

Stop Torture - update June 2015

Running total of ST postcards submitted so far:- circa 250-300, with a further 50 or so intended for circulation at the London offices of Bindmans LLP.

Further letters to go out to local Secondary Schools; Cecil Jones, SHSG, Belfairs Academy, Deanes re the possibility of 'exhibition'.

1. "UPDATE, 28 MAY 2015: Moses Akatugba pardoned

Emmanuel Uduaghan, the Governor of Delta State, has granted a total pardon to Moses Akatugba, who was sentenced to death by hanging for stealing mobile phones.

Thank you to the thousands of you who took action for Moses and urged the Governor to show mercy.

The news of his release comes days after thousands of you sent Facebook and Twitter messages to Governor Uduaghan asking him to make sparing Moses part of his legacy before he steps down on 29 May.

36,500 of you also signed our petition to the Governor, showing that together our voices really can make a difference....."

2. In addition Claudia Mendez was cleared of all charges and released some months ago 11-02-2015.

3. Angel Colon though not a Postcard ST Case was a POC case enduring 5 years of torture was also released in the latter part of 2014:

"Prisoner of conscience and torture victim Ángel Amílcar Colón Quevedo has been released from prison after five years in pre-trial detention, in a move that is welcome but long overdue, said Amnesty International.

Ángel Colón was arrested by police in Tijuana, northern Mexico, while travelling from his home in Honduras to the United States in March 2009. He was then tortured by police and soldiers: beaten, asphyxiated and racially abused. He was forced to sign a false statement which was used to implicate him in criminal activity. He retracted the statement when brought before a judge and reported his torture to the authorities who failed to take any action."..... Imprisoned and tortured for 5 years...

4. Ali Arass - Morocco- No updates tortured / electric shocks to testes, beaten on feet.

5. Diloram- Abdulkadirova...Uzbekistan fled in 2009 for Australia, returned arrested on return for typical regime overthrow charges. Incarcerated, no specifics on torture but looked thin at trial in 2010.

6. Alfreda Disbarro- No apparent change - investigation by Phillipino internal affairs office still ongoing after a year. (anniversary 11th June 2015)

On 3 October 2013 police in the Philippines accused 32-year-old mother of two, Alfreda Disbarro, of being a drug dealer.

She said that once police officers had got her inside their headquarters they pinned her to a wall, repeatedly punched her in her face and stomach, hit her with a club, poked their fingers into her eyes, slapped her, forced a mop into her mouth and banged her head against a wall.

Then they beat her with a wooden stick and a metal bar.

'He put a bottle on top of my head and aimed his gun at it. I was so afraid I would get shot. I just closed my eyes in fear' Over the following days Alfreda was in such pain that she couldn't eat, had difficulty breathing and kept vomiting.

During this period she was photographed with 300 Philippine pesos and a sachet of drugs, and told to sign a blank sheet of paper..

After making a complaint to the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, Alfreda underwent a medical examination on 10 October 2013. The doctor found numerous bruises and marks on her body and concluded that they were caused by a hard, blunt object.

Investigation in torture opened

On the 11 June the Acting Chief Inspector of June the Philippine Police Internal Affairs Service (IAS) opened an investigation into the torture of Alfreda by the police officers involved.

We received information that the Acting Chief Inspector of the IAS opened the investigation after receiving a letter from two Amnesty activists. It remains to be seen what comes of the investigation, but it does offer a small ray of hope that the culture of impunity around torture could end.

7. Other ST related matters

www.amnesty.org.uk/actions gives access to 16 or so '2 click e- petitions' still well worth a visit !!

8. Raif Badawi case.....(POC undergoing torture)

Activist Raif Badawi, sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison for “insulting Islam” and founding an online forum for political debate....

Excerpt from today's 'Guardian' newspaper (11/06/2015) :-

"A Saudi Arabian blogger sentenced to 1,000 lashes may be flogged for a second time on Friday, campaigners fear.

This week Saudi Arabia's supreme court upheld a sentence of 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes on Raif Badawi for insulting Islam. The judgment came despite criticism from the United Nations, United States, European Union, Canada and others.

In January Badawi received the first of 20 sets of 50 lashes. The punishment was ordered to be spread over 20 weeks and carried out on Fridays outside a mosque in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, but subsequent rounds of lashes were postponed on medical grounds.

Human Rights Watch said it believed that a second round of flogging would take place on Friday, following the new court decision.

Badawi co-founded the Saudi Liberal Network internet discussion group, which encouraged online debate about religious and political issues, in 2008. He was arrested in June 2012 under cybercrime provisions and sentenced last May.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Office in London said this week: “We are extremely concerned that Raif Badawi's sentence has been upheld ... We have raised his case at the most senior levels in the government of Saudi Arabia and will continue to do so.”

Saudi Arabia has dismissed criticism of its flogging of Badawi and “strongly denounced the media campaign around the case”.

On 29 May the Saudi embassy in Brussels sent an official statement about the case on behalf of the Saudi foreign affairs ministry to members of the European parliament. The statement condemned any “interference in its internal affairs”, saying that “some international parties and media ... drifted into an attempt to infringe and attack on the sovereign right of states”.

In his first letter from prison, published by the German weekly Der Spiegel in March, Badawi wrote how he “miraculously survived 50 lashes”, recalling that he was “surrounded by a cheering crowd who cried incessantly ‘Allahu Akbar’ [God is greatest]” during the whipping.

“All this cruel suffering happened to me because I expressed my opinion,” Badawi wrote.

Badawi’s wife and their three children have been granted asylum in Québec, Canada.

Joe Stork, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, said: “Saudi authorities believe they are the ones under attack while Raif Badawi waits to be publicly flogged merely for expressing his peaceful opinions. All Saudi efforts to improve the country’s image internationally cannot overcome this ugly message of intolerance.”

Under the judgment, authorities are to carry out the lashings in front of the Juffali mosque in central Jeddah, with at least one week between sessions. Saudi activists have told Human Rights Watch that lashing is generally carried out with a light wooden cane, and the blows are distributed across the back and legs, which leaves bruising but normally does not break the skin.

Saudi human rights activists and dissidents have frequently been the subject of harsh judgments. The co-founder of Badawi’s site, Souad al-Shammari, was released from prison in February but his lawyer – who is also an activist – is in jail after being sentenced to 15 years for his criticism of Saudi human rights abuses in media interviews and on social media. ".....

Amnesty's online petition has amassed a staggering > 1 million signatures (1.03M) to date.

A further horrifying revelation is that in March 2015- the Saudi's were giving serious consideration to upgrading Raif's flogging to a beheading..... ‘

Other Matters

Cakes and the Amnesteas ? 2 X cakes carrot cake, HM scones with cream and HM jam, and a fresh cream sponge with Strawberries !