



UK MUST CONFRONT SAUDI KING ON TORTURE

PRESS STATEMENT

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REDRESS, the international human rights organisation with a mandate to help torture survivors obtain justice, calls on the UK Government to raise the issue of torture in Saudi Arabia with King Abdullah during his State visit, including the torture of UK nationals. Several British men, including Ron Jones, Bill Sampson, Les Walker, Sandy Mitchell and others were brutally tortured in 2000 and thereafter, some of them for a period of more than two years.

None of these torture survivors have received any compensation from Saudi Arabia, and despite overwhelming evidence of the torture the Saudi Government has refused to investigate what happened, let alone prosecute those responsible. Attempts by the men to seek justice through the UK courts have failed because the rule of state immunity – the principle that a foreign State cannot be sued in a UK court, even for gross human rights violations – has been applied.

“The visit of King Abdullah to Britain is a golden opportunity for the UK Government to call on him to acknowledge that the torture took place, and to ensure justice for the terrible suffering they endured, which continues to devastate their lives,” said Carla Ferstman, REDRESS’ Director.

“It is hypocritical for the UK Government to say that it condemns torture wherever it takes place and yet not to speak out clearly on behalf of its own citizens. These men were deliberately subjected to unbelievably brutal treatment, and yet their Government has done little to support them – on the contrary, it argued in court that the Saudi Government and its officials should be shielded by immunity, even for the most egregious international crimes.”

REDRESS believes the UK Government has a clear duty to confront the Saudi Government on this fundamental human rights issue. Not to do so undermines the world-wide struggle against torture, and undermines democracy.

Note: REDRESS was founded by a British torture survivor in 1992. Since then, it has consistently fought for the rights of torture survivors and their families in the UK and abroad. It takes legal challenges on behalf of survivors, works to ensure that torturers are punished and that survivors and their families obtain remedies for their suffering. REDRESS cooperates with civil society groups around the world to eradicate the practice of torture once and for all and to ensure that survivors can move forward with their lives in dignity. It has intervened in a range of leading torture cases. More information on our work is available on our website: www.redress.org.

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