



Action by Christians Against Torture

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TORTURE - END IT NOW!

NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 2026



There is no dichotomy between man and God's image. Whoever tortures a human being, whoever abuses a human being, whoever outrages a human being, abuses God's image.

Saint Oscar Romero

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A HYMN FOR ALL SAINTS DAY

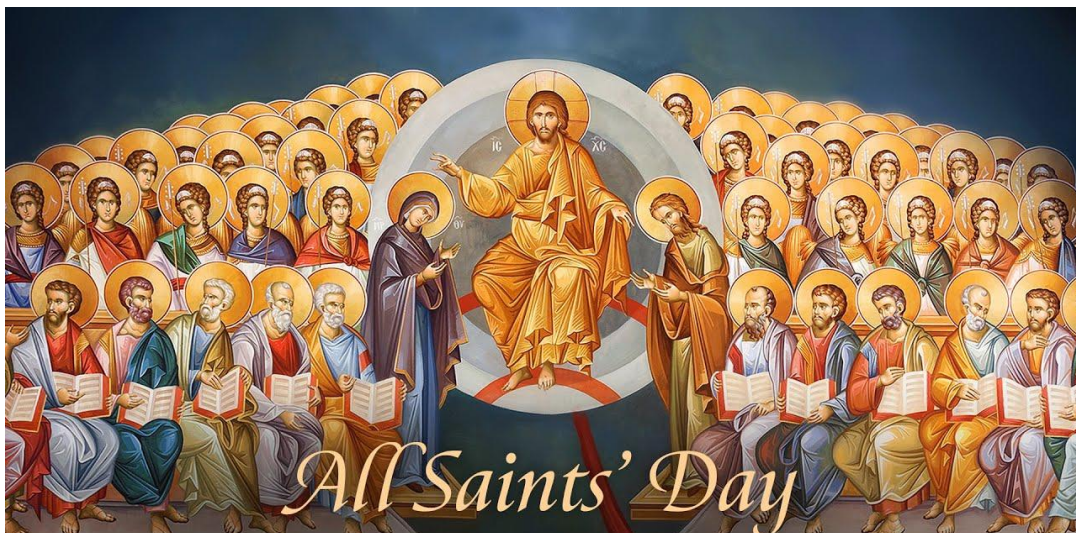
Who are these like stars appearing,
these, before God's throne who stand?
Each a golden crown is wearing:
who are all this glorious band?

These are they who have contended
for their Saviour's honour long,
wrestling on till life was ended,
following not the sinful throng.

These are they whose hearts were riven,
sore with woe and anguish tried,
who in prayer full oft have striven
with the God they glorified.

Now, their painful conflict o'er,
God has bid them weep no more.

By Heinrich Schenk (1656-1727)
trans. Frances Elizabeth Cox



[worksheetsHQ.com]

A PRAYER FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

Merciful God, we pray for all those who have died as victims of violence, war, or injustice.

May they find peace in your loving embrace and may their suffering be transformed into glory. Help us to work for peace and justice in our world.



This painting, ***Bound Together in Gaza***, is by Gazan artist Malak Mattar, 2020. Mattar gives voice to a generation shaped by repeated wars through her paintings. This work references *Guernica* — Picasso's iconic portrayal of civilians suffering in war.

Image: Malak Mattar

From the Canadian Museum for Human Rights:

<https://humanrights.ca/exhibition/palestine-uprooted-nakba-past-and-present/>

FROM THE COMMITTEE

The **Annual General Meeting** is scheduled for **17 October 2026**. It will take place online and details will be forwarded to members one month beforehand.

Thank you and congratulations to the members and groups of ACAT-UK who participated in our Christmas and Easter greetings campaigns. Joe Reilly's group at Stokesley sent 40 Christmas greetings cards this year, and Michael Combes reported that the Parish of Guildford posted over 200 cards.

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

In May 2026 Pax Christi **USA** reported that across the country, people in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention launched hunger and labour strikes to demand their freedom and protest at the inhumane conditions of their detention. Reports emerged of rising deaths, medical neglect, use of force, isolation, retaliation, overcrowding, lack of food, and the severing of contact with loved ones and support networks. At Delaney Hall, the largest immigrant detention centre on the East Coast, over 200 people were involved, and at Adelanto (California) at least 20 people went on hunger strike in response to mould, unsafe drinking water, and a lack of medical care. During a demonstration in support of the hunger strikers in May, ICE reportedly sent an armoured vehicle and armed agents, spraying pepper balls and tear gas at the crowd. Sr Susan Francois, CSJP, described the arrest of a medic attending to pepper spray victims who was detained for several hours. [Source ICN, 27 May 2026]

The US has also seen a dramatic increase in deaths of detainees in ICE custody. 54 people died between January 2025 and 24 June 2026. ICE has repeatedly failed to publish timely information on such deaths, including details on the prior health care received. One example is Mohammad Nazeer Paktiawal, an Afghan asylum seeker who had worked alongside the US military in Afghanistan, who died in March 2026 from an alleged allergic reaction less than 24 hours after his detention in Texas. His death certificate was released 103 days later and he was described as a “criminal illegal alien”, although he had a pending asylum claim. [HRW]

A **United Nations** commission of inquiry reported in June 2026 that **Israel** was deliberately targeting Palestinian children, resulting in genocide,

crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Gaza Strip, as well as war crimes in the occupied West Bank. Denounced by Israel as a "libellous sham", the report documents the targeting of Palestinian children in Gaza directly by shooting at their vital organs using precision weapons, such as quadcopter drones and snipers, and through high-impact weapons in strikes on residential buildings, schools, and displacement camps crowded with children. The report also states that children in Gaza and the West Bank, especially adolescent boys, have been "arrested, tortured, and ill-treated in Israeli prisons and detention facilities", and that it has documented "incidents of sexual and gender-based violence targeting Palestinian children, often during arrests or in detention". It also accuses Israel of using starvation as a method of war by restricting humanitarian aid into Gaza, leading to "acute and chronic malnutrition among children in Gaza, removing the basic conditions necessary for their survival". The 94-page report is available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/> [*"The essence of childhood has been destroyed": Israel's deliberate targeting of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 7 October 2023*]

In a YouTube video (see below) **Juliet Lamont** details her experience of abuse and mistreatment by Israeli forces intercepting a Global Sumud Flotilla mission to deliver aid to Gaza by sea (2025). Lamont describes being subjected to water immersion, cable-tied, and shackled to prevent escape. She was subjected to severe beatings, torture, and sexual violence while in Israeli custody. She also reported being assaulted by five men as a deterrent to future missions. Evidence from the detained flotilla participants is being taken to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sm4wOnZujXM>)

Bishops in Pakistan expressed dismay in July 2026 after the country's Supreme Court quashed the sentences of three men convicted of killing a Christian man and his pregnant wife. Shahzad Masih and Shama Bibi were severely tortured and then burnt to death after being thrown alive into a brick kiln (November 2014). The young couple had been accused of blasphemy. Overturning the death sentences of Irfan Shakoor, Mehdi Khan and Riaz Kamboh, the court claimed flaws in the evidence and weak prosecution. It also dismissed the Punjab Provincial Government's appeal against the acquittal of 102 people accused of complicity in the atrocities.

Such verdicts are part of a pattern in which Christians and other minorities are routinely denied justice following violence against them.

Also in Pakistan, **Saddique Masih**, aged 40, a brick kiln worker in Patoki, Punjab, had his throat slit because he was accused of pollution by drinking from a water cooler. He had four children, including a son with liver disease. His wife was threatened by the killer's family and had to leave the brick kiln. In another case, in March 2025, Christian factory worker **Waqas Masih** survived a throat-slashing attack by a Muslim co-worker who accused him of blasphemy. The attacker reportedly claimed that Masih had touched an Islamic textbook with "unclean hands", an allegation rights advocates said reflected the misuse of religious sensitivities to justify violence. In March 2026, 21-year-old Christian farmworker **Marcus Masih** was allegedly tortured to death by his Muslim employers in Punjab's Sargodha District, after which his death was staged as a suicide and reported as such to his family.

In July prisoners at **Iran's largest jail** sewed their lips shut as hundreds of them joined a mass hunger strike amid a surge in executions over drug offences and charges linked to anti-government protests. The hunger strike involved at least 1,500 death row prisoners at Ghezel Hesar prison near Tehran. It began after six men convicted on drug-related charges were transferred to solitary confinement before their possible execution.

Iran has also launched a systematic campaign against **teachers**, one of the country's most influential civic groups. At least 60 teachers and teachers' union activists are reported to have been arrested, prosecuted, or imprisoned. Charged with vague security offences, held incommunicado and in prolonged solitary confinement, they have been denied critical medical care, family contact and proper food. Sentences include long prison terms, lashes, and internal exile.

CHANGES TO UK ASYLUM POLICY

In May 2026 the UK and 45 other European countries signed a political agreement (the so-called **Chişinău Declaration**) endorsing plans to send unwanted asylum seekers to third country hubs. The UK is now believed to be seeking a deal with an unnamed third country, similar to the Italy-Albania agreement that allowed Rome to place detention centres in Albania. Although not legally binding, the agreement aims to "clarify

domestic frameworks" for applying ECHR Articles 3 (which prohibits torture) and 4 (the right to private and family life). Courts would be encouraged, for instance, to give the state more scope to deport people to places where they may be in danger of inhuman or degrading treatment.

On 17 June 2026 the **EU Parliament** passed the **Return Regulation**, five days after a New Pact on Migration and Asylum came into force. The Regulation creates a single, EU-wide system for returning third-country nationals who have no legal right to stay, with faster procedures, mutual recognition of return decisions, expanded enforcement powers, and retained human-rights safeguards. It was passed after a furious and highly acrimonious debate in which right-wing MEPs stood, applauded, pumped their fists, and chanted "send them back"; centre-left members responded with "shame on you." Some MEPs described the atmosphere as a "lynch-mob" mood and as "disgraceful", "dark" and "horrifying". The scenes prompted FIACAT and European ACATs to publicly denounce the conduct of the debate.

The **UK Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC)** has repeatedly criticised the Home Office for poor planning in asylum accommodation, border operations, and migration system reforms. In June 2026 it was expected to publish a report evaluating the effects of Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood's new immigration policy. Parliamentary groups have also criticised the reforms — notably describing the retrospective doubling of the qualifying period for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) for most skilled workers who are already en route to ILR from 5 to 10 years as possibly unlawful and "manifestly unfair", not to mention damaging the UK's reputation for attracting skilled migrants. Other criticisms focus on entrenching poverty among sponsored workers, increasing labour exploitation, and harming children's health through family instability and separation. The children of care workers would be particularly affected as their parents will not be able to access public funds and could be required to continue working in the low-paid sector for 15 years to maintain their immigration status under the new rules. Peers have noted the absence of an impact assessment and of good data generally on migration movements to justify the reforms, and they have urged the Home Office to resume exit-check statistics.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT – ONE PERSON'S EXPERIENCE

In 2025 26-year-old Isabel Roze from London travelled to Japan, planning to stay for one month and kick her ketamine habit. When she tried to acquire more of the drug on arrival the purchase was traced and, although she expected "a slap on the wrist", she was arrested and sentenced to five



months in solitary confinement in the Osaka Detention Centre. Her cell was 5 x 2 metres, with a toilet and sink, and a futon to be rolled out at night. Daylight came from a small semi-opaque opening in the ceiling. Through the one-way glass cell door the guards could watch her day and night without her seeing them. Here she describes her

experience of prison and how she came to value it. At ACAT we assume solitary confinement is inhumane, abusive, and amounts to torture. Isabel's story casts it in a different light.

I lived every day in hope of early release, which did eventually happen after five months. After a week inside, my communication ban was lifted and I was able to contact my family by sending a letter through the embassy. It was only in my second month I began to understand the structure of my new life.

At 7 am a bell would go off, our sign to get up and fold our futons away. We then had to sit on the floor of our individual rooms with the doors closed, either cross-legged or on our knees, ready for roll call. After a guard shouted "bango" you had to shout your number, my number was 100 (hyaku-ban). We were given three meals a day: breakfast consisted of two bread rolls with either jam or butter; lunch would be some sort of fried fish or protein with vegetables and rice; dinner was the same. All meals were served and consumed in our rooms. The food was repetitive, but it was fresh, and nutritious.

After lunch, we were allowed just 30 minutes of exercise outside per day. I spent mine doing stretching, yoga, squats and planks. If you were caught exercising outside of this timeframe you would be shouted at by the guards.

We weren't allowed clocks, so music would play to indicate when meals and exercise happened. The lights in my room were dimmed at 9 pm – never

completely out – a sign we had to go to sleep. We weren't allowed to wear eye-masks, so sleeping was difficult. Each time I tried to cover my eyes, I'd get shouted at aggressively. I never really knew why this was.

The fact I was also going through ketamine withdrawal for the first two months made the whole experience even more intense. While the symptoms are not super physical, you feel incredibly low, anxious and irritable, as well as foggy. Ketamine makes you feel detached, floaty and out of body; I was using it to numb myself, so it's hard for your body to adjust to rebalance.

I was consumed by paranoia. At one point during the communication ban, I was convinced my family was conspiring against me. I believed that my dad was taking the situation into his own hands by hiring an English-speaking investigator to help (he wasn't), which upset me because I wanted to sort out my own mess.

Everyone in the female-only detention centre lives in solitary confinement and communicating with other inmates is forbidden. My one brief interaction with another inmate happened during bathing time. She asked me very quietly if I was English when we were walking to the bathing area. I only managed to respond yes before she was disciplined by the guards. We never spoke again.

When it was bath day, they'd fill up four tubs just once, and we'd have to share with the other 100 people on our floor. If it was my turn to use the bath at the end of the day, the water would be freezing and filthy. There was even a net we used to fish other people's hair out.

My mental state was heavily impacted from being under-stimulated and unable to talk to anyone. I flip-flopped emotionally, one moment I'd be hysterical, then completely delusional and feeling insane, before telling myself I was going to get out of there and be fine.

Over time, I got books, photos and letters delivered from friends and family, through the help of the British Embassy. About five days after I arrived, they gave me a collection of snacks. [...] My first book arrived after one week. Even as I was experiencing the most traumatic thing I've ever gone through, I realised I was still privileged and lucky – some inmates got nothing. And when I served my time, I could go home to England where I didn't have a criminal record.

The embassy also gave me books to read to keep my mind sharp, including ones on drugs and addiction. [...] I began to use the designated nap time in the afternoon to meditate. During those five months, my outlook on life completely shifted.

At the start, my mind was clinging onto everything I was missing out on during summer at home, all the festivals I'd planned to go to. But then I began to learn about the principles of Buddhism. After practising meditation for an hour each day, I began to realise that I was damaging my mental health by fixating on all the material objects I was craving. I had a roof over my head, water, three meals a day, and I was warm. This is what I should be grateful for.

I knew I needed to switch my mindset in order to survive. Meditation saved me, and I still practise every day to keep me grounded and present.

After my release, I had about 10 days before I had to leave the country, so I spent some time in Hiroshima on my own, walking around, meditating, and crying. I listened to songs I hadn't heard for so long, it was such a release. My best friend flew out and met me in Tokyo, and we explored the city for a week before flying home. Embracing my mum, dad and sister at arrivals is a feeling I'll never forget.

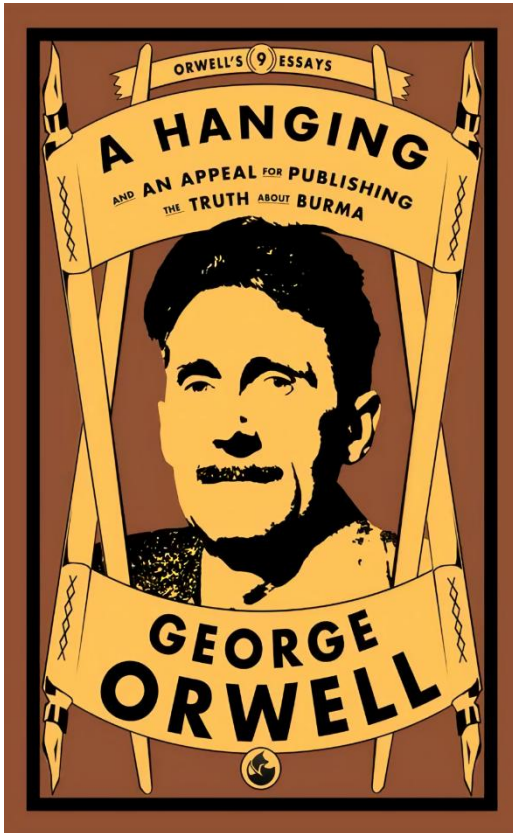
Having smoked marijuana since I was 16, I'd never experienced being sober as an adult. To have clarity was really refreshing. During my time inside, I started planning how I was going to shape my future. I'm writing a book and a play. I've even been contacted by an actor who I'm working with on a script.

I was on a really dark path before. Now I'm sober, I want to use my experience to raise awareness of the dangers of drug use and help others consumed by addiction. Lots of people who take risks never think it's going to be them, but when it is, you just have to ride it out. Despite it all, I'm glad that I rode that wave, because I've become a more self-aware version of myself in the process.

[Source: Isobel Williams, 17 February 2026, <https://discover.swns.com/>]

"A HANGING" by George Orwell

"A Hanging" is a short essay by George Orwell, written during his time in the British Imperial Police in Burma, where he observed the execution of a condemned man. The essay, first published in the *Adelphi* magazine in



1931, recounts the events of a single morning and describes the prisoner, the guards, and the ritual of the hanging in vivid and precise detail. Although Orwell called it an essay, it is an early work and appears to be a semi-fictional depiction based on real experience. The full text (the following is abridged) is available from the Orwell Foundation.

It was in Burma, a sodden morning of the rains. A sickly light, like yellow tinfoil, was slanting over the high walls into the jail yard. We were waiting outside a row of sheds fronted with double bars, like small animal cages. Each cell measured about ten

feet by ten and was quite bare within except for a plank bed and a pot of drinking water. In some of them silent men were squatting at the inner bars with their blankets draped round them. These were the condemned men, due to be hanged within the next week or two.

One prisoner had been brought out of his cell. He was a Hindu, a wisp of a man with a shaven head and vague liquid eyes. Six tall Indian warders were guarding him and getting him ready for the gallows. Two of them stood by with rifles and fixed bayonets, while the others handcuffed him, passed a chain through his handcuffs and fixed it to their belts, and lashed his arms tight to his sides. They crowded very close about him, with their hands always on him in a careful grip. It was like men handling a fish which is still alive and may jump back into the water. But he stood quite unresisting, yielding his arms limply to the ropes, as though he hardly noticed what was happening.

Eight o'clock struck and a bugle call, desolately thin in the wet air, floated from the distant barracks. The superintendent of the jail raised his head at

the sound. He was an army doctor, with a grey moustache and a gruff voice. 'For God's sake hurry up, Francis,' he said irritably. 'The man ought to have been dead by this time. Aren't you ready yet?'

Francis, the head jailer, waved his hand. 'Yes sir, yes sir,' he replied. 'All is satisfactorily prepared. The hangman is waiting. We shall proceed.'

'Well, quick march, then. The prisoners can't get their breakfast till this job's over.'

We set out for the gallows. Two warders marched on either side of the prisoner, with their rifles at the slope; two others marched close against him, gripping him by arm and shoulder, as though at once pushing and supporting him. The rest of us, magistrates and the like, followed behind. Suddenly, when we had gone ten yards, the procession stopped short without any order or warning. A dreadful thing had happened – a dog, come goodness knows whence, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding among us with a loud volley of barks, and leapt round us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large woolly dog, half Airedale, half pariah. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before anyone could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face. Everyone stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab at the dog.

'Who let that bloody brute in here?' said the superintendent angrily. 'Catch it, someone!'

A warder, detached from the escort, charged clumsily after the dog, but it danced and gambolled just out of his reach, taking everything as part of the game. A young jailer picked up a handful of gravel and tried to stone the dog away, but it dodged the stones and came after us again. Its yaps echoed from the jail walls. The prisoner looked on incuriously, as though this was another formality of the hanging. It was several minutes before someone managed to catch the dog and passed it to me to hold.

It was about forty yards to the gallows. I watched the bare brown back of the prisoner marching in front of me. Once, in spite of the men who gripped him by each shoulder, he stepped slightly aside to avoid a puddle on the path.

It is curious, but till that moment I had never realised what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting

a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we were alive. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone – one mind less, one world less.

The gallows was a brick erection like three sides of a shed, with planking on top, and above that two beams and a crossbar with the rope dangling. The hangman, a grey-haired convict, was waiting beside his machine. At a word from Francis the two warders, gripping the prisoner more closely than ever, half led, half pushed him to the gallows and helped him clumsily up the ladder. Then the hangman climbed up and fixed the rope round the prisoner's neck. And then, when the noose was fixed, the prisoner began crying out on his god. It was a high, reiterated cry of 'Ram! Ram! Ram! Ram!', not urgent and fearful like a prayer or a cry for help, but steady, rhythmical, almost like the tolling of a bell. The dog answered the sound with a whine.

The hangman climbed down and stood ready, holding the lever. Minutes seemed to pass. The steady crying from the prisoner went on and on. 'Ram! Ram! Ram!' never faltering for an instant. Suddenly the superintendent made up his mind. Throwing up his head, 'Chalo!' he shouted almost fiercely.

There was a clanking noise, and then dead silence. The prisoner had vanished, and the rope was twisting on itself. I let go of the dog, and it galloped immediately to the back of the gallows, but when it got there it stopped short, barked, and then retreated into a corner of the yard. We went round the gallows to inspect the prisoner's body. He was dangling, as dead as a stone.

DEATH PENALTY

In 2025 US states executed 47 men and women on death row, more than double the average number of executions over the past 10 years. As of mid-2026, the countries known to have carried out executions include: China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, United States, Vietnam and Yemen. Belarus is the only European country that continues to use capital punishment, while Israel re-introduced the penalty for 'terrorists' in March. Japan and South Korea legally maintain the death penalty but have not carried out executions recently. Russia has had a moratorium since 1996.

HOW ARE CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED IN CUBA?

Church leaders and Christian activists who speak out against Cuba's government risk arrest, smear campaigns, harassment, restrictions on movements, physical violence and imprisonment. Sermons are frequently monitored to ensure they align with Communist values. Churches and other Christian organisations will commonly face permit denials, fines, confiscation of property, demolition, closures and legal action.

Christians in Cuba must align with the country's Communist agenda, and failure to do so can bring pressure and persecution.

In the words of one church leader: "You must always be careful about what you say and who you talk to". Church activities, especially those benefiting local communities, are often deemed a threat to state interests, and that brings scrutiny and surveillance. To curb the church's influence, the authorities routinely deny registration of new churches, forcing many to operate 'illegally', putting them at greater risk of persecution.

Those who speak out against the government are especially exposed to pressure and persecution, regardless of denomination. Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Baptists often face greater obstacles in getting their churches registered, and those involved in house churches are greatly at risk of surveillance, property confiscation or demolition.

Government opposition to churches has become more targeted and adaptive. While the Catholic Church *is* persecuted in Cuba, it is less intense than what unregistered Protestant house-churches face. The Cuban state tolerates quiet religious practice but punishes Catholic clergy and lay groups when they speak publicly about human rights, protests, or social issues. In 1961, the regime expelled 131 Catholic clergy and confiscated Catholic schools and seminaries. The state cannot, however, risk an outright break with the Vatican, with whom it has diplomatic relations.

The country faces a deepening humanitarian crisis, which is having a huge impact on Cubans across the country. "You can have the best liturgy prepared, but everything can come to a halt due to a sudden power outage," says one church leader. [Main source: Open Doors]

UPDATE ON PRISONERS AND APPEALS

Christian **Layan Nasir** was released on 15 May 2026 from Damon prison in Israel, where she was held for eight months without charge or trial. This was her third spell in detention. Palestinian women held in Damon report harsh living conditions: "The prison is like a cemetery for the living. I left 79



other Palestinian prisoners, some of whom I know well, living in really difficult conditions. Conditions — already bad — are getting worse. Prison authorities are employing practices of starvation and medical neglect. Many prisoners need medical care but they are given no access to essential services. There is so little food and what is given is very bad

quality." [As reported to the Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem]. Layan is one of four female Christian students at Birzeit University in the West Bank known to have been targeted for arrest/detention and accused of "activism". The others are **Natalie Abuddayeh** (Abu Dayyeh, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church), Jolan Abu Awwad, Leila Na'el Khalil, and Sama Safi.

There is serious concern for **Natalie Abuddayeh**. In July 2026 she



appeared before an Israeli military court, which extended her detention to 23 September. The authorities have denied all the family's requests to have Natalie released on bail for the duration of the proceedings and have refused to allow them to visit or contact her in any way. She is still being held at Damon prison, where prisoners have reported terrible

conditions and repeated human rights violations.

Burundian journalist **Sandra Muhoza** has been freed after two years on appeal (13 April 2026). She was cleared of major anti-state charges and partially acquitted on being sentenced to time already served.

Kenia Inés Hernández Montalván remains imprisoned in Mexico, but her legal situation shifted after human rights organizations confirmed that all eight federal cases against her have been closed. However, she continues to serve a combined 21-year prison sentence stemming from two remaining convictions in the State of Mexico, where she was arbitrarily arrested in October 2020 during a peaceful demonstration. Throughout

her five years of detention, she has endured judicial harassment, including multiple transfers between four different high-security facilities. She has also faced a lack of native-language interpretation during her hearings. In September 2025 she initiated a hunger strike after prison authorities denied her permission to attend her mother's funeral.

Mohamed Lamine Haddi remains imprisoned in Morocco since 2017, serving a 25-year sentence inside a high-security facility, heavily isolated from his family and the outside world. Kept in strict solitary confinement, he spends nearly 24 hours a day confined to his cell with highly restricted access to fresh air or proper facilities.

Arrested in 2024 and tortured, **Saba Skhvitardze**, member of an opposition group in Georgia, was sentenced to two years imprisonment in September 2025.

APPEALS

Send an appeal on behalf of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, Guinea



On 9 July 2024 armed and hooded men invaded Oumar Sylla's home in Conakry, Guinea, and kidnapped him alongside Mamadou Billo Bah and Mohamed Cissé in front of many witnesses. All three men are leading members of the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC), an opposition coalition founded in 2019 to restore democratic rights in

Guinea. The next day, only Mohamed Cissé was released. He testified that all three were subjected to torture and inhuman treatment and had been taken to a detention centre on the coastal island of Fotoba. Reports indicate that the abduction was carried out by armed men of the Special Forces and the National Gendarmerie Intervention Group (GIGN).

Since then the families of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah have not known where they are, in what condition they are being held, or even if they are still alive.

Following national and international pressure, the prosecutor general of the Conakry Court of Appeal announced the opening of an investigation in

July 2024. However, two years later, no results or progress has been made public and no-one responsible has been identified or prosecuted.

Background

Since the military junta came to power in Guinea following a coup in September 2021 fundamental freedoms have been gradually curtailed and critical voices repressed. Since the kidnapping in July 2024 of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, other cases have been documented. They include: Habib Marouane Camara (disappeared) and opposition politician Néné Oussou Diallo (kidnapped). Relatives of opponents, musicians and journalists have been targeted with violence and, in some cases, briefly kidnapped.

Send a message to:

Mr Ibrahima Sory II Tounkara
Minister of Justice and Human Rights
1BP 564
Almamya
Commune de Kaloum
Conakry
REPUBLIC OF GUINEA
Email: contact@justiceguinee.gov.gn
Salutation: Dear Minister

His Excellency Mr Aly Diallo
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea
156 Cromwell Road, London, SW7 4EF
Tel: 02072589640
Email: embassyofguineauk@gmail.com
Salutation: Your Excellency / Dear Ambassador

Suggested message:

Salutation,

I am writing to you on behalf of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, who were kidnapped by armed men in Conakry on 9 July 2024, removed and tortured in detention. They are believed to be being held incommunicado at a detention centre on the coastal island of Fotoba and there are serious concerns about their health and well-being. Their families and friends have no confirmation of their whereabouts and do not even know if the men are still alive. A public investigation was announced soon after their abduction, but to my knowledge no progress has been made or publicised and no-one has been identified as responsible for the crimes.

I understand that the Republic of Guinea has signed and ratified the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1967 and 1978) and also the CAT (United Nations Convention Against Torture, 1986 and 1989). In accordance with these conventions, may I please urge your government to ensure the immediate release of Messrs Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, and also to both progress the public investigation into the enforced disappearances and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice?

Any information which you can provide on these cases would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely...



Send an appeal on behalf of Yonny Ronay, Mexico



Yonny Ronay, a young student from Chiapas, Mexico, was arrested on 13 March 2019 as he was returning to his home in Cintalapa from Tuxtla Gutiérrez, where he was studying. Arrested at a police roadblock, he was taken away without cause, and tortured in order to extract a confession in a robbery case: slaps, beatings, kneeling and simulated drowning.

During a second episode, he was also subjected to asphyxiation with a

plastic bag coated with chili. On 14 March, he was paraded in the local press and on social networks alongside large-calibre weapons and presented as a member of a criminal group and the perpetrator of a murder committed in Villaflores.

On 15 March, after a separate procedure on weapons-related charges had led to his release for lack of evidence, he was immediately re-arrested, this time for murder. Again he was tortured to force him into a confession. During subsequent court hearings the medically confirmed torture and ill-treatment were ignored and he was sentenced to 31 years and 6 months in prison (upheld on appeal in June 2022) on the basis of clearly fabricated evidence. Despite a federal judge's recognition in 2024 of serious irregularities in his trial Yonny remains incarcerated at Copainalá Prison No. 15, Chiapas, and is still waiting for new magistrates to re-examine his case and for justice to be done.

Background

Yonny's case illustrates the serious human rights violations in prisons in the state of Chiapas. The Mexican Human Rights Organisation Frayba has documented at least twenty cases of torture and violations in Chiapas' prisons between 2010 and 2025. From the moment of arrest, many people are subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, in a well-worn pattern of fabrication of guilt and political repression. Once incarcerated, they face forced labour, inadequate food, lack of adequate medical care, prison overcrowding and constant threats. There is general impunity for prolonged detention on the basis of confessions extracted under torture, fabrication of evidence, and lack of effective investigation.

Send a message to:

Fiscalía General de la República (FGR)
Dr. Velasco 175
Colonia Doctores
Alcaldía Cuauhtémoc
C.P. 06720
Ciudad de México
MEXICO
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Note: This is Mexico's Attorney General's Office, the only federal body empowered to review criminal cases, investigate misconduct, or reopen files.

Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB)
[Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos]
Plaza Juárez No. 20
Piso 5 Colonia Centro
Alcaldía Cuauhtémoc
C.P. 06010 Ciudad de México
MEXICO
Email: dgajuridicos@sre.gob.mx
Salutation: Dear Sir

His Excellency Mr Alejandro Gertz Manero
Embassy of Mexico
16 St George Street
London W1S 1FD
Tel: 020 7499 8586
E-Mail: mexuk@sre.gob.mx
Website: <http://www.sre.gob.mx/reinounido>
Salutation: Your Excellency

Suggested message:

Salutation,

I am writing on behalf of Yonny Ronay, a young student from Chiapas, who was arrested on 13 March 2019, taken away without cause, and tortured in order to extract a confession in a robbery case: slaps, beatings, kneeling and simulated drowning. During a second episode, he was also subjected to asphyxiation with a plastic bag coated with chili. On 14 March, he was paraded in the local press and on social networks alongside large-calibre weapons and presented as a member of a criminal group and the perpetrator of a murder committed in Villaflores.

During subsequent court hearings the medically confirmed torture and ill-treatment were ignored and on the basis of clearly fabricated evidence Yonny was sentenced to over 31 years in prison (upheld on appeal in June 2022). Despite a federal judge's recognition in 2024 of serious irregularities

in his trial Yonny remains incarcerated at Copainalá Prison No. 15, Chiapas. He is still waiting for new magistrates to re-examine his case and for justice to be done.

I would therefore urge you to ensure either that his case is re-opened and tried before a court that will give him a fair and just trial or that he is released immediately on the basis of his torture and clearly flawed trial evidence. I understand that Mexico has signed and ratified the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Ratified, ratified 1981) and the CAT (Convention Against Torture, 1986, 2005). Any information which you can provide on this case would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Send an appeal on behalf of Nargiz Absalamova, Azerbaijan



Nargiz Absalamova is a 28-year-old Azerbaijani journalist who since November 2023 has been imprisoned with other colleagues for her investigative work at one of Azerbaijan's last independent media outlets, Abzas Media. Through her work, Nargiz is committed to human rights and exposing corruption. She has investigated the alleged close relations

between companies and government officials and the corruption of the government. Also committed to environmental issues, she worked on the environmental and health risks related to the activity of the Gebadek gold mine in the Söyüdlü district, Azerbaijan.

In June 2025, after she had been detained for a year and a half and the charges against her had been extended, she was sentenced to 8 years in prison under Article 206.3.2 of the Criminal Code. The main charges are related to the illegal introduction of foreign currency into the country as part of a criminal association, which is regularly used by the Azerbaijani authorities to silence critical voices.

After a hunger strike in support of the director of Abzas Media, who was also detained, Nargiz and two other women were placed in solitary

confinement in cells without showers, ventilation or windows to the outside. Since the beginning of her detention her health has deteriorated dangerously. For over 6 months Nargiz has been deprived of medical examination. Suffering from chronic sinusitis, she now has severe headaches and breathing difficulties.

Send a message to:

His Excellency Mr Elin Suleymanov
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
66 Holland Park
London W11 3SJ
Tel: 020 7938 3412
Email: london@mission.mfa.gov.az
Salutation: Your Excellency / Dear Ambassador

Suggested message:

Salutation,

I am writing to you on behalf of Nargiz Absalamova, a 28-year-old Azerbaijani journalist who since November 2023 has been imprisoned with other colleagues for her investigative work at one of Azerbaijan's last independent media outlets, Abzas Media (although her charges relate to other issues, these are widely held not to be the real reason for her conviction).

I understand that she is in extremely poor health and needs urgent medical examination and attention. Deprivation of this amounts to ill-treatment and torture. I would therefore urge, through your good offices, the Azerbaijani authorities to review her case immediately and to ensure that she receives the medical attention that she urgently needs. I also understand that Azerbaijan has signed and ratified the ICPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified 1992) and the CAT (Convention Against Torture, ratified 1996, 2009).

Any further information or updates that you can provide on her case would be welcomed.

Yours sincerely ...



Send an appeal on behalf of Zhang Xinyan, Thailand



Zhang Xinyan, a Chinese pro-democracy activist from Hong Kong and a refugee recognized by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), has been detained since May 2026 in an administrative detention centre in Bangkok. She is at risk of deportation to China at any time, where she would face a high risk of arbitrary detention and political persecution. Zhang Xinyan is

a Chinese citizen who left Hong Kong after being persecuted for her practice of Falun Gong, a spiritual movement banned by the Chinese authorities. She was granted refugee status by UNHCR following the cancellation of her passport by the Chinese authorities.

In July 2025 Zhang Xinyan was the subject of an arrest warrant issued by Hong Kong police for "subversion" under the national security law (see below), with a reward of HK\$200,000 for information leading to her arrest. She is being prosecuted for having participated, from abroad, in the organisation of unofficial elections to form a parliament in exile. In May 2026 Thai immigration officials arrested Zhang Xinyan at her home in Bangkok and transferred her to the Suan Phlu Detention Centre, the same facility from which forty Uyghurs were forcibly deported to China in February 2025. This return was denounced by the UNHCR as a flagrant violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Officially arrested for overstaying her visa, Zhang Xinyan risks being deported to China at any time. Thailand would be in violation of its international obligations and would be placing Zhang Xinyan at imminent risk of arbitrary detention and persecution.

Background

Zhang Xinyan's "crime" is based on the "Hong Kong governed by Hong Kongers" principle which under the National Security Law imposed by Beijing in 2020 defines subversion in deliberately vague terms and is used to criminalize all forms of dissent. Zhang is one of 15 people newly targeted by the Hong Kong authorities in July 2025. More than 30 individuals are currently being prosecuted in this capacity around the world, with Thailand as a key partner of China in the practice. Foreign agents are authorized to operate on Thai territory to monitor, interrogate and kidnap dissidents. Detained Vietnamese refugees report the presence of Vietnamese officers in Thai detention centres, while forty Uyghurs were forcibly deported from the Suan Phlu detention centre to China in 2025, despite the risk of persecution. Thailand's own legal framework explicitly prohibits this. Its Prevention and Punishment of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act 2022 prohibits any deportation or extradition where there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be at risk of torture or enforced disappearance. Thailand has also been a party to the Convention against Torture since 2007 and is bound by the principle of non-refoulement.

Send a message to:

His Excellency Anutin Charnvirakul
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
Prime Minister's Office
Government House
1 Pissanulok Road
Dusit District
Bangkok **10300**
THAILAND
Email: saraban@thaigov.go.th
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Mr Nadhavathna Krishnamra
Royal Thai Embassy
29-30 Queen's Gate
London SW7 5JB

Tel: 020 7225 5500 / 020 7589 2944
Fax: 020 7823 9695
Email: rtelondon@thaiembassyuk.org.uk
Website: www.thaiembassyuk.org.uk
Salutation: Your Excellency

Suggested message:

Salutation,

Zhang Xinyan, a Chinese citizen who left Hong Kong after being persecuted for her practice of Falun Gong, a spiritual movement banned by the Chinese authorities, has been granted refugee status by UNHCR following the cancellation of her passport by the Chinese authorities. Currently detained by the authorities in Thailand, she is now the subject of a Chinese arrest warrant for having participated, from abroad, in the organisation of unofficial elections to form a parliament in exile, and she faces the imminent threat of deportation and persecution for her human rights work, should she be forcibly returned to China.

While I understand and appreciate the close ties and cooperation of Thailand with China, I would nonetheless urge your government to release her immediately, in order to comply with Thailand's own domestic legislation. The Prevention and Punishment of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act 2022 prohibits any deportation or extradition where there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be at risk of torture or enforced disappearance. Thailand has also been a party to the United Nations Convention against Torture since 2007 and is bound by the principle of non-refoulement.

Any further information or updates that you can provide on her case would be welcomed.

Yours sincerely ...



REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, regime critics, kidnapped, tortured and held incommunicado in the Republic of Guinea. Pray for them and for their families, who do not know where they are or even whether they are still alive.

Yonny Ronay, a young student in Mexico, arbitrarily arrested, tortured, and sentenced to 31 years on fabricated evidence for a crime he did not commit.

Nargiz Absalamova, a journalist exposing corruption and human rights violations in Azerbaijan, sentenced to eight years and in failing health due to harsh conditions of detention.

Zhang Xinyan, Hong Kong democratic rights campaigner and refugee in Thailand facing enforced deportation to China.



Hope in a Prison of Despair, by Evelyn de Morgan

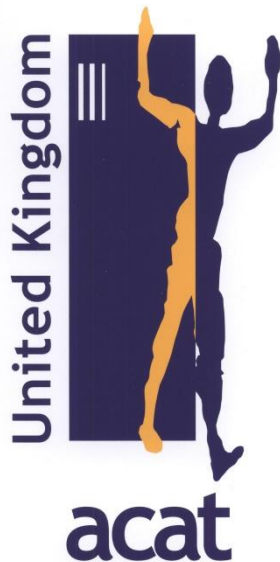
A Prayer for Pity

God our saviour, look on this wounded world in pity and in power; hold us fast to your promises of peace won for us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Poem for Refugees by Brian Bilston

They have no need of our help
So do not tell me
These haggard faces could belong to you or me
Should life have dealt a different hand
We need to see them for who they really are
Chancers and scroungers
Layabouts and loungers
With bombs up their sleeves
Cut-throats and thieves
They are not
Welcome here
We should make them
Go back to where they came from
They cannot
Share our food
Share our homes
Share our countries
Instead let us
Build a wall to keep them out
It is not okay to say
These are people just like us
A place should only belong to those who are born there
Do not be so stupid to think that
The world can be looked at another way

[Now read this poem from the bottom upwards]



Contacts

Dr Derek Lewis (Secretary)
25 Higher Woolbrook Park
Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 9ED
Tel: 07484145694

Email: ukacat@gmail.com

Maurice Dyson (Treasurer)
Tel: 01624 824255

Email: mauricedyson@outlook.com

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Read our newsletters, case appeals, ideas for action, background information and prayer materials.

Join in our Christmas and Easter Campaigns and write to prisoners, victims and human rights workers.

Urge authorities to expose torture, release prisoners, improve prison conditions and bring torturers to justice.

*What finer sound
Is there than a human being
Singing
Against
Cruelty, against Hate?
(Nidar Dinshaw)*

Website: <http://www.acatuk.org.uk>

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