

**United Nations Association UK
London and South East Region
13 Glenluce Road
Greenwich
London SE3 7SD**

Tel. 020 8858 8489



The Rt Hon William Hague, MP
The Foreign Secretary
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

London and South East Region

3rd June 2010

Dear Mr Hague

Allegations of British complicity in the torture of detainees

The London and South-East Region of the United Nations Association has been concerned for some time by the rising volume of allegations of British complicity in the torture of detainees suspected of terrorist offences. The number of such detainees alleged to have been questioned as to their life and contacts in the UK while undergoing brutality at the hands of security services abroad apparently prepared to disregard human rights or the UN Convention against Torture continues to grow. The list of countries where such practices are said to have occurred is also lengthening, and now includes Morocco, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Bangladesh.

It appears to us that the previous government, while formally denying any British involvement in the torture of detainees, made strenuous efforts to prevent the facts of the matter from being made known to the public, the courts and even to parliament itself. The previous prime minister undertook to publish the guidelines under which such questioning had been conducted, but failed to do so, even to the joint intelligence and security committee. The high court has on several occasions ruled sharply against government attempts to avoid disclosing relevant material.

In the related case of the death of Mr Baha Mousa in Iraq in 2003, we note that at the ongoing inquiry the former armed forces minister, Mr Adam Ingram, yesterday in effect admitted to misleading the parliamentary joint committee on human rights as to the treatment Mr Mousa had received at the hands of serving British personnel. There can be no place for a culture of the denial and concealment of unpalatable facts in this regard.

Our overriding concern is that Britain's reputation for upholding the rule of law at home and abroad is endangered by such allegations. If they are untrue, that must be established and the record corrected. If there is substantial truth in them, however, this must be brought to light and acted upon.

We were therefore extremely pleased to note your statement of 20th May in which you indicated there would be a judge-led inquiry into these matters. We consider such an inquiry, carried out in a timely and open manner, is essential to re-establish this country's ability to exemplify and promote fundamental commitment to human rights and the rule of law. That in turn will strengthen its hand in international affairs, notably at the United Nations Human Rights Council and in the Security Council itself.

Yours sincerely

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Neville Grant
Chair

London and South-East Region,
United Nations Association-UK