



FLAWED TORTURE INQUIRY SCRAPPED: NEED REMAINS TO ESTABLISH TRUTH OF UK COMPLICITY IN TORTURE

[London, 18 January 2012] Today, Kenneth Clarke, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, announced the close of the ill-fated Detainee Inquiry, established in response to allegations of UK complicity in the torture and ill-treatment of detainees held by foreign intelligence agencies. The reason given for the closure of the Inquiry is the commencement of new police investigations.

The Detainee Inquiry was flawed from the start and was therefore never going to get to the bottom of what happened. Indeed, many organisations including REDRESS, raised strong reservations about its limited scope, the restrictions on public access to information emerging from the Inquiry as well as the limitations placed upon officials called to give evidence. As these and related concerns were not taken into account by the Government, we decided that we could not participate in the Inquiry, as to do so would be to sanction a process that would not be transparent or capable of arriving at the truth.

While Clarke hasn't closed off the possibility for a new inquiry to be opened in future, no timeline for this has been given, nor is it clear what sort of inquiry this would be.

“The allegations are extremely serious, raising important questions that the public has a right to have answered about the role of the Government and its intelligence services,” said Carla Ferstman, REDRESS' Director. ***“Criminal investigations into the few cases that have managed to come to light thanks to the perseverance of victims and their lawyers are essential, yet they are not enough. The public has a right to know how these incidents were allowed to happen and what role the Government played. This is important from the perspective of public accountability and also to prevent recurrence.”***

REDRESS calls on the Government to commit to holding a robust inquiry into these and other allegations, which would afford full transparency and public accountability. This is the least that is required in a democracy that bases itself on the rule of law and continues to espouse its abhorrence of torture in all its forms. The fundamental opposition to torture is not only an expression of words – it must serve as the basis for the Government's action.

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