

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

### Panorama Programme

An opportunity for the wider British public to consider the subject of torture as a means of getting information from suspected terrorists was given on primetime television on 3<sup>rd</sup> August in BBC Panorama's *Fighting Terror with Torture*. It was a very explicit investigation into the techniques and thinking behind the Enhanced Interrogation carried out by and for the American CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) that had been roundly criticised in the Senate Intelligence Committee report published last December – see Briefing No 44.

In order to bring home to viewers something of the brutality torture involves the reporter Hilary Anderson, investigating in America, experienced (under careful medical supervision) “walling” – being banged up against a wall while being shouted at and being locked in a box in which she could hardly move while subjected to noises including sounds of an infant in distress. A volunteer serviceman demonstrated waterboarding, strapped down and having water poured over his face. Even in controlled circumstances and without the aim of extracting information these were devastating experiences for them both.

Some viewers may have found this too much and switched off unfortunately missing the core of the message. In an interview, Dianne Feinstein, who had chaired the SIC, reiterated that no actionable information had been gained through the widespread use of torture which could not have been gathered by other means. This was backed up in an interview with Ali Soufan of the FBI, who additionally said that the American programme of torture had fuelled hatred in parts of the world. The most chilling interview was with Buzzy Krongard of the CBI who spoke of trying to “balance efficacy and morality”. He added that anything found out which was thought to be of interest to the British Intelligence service was shared and “both services worked harmoniously”. When asked if the British would have known this information was extracted under torture he replied “They must have”.

The reply from the Foreign Office to Hilary Anderson when she put this to them was the usual “We stand firm against torture. We do not condone it or ask others to do it on our behalf.”

In spite of much still to be resolved in the States [see later], how much more genuine Dianne Feinstein’s summary seemed, coming after revelations in the SIC report of such brutality. “This has been a dark chapter and we must learn from it. This is not the America we stand for. It violates our values and system of justice and we must really not let it happen again.”

#### Q-CAT Trustees

Juliet Morton, Convenor and Treasurer	43 Embankment Rd, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1LA	<a href="mailto:juliet@mortonpq.plus.com">juliet@mortonpq.plus.com</a>
Jane Laxton, Newsletter Ed.	79 Wellington Road, New Brighton, Wirral CH45 2NE	<a href="mailto:janelaxton@hotmail.co.uk">janelaxton@hotmail.co.uk</a>
John Cockcroft	Barbara Forbes	David Mellor
Michael Hutchinson	Michael Still	
Website <a href="http://www.q-cat.org.uk">www.q-cat.org.uk</a>	Rosalind Mitchell, Website manager	

## Two recent items on the Guardian website are examples of ongoing problems in America

The first is dated 1/9/15:

Dick Cheney has defended the Bush administration's approval of the use of torture again in a new book about American exceptionalism written with his daughter Liz Cheney.

The book, *Exceptional*, argues that the United States is "the greatest force for good the world has ever known" and should remain so in spite of a current run of poor leadership by President Barack Obama.

It includes Cheney's latest rebuttals of charges that he damaged the United States by sanctioning torture after the 9/11 attacks and by backing the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Here is a passage from the book, on "enhanced interrogation" having "kept us safe":

"To call enhanced interrogation a program of torture, as President Obama has so many times, is to libel the dedicated professionals who saved American lives, and to cast terrorists and murderers as innocent victims ...

Ending programs that kept us safe, revealing the details about those programs to the terrorists, and spreading untruths about our policies was misguided, unjust, and highly irresponsible. It was recklessness cloaked in righteousness. It was my view then and remains so today, that President Obama, having so consistently distorted the truth about the enhanced interrogation program and the brave Americans who carried it out, is in no position to lecture anyone about American values."

In the second, of 14/8/15, Clive Stafford Smith wrote:

"Recent history demonstrates that if President Barack Obama, arguably the most powerful person on planet Earth, wants to prioritize almost anything ...— little can stand in his way. Why, then, is Shaker Aamer not home in London with his wife and four children?

Aamer is the last British resident to be detained without trial in Guantánamo Bay and he has never been charged with a single offence. In 2007, he was cleared for release by the Bush Administration; in 2009, six US intelligence agencies unanimously agreed that Shaker should be released. In January 2015, British Prime Minister David Cameron personally raised Shaker's plight with President Obama, who promised that he would "prioritize" the case.

On Thursday, ...the Guardian revealed that "the Pentagon [is] blocking Guantánamo deals to return Shaker Aamer and other cleared detainees." President Obama, it seems, has personally ordered Aamer's release, and his subordinates have ignored and thwarted his order...

The contravention of the president's orders indicates that there is a profound problem with the state of democracy in America. The military is not a democratic institution; a soldier takes an oath to follow orders. When a military officer simply chooses not to follow the clear order of the president, it is a slap in the face for the American system of government.

What makes General Dempsey (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) qualified to be the ultimate arbiter of due process? It is certainly not his intimate knowledge of the prisoners who he has blackballed. I am not sure General Dempsey has ever even been to Guantánamo; I have, some 35 times. Certainly, he has never met Shaker Aamer; I have, some 35 times. If General Dempsey took the time to learn the facts, he would discover that Aamer is no more a terrorist than the general himself is. Aamer loudly protests his detention without trial; all he wants is to be back with his children in London.

President Obama should certainly call General Dempsey into the Oval Office and read him the riot act. And though Obama is right to try to close Guantánamo Bay in general, the broader issue at stake is whether he is willing to allow the Pentagon to undermine the very essence of the US constitution. The president has given an order to the military; they need to obey it."

## **Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva: work related to that of Q-CAT**

QUNO endeavours to promote Quaker peace and social testimonies in the international institutions in Geneva concerned with human rights and refugees, international trade and development, climate change, food and sustainability and peace and disarmament. By working with government delegations, experts, staff of international organisations' secretariats, and non-governmental organisations, it seeks to widen the base of dialogue in ways that strengthen the Quaker testimonies in international policy-making and implementation.

Laurel Townhead's work there is concerned with human rights and she writes:

“Although none of our work focusses specifically on torture we do some work on it, mostly in relation to our work on children of prisoners and children of parents sentenced to death or executed. I have also been involved in some ongoing work on gender-specific monitoring of places of detention as part of our work on women in prison. Organisations who monitor places of detention (like the prisons inspectorate in England and Wales) have responsibilities around torture detection and torture prevention. The work I am involved in is aiming to ensure that these bodies are aware of the standards on the treatment of women prisoners and how imprisonment impacts differently on women. First there was a workshop with the UN Committee Against Torture, the UN Sub Committee on the Prevention of Torture and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Shortly I will be facilitating a session on a Summer School for national torture prevention mechanisms. I also did a small bit of work on the American Friends Service Committee's shadow report to the UN Committee on Torture about torture and ill treatment in US prisons.”

### **Stop the Arms Fair**

The world's largest arms fair returns to East London this September. For one week every two years arms companies display their weapons (some of which may be used for torture) to buyers from around the world, including those from countries with ongoing violent disputes, authoritarian regimes and states with serious human rights problems. The UK government helps to organise this arms fair, invites these military buyers from around the world, and helps arms companies to make financially attractive deals. This is done at taxpayer expense.

Under the auspices of Stop the Arms Fair ([www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events](http://www.stopthearmsfair.org.uk/events)) there will be a Big Day of Action on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 12 to 4, with a Meeting for Worship at 2, near ExCeL, London E16 1XL and a silent candle-lit vigil the evening before the arms fair opens, in solidarity with victims of the arms trade. (Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 7-8 p.m., meeting at 6.30 outside Royal Victoria DLR, E16 3BX)

Staff from QPSW will be at both events and available on 07523 357 905. Advance enquiries to [samw@quaker.org.uk](mailto:samw@quaker.org.uk).

Although there will be no specific Q-CAT presence at this, we are sure people receiving this newsletter will want to think about the protesters and join in the hope that eventually our Government will be persuaded to cease encouraging this dreadful trade.

The next Briefing is due out in mid-October and the next Newsletter at the beginning of November

**Website**  
Apologies that our website is currently incomplete. Material is having to be transferred to a new site and it is taking a while to move everything over.

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 £.....payable to Q-CAT.  
Name.....  
Address.....  
Postcode.....  
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  
Name .....  
Address.....  
.....  
Local and Area Quaker Meetings (if appropriate).....  
.....