



## UK MUST NOW COME CLEAN ON TORTURE

### **More than ever a judge-led fully independent inquiry is needed to look into allegations of UK complicity in the CIA's rendition and secret detention programme**

**11 December 2014** – The full scale of how the USA engaged in torture and brutally violated other fundamental human rights of detainees after the 9/11 attacks was laid bare yesterday. Now it is time for the UK Government to come clean about its own involvement in the CIA's rendition and secret detention programme, and its alleged complicity in the torture and ill-treatment of detainees by the USA, its close ally.

More than ever, a judge-led fully independent inquiry is needed to look into these serious allegations. The investigation into UK complicity in torture being conducted by the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) is no substitute for this, despite what Prime Minister Cameron suggested on Tuesday. It is now crucial that the UK Government's anti-torture commitment is properly scrutinised and fully implemented, including by responding adequately to any potential breaches by the UK of the UN Convention against Torture and the Geneva Conventions.

The heavily redacted Senate report does not include any clear references to the UK intelligence agencies or to Diego Garcia – a British territory known to have been used for rendition flights. However, a picture of what may have been the UK's potential role in the ill-treatment and torture of terror suspects has nonetheless begun to be pieced together by the first-hand account of victims, investigations of journalists and human rights organisations and protracted litigation, despite the efforts of the UK Government to keep everything out of the public domain.

In 2010 the Court of Appeal found that former Guantánamo detainee Binyam Mohamed, a British resident, had been subjected to “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment by the United States authorities” which had been known to the British security services. More recently, in October 2014, the Court of Appeal affirmed the right of a Libyan couple to sue the UK officials they say colluded with the CIA in their abduction and illegal transfer to Libya. A High Court judge had previously expressed his concern about “what appears to be a potentially well-founded claim that the UK authorities were directly implicated in the extraordinary rendition of the claimants.” And just last month, a High Court agreed that the claim by Yunus Rahmatullah, who was captured by British Special Forces in Iraq and handed over to US troops in 2004, and released 10 years later from Bagram airbase in Afghanistan, could proceed. He has raised serious allegations of torture.

It has been more than four years since Prime Minister Cameron announced a judge-led inquiry into the UK Government's and its intelligence agencies' potential role in the improper treatment of detainees abroad in the aftermath of 9/11. After the inquiry closed prematurely in 2012, following the opening of a police investigation into allegations that the British intelligence agencies assisted in the rendition of two men to Libya, which does not appear to have been concluded, the Government mandated the Intelligence and Security Committee to investigate the allegations of complicity.

REDRESS opposes this investigation because only a judicial inquiry which is fully independent of Parliament and the Government will be able to get to the bottom of what happened. The Prime Minister currently holds an absolute veto over the membership of the Committee, the evidence which it is allowed to examine, and the information which it is allowed to publish.

**“Despite perseverance on the part of victims, lawyers and others, the truth of what happened is still opaque and justice distant for most victims. The Government should seize the opportunity to proceed on a stronger and more independent and transparent footing,”** said Carla Ferstman, Director of REDRESS. **“Only a judge-led inquiry will be capable of determining the extent of any UK complicity in torture and how it was possible for such complicity to take root. Only this will prevent recurrence and will restore fully the Government’s moral authority in the fight against torture in all its forms.”**

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**About REDRESS:** REDRESS is an award-winning human rights organisation based in London which works internationally to combat torture by seeking justice and reparation for torture survivors. Since 1992, it has consistently fought for the rights of torture survivors and their families in the UK and abroad and has intervened in a range of leading torture cases.