
Amnesty International
LOCAL GROUP
CAMPAIGN UPDATE



Stop Torture Campaign / May 2015

STOP TORTURE

Global Day of Action 26th June



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Local group's monthly mailing can be downloaded from:
www.amnesty.org.uk/groups

GROUP CAMPAIGN UPDATE

STOP TORTURE - CAMPAIGN UPDATES



Nigeria: Boost for Moses Akatugba

On 10 December 2014, the UK Minister for Human Rights expressed the UK government's support for our demands on Moses Akatugba's case, including for a commutation of his sentence and an investigation into his allegations of torture. On 1st October the Governor of Niger Delta, Dr Emmanuel Uduaghan, spoke publicly about Moses in his Independence Day speech stating "the Prerogative of Mercy has been looking at Moses Akatugba's case." Independence Day in Nigeria (1 October) is a day when traditionally the Governor overturns death sentences for a few selected prisoners. From 22 September to 30 September 2014, Amnesty supporters across the world joined a social media action targeting the Governor's Facebook and Twitter accounts. On 30 October Moses sent a message to Amnesty supporters "I am so grateful for everything that people are doing in the UK to help me. The letters I have received give me hope. When I hear about the level of support and everything that is being done for me by Amnesty International, it makes me the happiest man on earth."

Please keep up the pressure on the Governor for justice for Moses by writing to him and signing the petition at: www.amnesty.org.uk/moses

Philippines: Torture investigation launched after Amnesty report

On 4 December 2014, Amnesty launched the report 'Above the law: torture and ill treatment in the Philippines'. In response to our findings, **the Philippine Senate announced that they would open an inquiry into the widespread abuse in the country.**

Philippines: Alfreda Disbarro message of appreciation

Alfreda has been receiving solidarity messages from across the world and because every letter has to be scanned by the officers at the Parañaque City Jail, they have been complaining of doing nothing but scanning her letters! Alfreda's family send their love and gratitude to all Amnesty members and supporters, and say **your support has helped to give them strength and courage.** More information on torture in the Philippines: www.amnesty.org.uk/exposed-police-torture-philippines

Mexico: Charges dropped against Claudia Medina Tamariz

On 6 February, a judge dropped the last remaining charge against Claudia, arguing that the sole piece of evidence – a report filed by the marines – was a lie. **She is now free to get on with her life.** We will continue to support Claudia's fight for her torturers to be brought to account. In her own words: "After this long process I had to go through I felt the need to become a human rights activist, to show that I'm not a criminal, as authorities portrayed me. I will not allow even one more woman to be tortured in Mexico." More information on Claudia's case: www.amnesty.org.uk/claudia



Mexico: President visits London

On 2 March, as the Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto arrived in the UK for a State visit, we delivered a petition signed by over **14,000** people to the Mexican embassy. Our main objectives for the visit were to get human rights raised by UK officials in meetings with the President and to put the spotlight on Mexico's record on torture. **We received over 200 pieces of media coverage during the visit and have had confirmation that at least five UK Ministers, including the Prime Minister, raised human rights with the President.**

Morocco: A step towards fighting torture

On 24 November 2014 Morocco strengthened its international commitments against torture, when it started the process to ratify the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

UK/USA: Parliament calls for return of Shaker Aamer to the UK

On 17 March politicians from all the major UK parties debated Shaker Aamer's case in the House of Commons. Shaker Aamer is the last remaining former British resident held at Guantánamo Bay. He has been detained for 13 years without charge or trial and says he has been mistreated during his detention. **A resolution was passed** calling on 'the US government to release Shaker Aamer from his imprisonment in Guantánamo Bay and to allow him to return to his family in the UK'. The UK government supported the resolution with Foreign Office Minister Tobias Ellwood stating "I hope I have made it clear that the UK government are absolutely committed to securing the release of Mr Aamer. Today I would like to underline that commitment and join the House in calling for the US government to approve the release of Shaker Aamer to the UK."

On the same day we delivered a petition to Downing Street signed by **41,688** people calling on the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, and US President, Barack Obama, to return Shaker Aamer to the UK, unless he is to be charged and brought to a fair trial. You can take action calling for justice for Shaker Aamer in this mailing (See Action 3). More information on his case: www.amnesty.org.uk/shaker

EU Tools of Torture: There is still time to write to your MEPs calling on the EU to urgently close the loopholes that allow people to profit from the trade in torture equipment. The European Parliament's trade (INTA) committee will be reviewing the text in May, ahead of a vote in July. All MEPs will then vote on the issue in the week commencing 7 September. In December, Business Secretary Vince Cable told the Conventional Arms Export Control Select Committee that the UK government would look favourably on closing the loopholes in the EU regulation on the trade in torture equipment. The action from the October Stop Torture mailing is still live. For sample letters, to see the October campaign mailing or to feedback on your activities contact us: lobbyfeedback@amnesty.org.uk

'Doctors against Torture' Conference: On 20 January 2015 Amnesty International UK, the British Medical Association and Freedom from Torture held a fascinating conference to explore the ethical and practical challenges facing forensic physicians who work with victims of torture. The conference brought together specialists on medical ethics, torture and its forensic documentation to explore these challenges and what can be done to support forensic health professionals working in this environment. **Independent medical examinations are one of the key safeguards of the Stop Torture campaign**, particularly in the context of Mexico and Morocco. Engaging medical professionals in the UK on this aspect of the Stop Torture campaign will help to strengthen our voice. You can watch a video of the conference, which included sessions on Mexico and Morocco at: <http://bma.org.uk/doctorsagainsttorture>

US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report on CIA torture

On 9 December 2014 the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released the summary of a report detailing torture methods used as part of the CIA's secret detention and interrogation programme. The report provides details of how the CIA used "waterboarding", mock execution, prolonged sleep deprivation, stress positions and other forms of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment against detainees who had been forcibly disappeared. The summary report also provides information on the effects of the interrogation techniques and detention conditions on the detainees themselves, including "hallucinations, paranoia, insomnia, and attempts at self-harm and self-mutilation".

ACTION 1: MEXICO

Improve safeguards against torture in Mexico

Amnesty International has documented the widespread occurrence of torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico, by police and soldiers, especially in the context of the so-called “war on drugs”. Between 2003 and 2013 reports of torture in Mexico increased by 600%. Impunity is a major problem as convictions are almost non-existent, so very few people are being held to account for their torture crimes. One of the safeguards against torture which is lacking is independent forensic medical examinations for victims of torture. Mexico often fails to meet international standards in this area, such as the UN backed Istanbul Protocol - a manual on the effective investigation and documentation of torture and other cruel treatment. Official forensic doctors often fail to adequately and promptly examine detainees who file complaints of torture. Medical forensic examinations, when carried out, can take months and even years to take place, when most physical marks of torture will have healed. The absence of physical evidence of torture in the medical examination is often interpreted automatically as meaning that no torture took place.

Why now?

There are many reasons why right now is a good time to increase our pressure on the Mexican authorities.

- In February 2015 a new Federal Attorney General was appointed, so we have an opportunity to raise our concerns with a new key target.
- On 2-5 March the Mexican President, Enrique Peña Nieto, came to the UK for a formal State visit (see updates section). At least five members of the UK delegation, including the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, raised human rights with the President, after targeted advocacy and activism from us. We also put the media spotlight on Mexico’s record on torture, both in the UK and in Mexico, so we have an opportunity to build on that.
- On 10 March 2015 the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture published a report on torture in Mexico (to read the report visit: <http://antitorture.org/mexico-2014/>). The report backs up many of Amnesty’s concerns, including the need for an overhaul of the implementation of medical forensic examinations of torture victims, as a first step towards combatting torture and ending impunity in the country.
- 2015 is also a ‘Dual Year’ of international cooperation between the UK and Mexico, which provides lots of opportunities to put the spotlight on Mexico’s human rights record.

What are we asking for?

We need to keep the pressure on. Call on the new Federal Attorney General to implement the UN Special Rapporteur’s recommendations and ensure medical examinations are carried out promptly and in accordance with the international standards, such as the UN backed Istanbul Protocol.

In your letter you should include the following demands:

- Overhaul the application of medical forensic examinations for those who allege they were tortured or ill-treated, so that these examinations fully comply with international human rights standards, such as the Istanbul Protocol;
- Ensure that official medical forensic experts are independent of the Federal Attorney General’s Office to ensure their independence and impartiality;
- Ensure that forensic investigations by independent forensic experts are considered as primary evidence by prosecutors and judges and given the same weight as official investigations.

A template letter can be found in Annex 1

Email feedback and any response you receive to activism@amnesty.org.uk

ACTION 2: UZBEKISTAN:

Tell the EU to put human rights back on the agenda

On 23 October 2014, a resolution on Human Rights in Uzbekistan was passed at the European Parliament making several recommendations to the Uzbekistani authorities. These included the immediate and unconditional release of all persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges; elimination of torture and other ill-treatment in pre-trial detention and correctional facilities; allowing an independent investigation into the mass killings in Andizhan in 2005; and approving the pending requests by 11 UN special procedures to visit Uzbekistan, including the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The resolution specifically mentions Dilorom Abdukadirova as one of the *“seven others who are perceived as critics of the government or witnesses to the Andizhan massacre of 13 May 2005, when Uzbek government forces shot and killed hundreds of mainly peaceful protesters”*.

On 13 May 2005, Dilorom Abdukadirova joined thousands at a protest in Andizhan to voice concerns about the economy. The protest was mostly peaceful, but security forces fired on the crowds, killing hundreds. Dilorom fled the country after the events in Andizhan but was imprisoned after she returned to Uzbekistan in January 2010 to be reunited with her husband and children. Dilorom is a prisoner of conscience and is serving an 18-year sentence in Tashkent Women’s Prison, in Uzbekistan.

Why now?

On 15 April Amnesty launched a new report on Uzbekistan, ‘Secrets and lies: Forced confessions under torture in Uzbekistan’ (Read the report at: www.amnesty.org.uk/uzbekistan-torture-corruption-and-lies). The report highlights how torture is endemic in the country’s criminal justice system and that the use of torture and other ill-treatment is widespread. Victims include government critics, religious groups and migrant workers. In October 2015 the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) will meet and we are calling on them to put Uzbekistan’s human rights record back on the agenda.

What are we asking for?

We are calling on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (FAC) ahead of an October meeting to place Uzbekistan as an urgent item on the FAC agenda; and for strong FAC conclusions on human rights in Uzbekistan to be adopted before or on October 2015.

Please write a letter to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

In your letter you should include the following demands:

- Put Uzbekistan’s human rights record back on the agenda and take concrete steps to ensure that action on Uzbekistan’s record is timely, meaningful, effective;
- Issue Council conclusions on Uzbekistan which include appropriately strong language on the human rights situation;
- Publicly support the creation of a UN special procedure mandate on Uzbekistan.

A template letter can be found in Annex 2.

Email feedback and any response you receive to activism@amnesty.org.uk

ACTION 3: Justice for Shaker Aamer

Shaker Aamer moved to the UK in 1996, where he married a British woman. They have four British children. He was originally detained by Afghan forces in 2001 in Afghanistan, where he was living at the time with his family. According to Shaker Aamer, he was in Afghanistan because he was working for a Saudi charity. In February 2002, he was sent to Guantánamo Bay.

During his detention, Shaker Aamer says that he has been tortured, and according to his lawyers, he has spent much of the time in solitary confinement. He is the last former resident of the UK held at Guantánamo and has never been charged, tried or convicted of any recognised criminal offence by the US authorities.

On 22 January 2009 President Obama signed an executive order committing the US administration to resolving the cases of the detainees held at Guantánamo “as promptly as possible”. Shaker Aamer was cleared for transfer from Guantánamo in both 2007 and 2009. This indicates that the US is not intending to bring him to trial.

In April 2014 Shaker Aamer was examined by an independent doctor and diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. According to his lawyers, Dr Emily Keram, a forensic psychiatrist, “the length, uncertainty, and stress of Mr Aamer’s confinement have caused significant disruptions in his ability to function.” Dr Keram recommended that he receives psychiatric treatment, “as well as reintegration into his family and society and minimisation of his re-exposure to trauma and reminders of trauma”.

Why now?

David Cameron went to the US in January 2015 and raised Shaker Aamer’s case with President Obama. Following this visit, it was reported that President Obama had promised to prioritise a review of Shaker Aamer’s case.

Despite the seeming willingness of UK authorities to permit his return to the UK and re-join his family (see campaign updates section), Shaker Aamer remains detained without charge or trial.

What are we asking for?

Please write a personal letter to President Obama calling for him to be returned to the UK, if he is not to be charged and given a fair trial. President Obama has publicly stated his desire to close Guantánamo Bay. In your letter you should include the following demands:

- Release Shaker Aamer unless he is to be charged and brought to fair trial;
- Give Shaker Aamer immediate and regular access to independent medical assessments and care;
- Investigate immediately all allegations that Shaker Aamer has been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that anyone found responsible is brought to justice.

A template letter can be found in Annex 3.

Email feedback and any response you receive to activism@amnesty.org.uk

ACTION 4: Global Day of Action

On 26 June, Amnesty International is holding again a Global Day of Action to mark the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Amnesty supporters all over the world will organise sponsored walks and runs to show solidarity with victims of torture worldwide and to ‘Stop Torture One step at a Time’.



Organising a sponsored walk or run is easy. All you need to do is plan a route, recruit some walkers or runners and then start getting sponsors. Make sure you tell everyone about the Stop Torture campaign when you ask for sponsorship and encourage them to take an action. To join in with the global day of action ideally your events would take place on June 26th but anytime that week or the summer term is fine if that’s better for you.

IDEAS FOR GREAT WALKS / RUNS

The best thing about a sponsored walk or run is that almost everyone can take part. It’s easy to tailor it to suit your group. Here are a few suggestions you might want to try. All the ideas below would equally apply to a run.

Scenic walk

Many activist groups are based in rural communities. If you’re lucky enough to have the beautiful British countryside on your doorstep, a scenic walk is probably your best bet. Often routes are already marked out, but if you or someone in your group has local knowledge, you can be creative and design an alternative route of your own. If you offer a unique walk, you’re more likely to attract ramblers from outside your group - and may get some new members.

Urban walk

Every city is full of stories – but too often we are preoccupied with our daily grind. Many city dwellers see little of their town beyond the office they work in and the nearest high street coffee chain. A sponsored city walk is the perfect way to change this. You could plan a route taking in sites of historical interest. Consult the local tourist board or just sit down with the group’s resident history buff.

Pub walk

For some people, walking is more about the destination than the journey. If you’re more interested in the local brewery than the local flora and fauna, a pub walk is for you. For a rural pub walk, pick a village pub that offers a place to put your feet up and refuel after a gentle jaunt. If you’re in an urban area, you could stop off at different pubs along the route – but careful not to overdo it.

Dog walk

If you’re a group of dog lovers, try a sponsored dog walk, perhaps culminating in a collection in town. Nothing encourages donations on a street collection quite as much as the addition of dog appeal.

Action walk

The Stop Torture campaign is a good chance to engage people who might not be typical Amnesty supporters because torture is so clearly wrong. You could set up tables along the route with action cards and case sheets for cases featured in the campaign. Or you could book a table in a pub afterwards and encourage walkers to join you for a drink and a spot of easy post-walk campaigning.

Email activism@amnesty.org.uk for Stop Torture campaigning materials.

FUNDRAISING FROM YOUR WALK /RUN

Here are a few tips on how to ensure your walk raises as much money as possible for Amnesty.

- Set up a JustGiving page for anyone who wants to support the cause but can't donate on the day.
- Bring collection tins with you. They may seem old-fashioned but street collections are still the biggest single source of income for our local groups. If you're planning an event at the end of the walk or run, make sure you have a few tins with you.
- Charge an entry fee. Charging people to take part in the walk or run is a great way to generate funds. To make sure you don't leave anyone out, you could make the entry fee optional. This allows people on low incomes to take part - often those who can afford to will donate more than the suggested amount.
- Ask everyone you know to sponsor you. Take your sponsorship form to work, to family gatherings, to social occasions and anywhere where there are people who might sponsor you.

Get in touch. fundraise@amnesty.org.uk or call Richard on **020 7033 1650**

Suggestion: End your walk / run with a Mexican-themed Piñata action

Groups could end their event with an action for the Stop Torture campaign. Mexico is one of our target countries and we recently delivered a petition signed by over 14,000 people to the Mexican embassy on the occasion of the Mexican President's visit to the UK. As a 'hook' we hid the petition inside a giant Mexican piñata and smashed it out with a large stick. There's a short video clip to give you a taster of how it went (scroll down the page): www.amnesty.org.uk/claudia

Ideas for using your piñata

What is a Piñata and how do you make one?

Commonly associated with Mexico, a piñata is a highly decorated container made of papier-mâché, pottery, or cloth. It is decorated and filled with small toys or sweets and then broken apart with a stick as part of a celebration. There are plenty of videos and online guides to making a piñata. Here are just a couple:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Pi%C3%B1ata>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44JYARhkFe8>

- Create an eye-catching photo with the piñata and all the people who took part in your sponsored event. You could send this to your local press (we can help you with this).
- Fill your piñata not only with sweets but with badges or Stop Torture stickers (see resources section). Only when people have taken action (signed an action card, letter or) can they have a go at smashing the piñata to get a sticker.
- Fill the piñata with action cards. Once the piñata has been smashed get people to sign them.
- Use a 'Don't turn a blind eye to torture' sticker to make a blindfold (see resources)

Email feedback and photos of your event to activism@amnesty.org.uk

STOP TORTURE CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

All activist groups should have received a Stop Torture campaign pack at the start of the campaign. You can order more copies of this pack by calling **01788 545 553** and quote the code STOPT01.

Other materials have been produced since; please see below for a full list of Stop Torture Campaigning materials.

Please call TFS, Amnesty's mailing house, on 01788 545553 and quote the following codes:

- Stop Torture Campaign Pack: STOPT01
- Stop Torture Campaign Pack Letter to go with STOPT01 item: STOPT02
- Claudia Medina Action Card: STOPT03
- Ali Aarrass Action Card: STOPT04
- Moses Akatugba Action Card: STOPT05
- Alfreda Disbarro Action Card: STOPT06
- Dilorom Abdukadirova Action Card: STOPT07
- Claudia Medina Casesheet: STOPT08
- Ali Aarrass Casesheet: STOPT09
- Moses Akatugba Casesheet: STOPT10
- Alfreda Disbarro Casesheet: STOPT11
- Dilorom Abdukadirova Casesheet: STOPT12
- Stop Torture Stickers Sheet (15 stickers per sheet): STOPT13
- Stop Torture Poster (A2): STOPT14
- Stop Torture A5 Leaflet: STOPT15
- Stop Torture A3 Placard: STOPT16
- EU Tools of Torture Flashcards: STOPT17
- 'Don't turn a blind eye to torture' Stickers Sheet (4 stickers per sheet): STOPT18

For more information on the campaign, including campaign resources, current online actions, research reports and videos see:

www.amnesty.org.uk/torture

ANNEX 1: Letter to Mexican Federal Attorney General

Arely Gómez González
Procuradora General de la República
Procuraduría General de la República
Av. Paseo de la Reforma 211-213
Col. Cuauhtémoc C.P. 06500
Mexico D.F., MEXICO

DD/MM/YYYY

Dear Attorney General,

Amnesty International has documented the widespread occurrence of torture and other ill-treatment in Mexico, by police and soldiers, especially in the context of the so-called “war on drugs”.

On 10 March 2015 the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture published a report on torture in Mexico. The report recommends an overhaul in the implementation of medical forensic examinations of torture victims as a first step towards combatting torture and ending impunity in the country.

Therefore I urge you to implement the UN Special Rapporteur’s recommendations and to:

- Overhaul the application of medical forensic examinations for those who allege they were tortured or ill-treated, so that these examinations fully comply with international human rights standards, such as the Istanbul Protocol;
- Ensure that official medical forensic experts are independent of the Federal Attorney General’s Office to ensure their independence and impartiality;
- Ensure that forensic investigations by independent forensic experts are considered as primary evidence by prosecutors and judges and given the same weight as official investigations.

Yours sincerely,

ANNEX 2: Letter to the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

High Representative
Federica Mogherini
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

DD/MM/YYYY

Dear High Representative Mogherini,

13 May 2015 marked the 10th anniversary of the Andizhan events in Uzbekistan, when Uzbekistani security forces fired on several thousand mainly peaceful demonstrators, including women and children, gathered in the centre of Andizhan and killed several hundred. Following the mass killings, the EU called for an international independent investigation into the Andizhan violence and established sanctions against Uzbekistan, including a visa ban on Uzbekistani officials and an arms embargo. However, despite total impunity for the perpetrators of the mass killings and the lack of an independent investigation, the EU has since dropped both the sanctions and the call for an investigation. At the same time the human rights situation in Uzbekistan is not improving. The rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression are severely restricted. Uzbekistan has refused requests for access from 11 UN human rights monitors and the Special Rapporteur on Torture has not visited the country in over 12 years.

Torture has become a defining feature of the Uzbekistani criminal justice system. It is central to how the Uzbekistani authorities deal with dissent, combat security threats and maintain their grip on power.

Despite systematic and brazen denials by the Uzbekistani authorities, torture and other ill-treatment by the security forces is routine and pervasive.

EU foreign ministers have not discussed Uzbekistan since dropping sanctions five years ago, despite assurances to the contrary.

As chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, I urge you to ensure that the EU and EU foreign ministers:

- Put Uzbekistan's human rights record back on the agenda and take concrete steps to ensure that action on Uzbekistan's record is timely, meaningful, effective;
- Issue Council conclusions on Uzbekistan which include appropriately strong language on the human rights situation;
- Publicly support the creation of a UN special procedure mandate on Uzbekistan.

Yours sincerely,

ANNEX 3: Letter to President Obama

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500, USA

DD/MM/YYYY

Dear President,

I am concerned about the health and ongoing detention of the former UK resident Shaker Aamer (Internment Serial Number ISN 239) at Guantánamo Bay. Mr Aamer has been held without charge or trial for over 13 years. Mr Aamer was cleared for transfer in 2009 by the Guantánamo Review Task Force and the UK Government has repeatedly asked for him to be returned to the UK and yet he remains detained. Mr Aamers lawyers have reported that his health has been deteriorating.

I urge you to:

- Secure the release of Shaker Aamer and return him to the UK without delay, if he is not to be charged and brought to fair trial;
- Give Shaker Aamer immediate and regular access to independent medical assessments and care;
- Immediately investigate all allegations that Shaker Aamer has been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and ensure that anyone found responsible is brought to justice.

Yours sincerely,