



Christians Against Torture

a campaign of churches in Wales

Christmas mailing 2011

WILLIAM SHAIBOUB - THE FAMILIAR FACE OF OUR 2012 CALENDAR



We have campaigned for many years for William Shaiboub, imprisoned on false charges in Egypt for more than 12 years. He features again on our Christmas greetings list (inside), and also on the 2012 Christians Against Torture calendar. If you can use more calendars to promote the campaign, please let us know how many you need. Like all our materials, they are free, but a donation towards postage would be appreciated.

Delegation queries UK mismatch between principle and performance

Your pressure on torture is welcome - justice minister



Lord McNally

The pressure of churches in Wales on issues such as torture and enforced disappearance has been welcomed by the Minister of State for Justice, Lord McNally. Meeting a delegation from Christians Against Torture at the Ministry of Justice in London on 26th October, Lord McNally acknowledged the value of contributions from campaigning groups.

Two members of the CAT steering group, Revs Roy Jenkins and Mark Soady, outlined the campaign's work over the past 30 years, rooted in the churches and a faith-based understanding of human rights.

They praised the actions of successive UK governments in promoting international agreements, and welcomed clear statements rejecting torture and enforced disappearance. *But they questioned the apparent mismatch between declared principle and actual performance.*

Discomfort on failure to sign disappearances treaty

On the failure to sign and ratify the international convention on enforced disappearance, the minister indicated his distinct discomfort that apart from Switzerland, the UK was the only country in Western Europe not to have complied. He reiterated that work was proceeding to determine what changes would be necessary in domestic law to implement the treaty, but was not able to offer a date when this work might be complete.

On the inquiry into alleged complicity by British intelligence agencies in the torture of individuals overseas, he expressed regret at the decision of ten human rights organisations to withdraw from the inquiry on the grounds that it lacked credibility and transparency. Lord McNally stressed that the door remained open to their involvement, that the government had no interest in a whitewash, and that unless such inquiries had credibility they were a waste of time.

The CAT delegation listed some of the specific concerns regarding transparency – particularly the fact that the Cabinet Secretary (who reports to the prime minister) would have final say on what material may be disclosed in public. They were told that assurances had been given that this would be determined only by what was in the overall interests of national security; it was believed that the government was in a better position than the judiciary or the inquiry itself to make such judgements.

Further questions were raised about the removal of legal aid provision to some torture survivors in the UK, and about potential dangers if the Human Rights Act were to be repealed.

Religious Freedom is Human Rights Day theme

Christians of many traditions have shared over the years in the annual Human Rights Day event organised by the Christians Against Torture group at Ararat Baptist Church, Whitchurch, Cardiff. The theme of this year's event, on Saturday 10th December (10.30 – 11.30 a.m.) is: 'The Right to Believe – Religious freedom as a human right today.'

The speaker is John Kinahan, of the Forum 18 News Service, a Norwegian-based Christian web and e-mail initiative (news@editor.forum18.org). The service provides original and objective reporting and analysis on violations of freedom of thought, conscience and belief for people of any religious affiliation. It mainly reports on the former Soviet states, notably Belarus and Central Asia, but also publishes original work on states such as Serbia and Turkey. All are welcome to this event. Enquiries: 029 2062 7431.

Amnesty looking for letter writers who might just save lives

Amnesty International are looking for more people to join their Urgent Action network, which began more than 35 years ago as a response to torture. Christians Against Torture have been involved in this network from its beginnings. As it has grown, the scheme has protected people from torture and ill-treatment, obtained the release of people wrongly, and sometimes secretly, detained, and secured access to medical treatment or legal counsel. Sometimes it has saved lives.

Currently it tackles about 400 new cases a year, addressing not only torture but death threats, disappearances, the death penalty, forced repatriation and evictions and a range of other human rights violations. To join the network, all you need is an email address and a little spare time. Details from Individuals at Risk Programme, Amnesty International UK at iar@amnesty.org.uk

Christians Against Torture are grateful for the help of Amnesty with campaign information – and also for news about prisoners held for their faith supplied by **Christian Solidarity Worldwide**. They have extensive lists of prisoners needing support. Details from: Christian Solidarity Worldwide, PO Box 99, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3YF tel 0845 456 5464 admin@cswworldwide.org.uk

NEWS OF PRISONERS FROM PREVIOUS CAMPAIGNS

Dmitry Shestakov, the Pentecostal pastor in Uzbekistan freed from prison earlier this year has written to thank all who have supported him. His health is now greatly improved, but his movements are still restricted, and he is able to attend church only as a visitor.

Another message of thanks has come from Safia Fahassi, whose journalist husband **Djameleddine Fahassi** was abducted in Algeria in 1995 and has featured in a number of Christians Against Torture campaigns. She and her daughter are grateful for everyone who has sent greetings.

The plight of human rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng**, who has now been missing for more than a year, has been raised with the Chinese authorities by United States vice-president Joe Biden and by the president of the European Parliament.

SHARING THE PRAYING

We are grateful to the Rev Malcolm Shapland of the United Reformed Church for the prayers included in this mailing. Please use them – and encourage those leading worship to do so, and to refer to Christians Against Torture.

Our Treasurer, Mrs Anne Morgan, 9 Pilgrim Close, Radyr, Cardiff CF15 8GD, is always happy to receive and acknowledge your support.

Christians Against Torture encourages Christians of all traditions to work and pray for the abolition of torture and the care of its victims. It is independent, but functions as an agency of Cytun, Churches Together in Wales, and is linked with the International Federation of Christians for the Abolition of Torture. It was launched in 1981 by the former Council of Churches for Wales, with the support of the Welsh section of Amnesty International. Supporters receive three mailings a year - for Easter, Christmas and the autumn Freedom Feast. Christians Against Torture, 60 Ty Wern Road, Rhiwbina, Cardiff CF14 4SF. Tel: 029 2062 7431 email: admin@torturecymruwales.org.uk