had been prevented from obtaining the full evidence it needed and asking that the Committee on Torture press the UK Government to set up the judicial inquiry so that the full picture of UK involvement becomes clear and stringent measures are set in place to avoid any reoccurrence.

Q-CAT Conference: Preventing Torture – Effective Action

The conference on 3/11/18 went well and those there were very interested to hear the four speakers and join in the discussions and What do we do next? session. An article about it by Barbara Forbes was published in *The Friend* on 23/11 and is available on the website. A detailed report including summaries of the speakers' presentations will form our next Briefing in mid-January.

Trustees' Meeting

At our Meeting on 10th December we welcomed Sue Jenkins as a new trustee from Central England. David Mellor and Michael Still retire as trustees at the end of 2018, and we thanked them for their valuable service. Michael Hutchinson will act temporarily as Treasurer.

Other matters on the agenda were follow-up from the Conference, plans for presence at Britain Yearly Meeting in May 2019, liaison with Supporting Area Meetings, and developing wider support. Plus South East Scotland Area Meeting and the Cycle Ride in aid of Freedom from Torture, which are referred to elsewhere in this newsletter.

Cycle for Torture 2019

This relay cycle ride, in 19 stages from Hastings to Edinburgh in July 2019 is being organised by Edinburgh Freedom from Torture group (at the instigation of local Quakers) to raise awareness of FFT's work, to connect with local groups and Quakers and to raise funds. The route will include stops in Brighton, London, Marlow, Oxford, Milton Keynes, Daventry, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Manchester, Lancaster, Kendal, Alston, Newcastle, Wooler, Tweedbank, Biggar, Glasgow, Falkirk, and Edinburgh. Events have already been arranged in some of these places, including a showing of *Feeding the Darkness* in Birmingham. If you are interested in joining in as a cyclist, or in helping to arrange accommodation or events in any of these places please look at the website <https://edinburghfft.org/cycle2019/>. Queries can be directed to cyclefft2019@gmail.com.

New Supporting Area Meeting

We are delighted that South East Scotland Area Meeting, at their meeting on 24/11/18, agreed to become one of Q-CAT's Supporting Area Meetings. These are Meetings which have a particular interest in upholding Q-CAT's work and keeping their members informed of and involved in its activities. They nominate and support a Trustee if they are able. If your Area Meeting might be interested in this, please contact Juliet Morton for further details.

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.