



Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

16 December 2014

Dear Prime Minister,

We write as a coalition of human rights NGOs to jointly urge you to establish an inquiry into UK involvement in rendition and torture, with the powers and independence it needs to get to the truth, and a mechanism to allow the meaningful participation of victims.

As we have liaised with your Government previously on the characteristics necessary for a meaningful and effective inquiry, we will not go into those in detail again. However, we attach our recent letter to the Intelligence and Security Committee, and would simply note that neither the ISC, nor its unfinished predecessor under Sir Peter Gibson, came up to the mark.

As you will know, we welcomed your announcement in July 2010 that an independent, judge-led inquiry was to be established, and sought for a long period to come to agreement with the Government on its protocol and terms of reference. Ultimately, and unfortunately, we found ministers unwilling to make the necessary compromises for Sir Peter Gibson's inquiry to gain our confidence.

We would note at this point that the ISC falls yet further short of the necessary standards – and in saying so, we are taking into account the minor changes to the ISC made by the Justice and Security Act 2013. And in any case, it is undeniable that its current workload means that it will be unable to complete its inquiry within the necessary timeframe for a matter of such importance.

But more importantly, we would like to remind you of your 2010 statement which in our view was correct – that is:

“I do not think for a moment that we should believe that the ISC should be doing this piece of work. For public confidence, and for independence from parliament, party and government, it is right to have a judge-led inquiry.”

Your Government rightly came into office determined to get to the bottom of this issue, something crucial not only for accountability but also to restore Britain’s reputation in the world. Yet last week’s publication of the report by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) has highlighted not only the horrors of the CIA’s torture programme, but also the UK’s failure as a country to put our own house in order.

We therefore urge you to deliver on your promise of an independent, judge-led inquiry with the powers necessary to get to the truth, before next year’s General Election. We are all of course willing to meet with you, your ministers or officials to discuss again what form of inquiry is necessary to ensure this.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Evans, Director, The AIRE Centre

Kate Allen, Director, Amnesty International UK

Muhammad Rabbani, Managing Director, Cage

Susan Munroe, Chief Executive, Freedom from Torture

Andrea Coomber, Director, JUSTICE

Shami Chakrabarti, Director, Liberty

Carla Ferstman, Director, Redress

Clare Algar, Executive Director, Reprive

Hanne Stevens, Director (Interim), Rights Watch (UK)

The principal point of contact for further information about concerns raised in this letter is Donald Campbell at Reprive: Donald.Campbell@reprive.org.uk / 0207 553 8166. He will in turn forward any correspondence to all the signatory organizations.

ANNEX:

Joint NGO letter to the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, AI Index: EUR 45/011/2014, 30 October 2014 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR45/011/2014/en>