

`Reclaiming our Rights'; transcription of main plenary speeches 2 December 2006

Bill Bowring

I will diverge from my title and pick up on the concept of terrorism. I become more convinced that this is first of all meaningless, but also means everything. I just read John Dugard, the UN Special Rapporteur for the (Palestinian) Occupied Territories. His view is that the Security Council of the UN, guided by the major powers, has shown little interest in the search for a definition of terrorism that takes account of its causes, and which condemns both non-state terrorism and state terrorism even-handedly. Terrorism, for the Security Council, is what obscenity was for the American judge who remarked that he knew an obscenity when he saw one. The danger with this approach is that it gives each state a wide discretion to define terrorism for itself, to define terrorism widely, to settle political scores by treating their political opponents as terrorists. It is thus a licence for oppression. That is my view also. If terrorism has any meaning whatsoever, it means very serious crimes committed against civilians. I can point very easily to some such crimes, war crimes, for example war crimes committed by the British government during the invasion and occupation of Iraq, in the use of cluster bombs deliberately or recklessly in the vicinity of civilians. These are the most serious crimes you can possibly conceive of, which continue - because of the nature of cluster bombs - to this day; and the British for the time being have got away with it. What do the Israelis do in the Lebanon but exactly the same thing? Now if we want to attach the word 'terrorism' to something, I would suggest that's the kind of action which the word might describe.

Another example which is rather more topical; a chap I met a while ago, I have his book inscribed to me; Alexander Litvinenko, has recently died as a result of poisoning with Polonium 210. We now find there is a trail of this stuff all over London, and not only has a British citizen, which he had just become, been murdered with this substance, but it looks as if an Italian citizen's life is also in danger. I'm not going to say who did it (I don't know) but I saw a very good analysis by a Russian defence analyst a couple of days ago, where he said - and increasingly this is what we're now hearing - that putting together something of that kind could only be done by a state agency, and indeed one involving very sophisticated facilities. I'd like to know which state is likely to have been involved in this. I saw Barroso of the EU has recently pointed out that a series of people have recently died, either shot dead at the door of their apartment, as with Anna Politkovskaya, who dared to tell the truth about Chechnya, or Mr Litvinenko, or indeed the Italian examining judge Mr Scaramello. So if you want to attach the word 'terrorism' to something, I think that kind of activity is what you attach the word terrorism to, if indeed it has meaning.

So just returning for a few minutes to the topic I was meant to be talking about, by the way there's someone you should listen to later on, that's Ben Hayes from Statewatch, who knows much more about this topic than I do, and their web site on Statewatch is absolutely superb. I've just written 20,000 words for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the question of human rights effects of asset freezing, and if you want a lot of detail on that, the Statewatch web site will give it or I will send you my paper if you like, which contains that information and more besides. There's a general problem going on there; that is, the word 'terrorism' having been picked up at

the level of the UN, what that means is that you now have lists of individuals and organisations coming from the UN Sanctions Committee, with absolutely no control over how you get onto this, and it's absolutely impossible to find out. Indeed there is no way of getting off. Ben Hayes has now collected on the Statewatch web site a whole series of cases which have gone to the Court of First Instance of the European Court of Justice, where people are trying to appeal against the fact that they or their organisation find themselves on these lists. I just want to give you a couple of examples. There's the Philippine Professor Sison who is represented by one of my friends at the European Court. I've met him a couple of times – he's a little chap; he's the least violent looking chap I've ever seen probably. However, he is a leader of the Philippine resistance movement and if you know anything about the history of the Philippines you might well think that if you are a Philippino you might well want to get involved in activity against the present government there and those who stand behind them. There's an honourable tradition of this going back centuries. Because he's a leader of the Phillipino opposition he is on this list, having his assets frozen. He's not in prison, he is still alive, but he's only alive through the charity of his family because the whole of the rest of his life has come to a stop in terms of what he can do, where he can live, where he can travel, etc.

Another very brief example; we're going to hear from some Basque colleagues later on today about another case going through the courts, which is about a Basque youth organisation. They were put on this list. In fact their assets weren't frozen. They have tried to take their case both to the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, and they have got nowhere on either occasion. The ECHR said that it might be embarrassing to be on this list, but it doesn't count as a violation of human rights to be described as a terrorist and put on the terrorist list. It gets worse, and the way it gets worse is that this action is at the international level and the upshot is that we no longer have procedural rights. That is, the procedural right to be told what it is you are supposed to have done, to have a hearing at which you can contest this and to have some possibility of appeal, and to have regular reviews if you are in detention.

By the way, if you are a person detailed by occupying forces in occupied territory, you have all these rights which are set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention. If you are a British or Iraqi citizen who has been detained by the British forces in the southern part of Iraq, like Mr. Al Jeddah, you have none of these rights, you are detained on the say – so of Major General Rollo – he decides whether you are a threat, he doesn't tell you what you are alleged to have done, and he can decide you will be detained indefinitely. And Lord Justice Brook said in the Court of Appeal that actually Mr. Al Jeddah does not have the benefit of British law, he's under Iraqi law, that he can come to the British court even though he has no rights, and it's perfectly alright. The situation in southern Iraq is equivalent to what the UK faced in the Second World War So this war on terror is the same as the war against the Nazis, and you lose your procedural guarantees as a result. And this is happening not just with the British in Iraq, not just with individuals and organisations all over Europe now, but increasingly in the UK. I want to finish by saying I'm glad to see someone I know here from Hizb ut Tahrir. I would argue with him all day and all night if given the opportunity, and I think they are a political party, they are putting their point of view, and I think they participate in political discussions also.

With Phil Leach now we are taking some cases to the ECHR about Hizb ut Tahrir, about people who are refugees in Russia from Uzbekistan. We'll hear from Craig Murray later on today; in Uzbekistan, if they suspect you are a member of Hizb ut Tahrir not only to you not get a hearing, you get boiled alive. I'm not joking, that is what happens to you in Uzbekistan. So they have fled to Russia, and there Hizb ut Tahrir has been banned. At a court hearing of which nobody was given any notice, nobody knew it was happening, there was only the government there in front of the court. The court banned Hizb ut Tahrir, and nobody was told of this decision. The first anyone knew that Hizb ut Tahrir had been banned was when people were arrested and sent to prison, in part for membership of Hizb ut Tahrir. Tony Blair has been working night and day for the last two years to get Hizb ut Tahrir put on the proscribed list in this country. The association of Chief Police Officers came out and said this was ridiculous because this is not an organisation which has ever espoused or used violence. So I heard a good suggestion in a meeting in the House of Commons a while ago, which was that all of us should set up and join a Hizb ut Tahrir supporters group. Whether this would do any good, I do not know.

It's good to see so many people in the room. I have tried to give you a few pointers to how you why what is going on is so bad. I hope that you have not been in any sushi bars, hotels and BA aircraft in the last few weeks. And just to repeat, if that is not terrorism, I don't know what is.

Gareth Peirce

To be described as a lawyer who defends people accused of criminal offences would be a fine thing if I now were. I'm now a lawyer who represented people who are accused of involvement in international terrorism who have no idea what the case is against them, who never know the case against them, yet who are incarcerated indefinitely without trial and who suffer all the stigma and open-ended damage and danger, and so on their families, of someone accused of a criminal offence without the ability ever to meet the accusations. The title of this conference, 'Reclaiming our Rights', is a bit optimistic. We are in a dire situation in this country, just looking at this country alone; our rights, particularly those rights I ought to know about, the rights of due process of the accused, have been torched. They have been burnt to a crisp! The naivety of thinking we can just reclaim them in a flash is wrong; we have to realise the extent of what has happened, the depth and the duration of what has happened. If we were having a debate in Parliament now it would still be a vigorous debate if the topic for discussion was the entire abolition of jury trial. There would still be plenty of MPs (probably more Conservatives actually than any other party) who would say that the fundamental freedoms of this country are history, and demand the enduring right to jury trial. In fact, it's gone, for a lot of people, it has been taken away, but without any Parliamentary debate, by sleight of hand. And we remain uninformed, unadventurous, uncritical; those here in this room represent the active community in what is a passive, unquestioning, accepting population in this country, tragically.

But the enormity of the failure, which has consequences for the rest of our lives, if we only learn one single lesson from recent history, it is that the injustices of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the injury meted out by the British state were what perpetuated the conflict, the injustices were what fuelled the fire of the conflict for 30 years. What

happened was always reactive, if one went back to Bloody Sunday; if one went back to the Civil Rights marches before Bloody Sunday, what was going on? People were asking for simple rights; of due process, of education, of housing; and it was the brutal reaction of the state and the cruelty year after year that fuelled the fire of the reaction and here we are again, but worse. We're not wrongly convicting people; we're not locking them up after the trial in which there were brutal confessions extracted. We've actually removed all that; we're just doing it without any due process at all.

So I simply will take one or two examples to show how in this country we managed to do it without anyone noticing; it's just a three-card trick, and it works. In 2001 we wanted to ape Bush; he had his Patriot Act. We wanted to do something similar. So we rushed through Parliament the ACTSA. Easy to do; a number of Parliamentarians were concerned. They said; should we not be prosecuting people; and they were reassured; don't worry; this is always a last resort. There would always have been a careful decision about whether we could prosecute people first; the Crown Prosecution Service will always have made a decision. Those people stayed in prison for three and a half years, interned indefinitely without trial, and many of them went mad. A reflection of how awful this was is that a number of them ended up in Broadmoor, driven mad by indefinite detention. To the surprise of the government, they won after three and a half years, in the House of Lords judgement. There were some stirring words said by a number of the Law Lords about how it isn't the threat of terrorism we should fear but the threat of laws like that. So what was the government's response; it was just to bring in another law like that.

This time it was called control orders, and the same people who were driven mad were out on the streets the next day, damaged as they were, but under a new form of control, this time affecting their families. All the time on secret evidence which they didn't know, and couldn't challenge. Suddenly, last year Blair said; the rules of the game have changed; again, again; but this time he had found out how to do it without even Parliamentary scrutiny; and Parliamentary scrutiny in this country, with the dominant party having the large majority it does and with the determination our Prime Minister has to follow the American way, is pitiful. But even so, he found a way which didn't need Parliamentary scrutiny. This was with foreign nationals whom we've always said couldn't be deported to their country of origin because of knowing they would be tortured. We've said that. We've got it in black and white' each of these men acknowledged they would be tortured or killed if he was sent back to his country of origin. But come August 11th, Tony Blair said 'it's ok'; there are no criminal accusations, these are not control order cases; we're going to deport people now; this is just an immigration matter; it doesn't need Parliament; we have put it back into the field of immigration law. Immigration detention didn't need an Act of Parliament; didn't need debate; and so these men have been once again in prison now for over a year, this time to be sent to countries with which we have made an agreement. Gaddafi has signed a diplomatic assurance with this country that he won't torture people, at least if he receives them from us. These are people who have already been tried in courts which are not independent, which the British government's own experts say operate under his diktat. Those courts have already convicted these people and sentenced them to death in their absence, without there being extradition, without the benefit of any due process. We've locked these people up without trial on a secret accusation, for five years, and now we're sending them

back to a country which will torture them. We didn't have a Parliamentary debate about whether this country wants to send people to torture, didn't have that. All we had was an executive action, saying it's all right, we have a memorandum of understanding with Libya, with Algeria, with Jordan, even though we acknowledge officially that those countries still practise torture.

Brian Haw

This war is about babies, and our leaders have become the lepers of the world! Look what they do to the world, what we do to our neighbour's baby in Afghanistan with depleted uranium! Our nuclear waste is dumped on any country where the leader does not do what we want them to do; Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, and now there are thousands of tons of our filthy nuclear waste dumped on our neighbours' babies. Look what it does to babies! I would say, God forgive us, but look at our display that we had in Parliament Square, in front of Parliament. On 23rd May 78 police destroyed our display in the night. They came marching like the Roman legions, like the Nazis, just carrying out orders. They had legal justification, I was told. Orders from whom, I asked. I insisted on speaking to their superior officer, I said; I believe you're committing an offence. They said their commander was in bed, but oh no, he wasn't. They committed an illegal seizure. I asked, on what grounds are you trying to remove our display? They tried first on April Fools' Day. The truth was coming out that week from Abu Graib; very embarrassing for Bush and Blair; not apparently for those Arabs, 'ragheads', 'sand-knickers' as they call them; it wasn't embarrassing enough to be naked.

When they took away our display, I went right up the ladder to Sir Ian Blair; I said the police should not steal; they stole the heart of the world from off the pavement. We had 25 or 30 languages; the world was speaking on that pavement; the heart, the humour, the love...Love is the answer.

The first Christmas I was there, a vicar from Leeds came to see me. We agreed; we are killing each other at Christmas, dropping bombs on our children. It's evident that someone somewhere has to do something to stop this madness. What am I doing? What more can I do?

They attacked the display under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA). The story was that Blair had in effect crossed out articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act and substituted some little clauses in SOCPA. Your right to speak has been taken away; you have to get authorisation to have freedom of expression; isn't that so? You have to notify the Commissioner 6 days in advance, in case he needs to marshal troops to control people like Angela Blum. I've seen the swastika marched down Whitehall, while I've been there; how about that? Marching the swastika down Whitehall, and yet Angela Blum on the 60th anniversary of Hiroshima was threatened with arrest for breaking the law, for commemorating the effects of the nuclear bomb we dropped.

The account of this incident in the Independent on Sunday attracted a letter to the paper from one Michael Coleman; 'Dear Sir, I write to express my revulsion at the egregious sophistry of Joan Smith's article ... We and the USA are totally responsible for every Iraqi death, rape or torture since the first moment of the illegal invasion.

Currently 40,000 mercenaries are involved in this obscenity and they answer to no laws of any sort, courtesy of Paul Bremner. The hundreds of thousands murdered by the allied troops, and the untold deaths of future generations from the cluster bombs and from depleted uranium littering the landscape are our joint responsibility. As regards inter-factional violence, there is a phrase that has never entered Ms Smith's consciousness nor any knowledge of Negroponte – the American Ambassador to Iraq and the death squad king of Latin America. Every genocide by the USA, in Latin America and in Vietnam, as well as Iraq, has followed the same pattern of assassinations, death squads, torture, until this work of art blazes into civil war – which of course entails the US and UK staying the course to save the benighted savages from themselves whilst simultaneously keeping their raw resources. This was, and always has been, about oil, whatever the human cost.'

We had the US and UK's bloody washing hanging out outside Parliament, and they can't stand their bloody washing, and we can't stand our neighbour's child being slaughtered.

War is about making money. We say 'love your neighbour; love your neighbour's child as your own, regardless of race, colour, religion'. This is Christianity, humanity, the path to peace. Mr Bush and Mr. Blair, it's time we did it. NOW. We had better wake up and do it now. Some of us know about people being murdered for being Jews, Communists, 'niggers'; we know about that; we have been there before. And now it's another Semitic people being exterminated, isn't it? The board at the front of our display said 'A genocide too far'. My nation, right or wrong! It's time to wake up our country. Bush and Blair, the money makers' puppets. Were the people of Hitler's Germany responsible? We are each responsible. Wake up Britain, it's time for love, peace, justice for all, NOW.

Ben Hayes

A large part of my work over the last five years has been the monitoring of the various terrorism lists, both at Statewatch and at CAMPACC, and in association with the Institute here. What I want to talk about is why we're vehemently opposed to the policy of proscription in all its forms. Just to give you a couple of examples of the kind of effects of proscribing both groups and individuals, CAMPACC was set up in response to the banning of 22 organisations in the Terrorism Act 2000, and their analysis – this was before September 2001 – was that if you do start banning organisations this has the effect of criminalising communities. The reality of proscription was brought home to me in the aftermath of 9/11, when George Bush stood up and told us that either you're with us or you're with the terrorists. Whilst most of the world said, don't be stupid, what the policy of proscription does is really enshrine this distinction into law. So what happened in the wake of 9/11 was that repressive governments around the world queued up to declare themselves on the side of freedom and democracy, and groups around the world resisting occupation and tyranny were declared 'terrorist' at a stroke, as a quid pro quo. You help us with our war on terror, and we'll help you with yours. So the policy of proscription extended rapidly around the world. The UK terrorist list now contains 44 groups around the world and another 14 in Northern Ireland. The EU has its own list, which contains 48 groups and 45 individuals, and just to give you a flavour of how these kinds of decisions were taken, this list was actually adopted in December 2001, by a procedure

which is used very rarely. What happens is they simply fax around the list to all the foreign ministers, and if no-one objects, the procedure means that the measure is adopted. So this was done on the 27th December, two days after Christmas; the list was literally faxed around the foreign ministries on Christmas Day, and no-one objected so it became law. The UN has a terrorist list as well; this list ostensibly concerns associates of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaida and the Taliban, and the US has basically been the driving force behind it. It contains 123 groups, and 350 individuals, none of whom have access to a court to challenge their inclusion on this list; all of whose assets may be frozen and various human rights denied.

I want to run through our five main objections to the terrorist lists. Primarily, they are a recipe for arbitrary and unjust decision making. Secondly, there is the crippling effect on groups and individuals who are proscribed. Thirdly there is the criminalisation of solidarity; organisations that have long been supporting groups in Palestine and places like that, and transferring money, are frequently interrupted by state agencies. Fourth, the lists are a complete assault on due process and human rights; they really fly in the face of natural justice. Fifth, they have an effect of undermining peace processes and conflict resolution. If you just think back a decade ago, and however we might have characterised the peace process, whatever form and however we might have criticised the peace processes that were happening, we just don't have that any more, we just have a deadlock between governments and terrorists. If Mark (Muller) was here, he would certainly have said something about the Kurds, because that was one of the things he's been working on. Two weeks ago, CAMPACC organised a seminar in the Houses of Parliament, to discuss the ban on Kongra Gel, who were added to the EU terrorist list earlier this year. Now this meeting occurred at a time when the war between the Turkish government and Kongra Gel continues despite the renewal of the ceasefire by the PKK and Kongra Gel. And at a time when human rights violations against journalists, writers, trade unionists, publishers, have been increasing at an alarming rate. Now, our meeting two weeks ago really highlighted the reality of the ban. First we heard from the Plaid Cymru MPs who kindly hosted the meeting. They said they could not believe the level of hostility just towards the organisation of the meeting, within the Houses of Parliament. As I said, our democratic institutions don't much care about conflict resolution any more. We were then supposed to hear from Renzi Kartal, European spokesman for Kongra Gel. Mr. Kartal is a respected former member of the Turkish Parliament who is now based in Brussels, but unfortunately we didn't get to hear from Mr. Kartal because at the eleventh hour the UK government refused him a visa. We then heard from a Kurdish activist, who has been working for years on a Kurdish youth project which has now been forced to close, just because of the ban. And we heard from countless other people how Kurdish activists here now fear jail, just for speaking out on the issues they believe in. Obviously they have been gagged not because of any threat they pose to Britain but to appease the Turkish government. I'll give you another example. Several months ago I was speaking at a conference in Helsinki, on this issue, and someone put up his hand and said I have a question for you. He said I'd like to know if the people of the UK know where Baluchistan is. He said I'm not trying to cast aspersions on the intellect of the British public, but I'd like to know if they know why the Baluchistan Liberation Army has also just been added to the UK terrorist list. Now for those of you who don't know, the Baluchis are really in a very similar position to the Kurds. They are the victims of empire' they have a very rich land which has been divided between three countries' Afghanistan, Pakistan

and Iran, and they are now being brutally repressed both by the Pakistani government and by the Iranian government. So what have the Baluchis ever done to us ? Why are they on our banned list of terrorist organisations ? The reason is very simple; General Musharraf supports our war on terror, so we support his. We support it with F16s, with helicopter gunships, and now we support it with the veneer of political and legal legitimacy. We, the British people, are giving generous support to the slow genocide of the Baluchis. There were three and a half thousand people killed this year.

So I will just finish up; what is to be done ? Basically, international law has now contrived a bogus distinction between good and evil which is being used to prop up authoritarian regimes around the world. And this bogus distinction is what legitimises the whole war on terror in all its guises. As Gareth said earlier, really so much has been lost; really it is difficult to know what to do. But there is resistance. For example proscribed Basque organisations are leading the challenge to the EU terrorist list and if things go as expected they will probably be the first to be heard in the European Court of Human Rights, which as you know is a very long and arduous process. And solidarity organisations are also challenging the ban by transferring not insubstantial sums of money to organisations on the terrorist list. There's an organisation in Denmark which is called ??, which means Uproar, or Rebellion, and last year they transferred substantial funds to the FARC and to the PFLP. They went on TV, said what they had done, and basically invited the Danish government to come and prosecute them for the transfer of funds to these organisations, with the idea that this would allow the status of the list to be tested in court. Their leader Patrick McManus has been arrested, his house and his office raided, and he's been placed under extremely heavy surveillance and police attention, and his trial is expected to begin in April 2007, and I would urge all of you to support this man, because here is someone who could potentially go to prison for what he's done without much of the world batting an eyelid. So there is emerging a campaign against the policy of proscription in all its forms, and at the heart of it is the idea of solidarity, solidarity with all those groups resisting occupation and tyranny, including those who have taken up arms in their struggle for self-determination. We also need solidarity with all of those branded as terrorists by states and international organisations, and solidarity with the simple idea that dialogue and negotiation is the only way to resolve the host of complex historical struggles that have now been lumped together under the banner of terrorism.

Lastly the biggest problem we face in all this is the failure, and the bias, of the so-called international community. In the wake of German fascism and World War 2, the United Nations was founded on the very idea that the international community would show solidarity with those resisting oppression and tyranny. Now, the international community is overwhelmingly on the side of the oppressor. So I would urge you to support CAMPACC, support those organisations that have been proscribed for fighting oppression, and think carefully every time you hear the word terrorism bandied against groups and individuals, because very often there's a deeper political purpose behind that.

Mark Thomas

I want to take up some of the themes that Ben was talking about. I think all of us recognise that we are facing extremely illiberal times, and our side aren't exactly winning at the moment, and that's just the most neutral way you can put it. We're

losing, is more accurate; we are losing human rights and we are losing the battle to actually reclaim, to have our rights and to use them. And we need to fight every inch of the way on this. It's very interesting because eventually, the so-called war on terror will falter and peter out. Eventually, people will be left standing in the rubble amidst all this legislation. Then I wonder how much of it will still be allowed to stand. I wonder how much of the legislation will be kept. The police actually enjoy some of this legislation; they think it gives them the chance of a bit more power to give them a slightly easier life. I'm not really being flippant; the police ask if we arrest someone do we have to fill in lots of forms or can we just do it? They want to go for the 'just do it' option. There was an example of that when the proscription list first came out in 2001. There was a great demonstration outside the Home Office; some of you may remember it, in fact some of you were actually there; it was about Kurdish organisations being banned. Suddenly, organisations which were on ceasefire and had declared a commitment to the peace process were now regarded as terrorist organisations. And the minutiae of the legislation said, if you wear a t-shirt that says you support the Kurdish people; if you wear a t-shirt or a badge or any cultural artefact that identifies that, you can face six months in prison. Obviously we all know six months for a t-shirt is absurd. (A couple of weeks for a Pringle golf sweater is possibly acceptable!) I was part of a great team of people who organised opposition to that. I had a t-shirt printed with all of the names of the organisations that were banned, and we were quite happy assembling outside the Home Office thinking we might get a bit of press interest, and about four thousands Kurds arrived en masse, which they occasionally do, all wearing big t-shirts with 'I am the PKK' on them. The cops were really great; I spoke to one of the senior officers who said; you've done really well here, you've got your own police spotter helicopter, that's a really good turnout. So he was very complementary. We actually handed in a copy of the t-shirt to the Home Office – Jack Straw was the Home Secretary at the time, and we asked his assistant if they could persuade Jack to put it on and thereby arrest himself. I spoke to a senior police officer and he said, nobody's going to get arrested for a t-shirt; it's just a chilling effect; we want to calm everything down. We thought this is surely an absurd law, and surely nobody is going to follow this through; surely nobody is going to get arrested for a t-shirt.

We were wrong. A couple of years later there were four Kurds who were arrested in Dover; they were travelling to a Kurdish rally in Europe; they had four thousand pounds with them. They were arrested by Special branch who said, you are going to give that four thousand pounds to a terrorist organisation. And they put them on trial. Fortunately in these rather fraught times there is still a minor problem of having to come up with evidence in court, thankfully. And the only evidence that could be found that could link the men in any way to a 'terrorist' organisation was that one of the chaps was wearing a t-shirt with 'I am the PKK'. It was the one worn outside the Home Office, and that was the only evidence they had. So we might look at these laws, and think surely they won't enact it, but given half a chance they will. They guys were acquitted on a legal technicality - of being innocent. These laws have an incredible effect, as most of you know. There have been a series of laws that have come in and they have affected different parts of our community in different ways. Obviously a proscription will affect various parts of the Tamil community or the Kurdish community. Then the anti-terror laws will affect people in the sense of their civil liberties, but comparatively across the country those aren't huge groups of people. Interestingly enough I think the laws that have really touched people have

been the laws which New Labour have introduced which have been petty and spiteful. Like ID cards for example, it's one of the things that makes people physically angry about having to justify ourselves to the state, rather than the logical thing which is that the state should justify itself to us. The licensing act too; if you have a piano in a pub for example; this might sound small beer, but if you have a piano in a pub and you play it and you haven't got an entertainment licence you could be arrested, and the sentence for not having a licence is comparable to being a drug dealer. So it's nuts; interestingly enough there is an exemption in this; that is for Morris dancers. So if anyone wishes to join me I hope to be having a rave in which we can each be Morris dancers, so we won't need a licence.

Another example is the SOCPA restrictions on protest requiring permission from the police to demonstrate in Parliament Square and its environs. And also the Harassment Act, which is a lesser looked-at piece of legislation, which says that if you go to someone's house with the intention of getting them to change their mind, about any given subject, you can be harassing them. But I think we have a chance to get back on them about this, because during an election time, anyone who rings on your doorbell who's canvassing has got the intention of making you change your mind. If we can get it together we could get every major political party and its dog for harassment. And it seems to me that those ways of tackling it have merit. One, because of Brian Haw and the amazing stand he has taken against the draconian positions that we have faced on freedom of speech in Parliament Square. That has been an incredible, a remarkable stand, and a testament to an individual and his courage. I couldn't do that, I couldn't begin to do it, I don't think most people could. Alongside that there is a whole wellspring of anger of people who want to join in but aren't able to go the distance that some others can.

This has been the interesting thing about doing the mass lone demonstrations, that because the police have said you need a permission, in effect a licence, if you wish to demonstrate in Parliament Square and its environs, it opens it up to the kind of challenge that the authorities simply aren't prepared for, which is total compliance, and aggressively complying. We organised mass lone demonstrations where 150 people turned up at Charing Cross police station, each of them wanting a licence to stand there with one banner, doing their own demonstration, and the paperwork of it is quite immense. In August when this happened the police at that station went into complete melt-down about it. They were there for four hours just getting the paper in and photocopying it. We now know that there have been twice the amount of requests for demonstrations since SOCPA has been introduced. I should point out that the zone of restriction covers four different police station areas – Charing Cross, Lambeth, Belgravia and Parks Police. Belgravia are super. If you ever want to do a demonstration, do it in Belgravia because they are fantastic. They get maps out that show you the individual houses in a street and ask you where you are going to demonstrate. It wastes an inordinate amount of their time and I would urge you to do it. The interesting thing was, whilst we were doing it, there was a lovely chap who was standing there – there were all sorts of banners, some of them very serious, like banners that said 'UK out of Iraq', or 'Stop the Israeli aggression in the Lebanon'; others are less serious like 'free tampons on the NHS'. One woman just had a banner that said 'Ban the bits in cheese', which I thought was very British. I was outside Westminster Abbey a few days later, demonstrating within the zone and calling on the Abbey to be shut because God was dead. A chap came up to me with a blazer and I

wondered whether I was going to be shouted at now, and he said 'you don't remember me? I was on the demonstration in Parliament Square. It's absolutely dreadful what they are doing out there.' And he was the last person I would have expected to see there. I think part of what we need to do is to reach out to those people who would give a care about the anti-terror legislation and about proscription if they knew more about it, but they do care about what they perceive to be the loss of their rights – whether it's about SOCPA, or the Harassment Act, or ID cards; there is a whole wellspring of people out there who care passionately about their rights and it's up to us to find ways to connect with those communities and to bring them into the fray .

Craig Murray

I have a lot to say and too little time. If you feel like more detail you can buy my book. It makes a great Christmas present and you can read it yourself before you give it to someone. You can also give it to a New Labour supporter and they'll be really annoyed.

I was British Ambassador in Uzbekistan, where I turned up in August 2002. It was my first ambassadorial post. I knew Uzbekistan was a dictatorship. I had been told it had not much change since the days of the Soviet system, but I really wasn't prepared for how dictatorial it was. It's a totalitarian state, it has no freedom whatsoever. Opposition political parties are banned; they (the government) don't win the elections, because the elections are not contested; there is no free media, no freedom of assembly. Amnesty International reckon there are 7000 political prisoners, and I think that's probably an under-estimate. There's no freedom of the internet either. The majority of the population work on state farms producing cotton. Uzbekistan is the world's second largest producer of cotton, so the irrigation for the Uzbek cotton industry has caused the destruction of the Aral Sea. And the people who work on the cotton farms, they work 12 hours a day 6 days a week, and the official salary they get is \$12 a month. What they actually get in their hand is \$2 a month. That's about seven cents a day, for working 12 hours a day. And they can't leave, they're slaves. Not only does Uzbekistan have an external visa system for leaving the country, they have an internal visa system. If you want to move from one village to another village, you need a visa. And if you're a cotton worker you won't get it, because they want to keep you on the cotton farms. In the harvest season, with the schools and universities all closed, the pupils and students and teachers are sent out to harvest cotton as well. Children of seven and eight years old work a 12 hour day in the cotton fields, for three months on end. And as Ambassador I was under instruction, whenever I made a public speech, to refer to Uzbekistan as our ally in the war on terror, and always to thank President Karimov for his assistance in Afghanistan and for giving the US an air base.

I decided to try to find out more. I had been there a couple of weeks when I attended a dissident trial; it was of six people who were charged with membership of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a movement said with some justice to be linked to Al Qaida. They were charged with the armed robbery of a jeweller to fund terrorism, and with the murder of two policemen – and according to Human Rights Watch there were 12 other people who had already been convicted of the murder of the two policemen. There was no accusation that it was a mob, or a conspiracy – quite simply, two policemen had been murdered. When that happens, the Uzbek government uses it

to round up a lot of dissidents, and try them, and if it's murder, execute them. I was stunned when I attended this trial. I could only compare it to footage I've seen of Hitler's show trials. The accused looked beaten and emaciated; the judge was screaming at them, making gratuitous anti-Islamic remarks; for example 'I'm surprised that you could find time to commit all these crimes when you had to stop to pray five times a day'. And all his cronies in the court would laugh as though this was great wit. The first thing happened in that court room which led me onto the path that brought me out of the diplomatic service and led me here today. One old man was giving evidence; he had made a statement to police that two of the accused, who were his nephews, were members of Al Qaida, and had travelled to Afghanistan, and had met with Osama bin Laden in person. And like everyone else in that court room, as he was giving his evidence he was terrified; he was an old man, and you could see that he was scared stiff. But suddenly he found some inner strength, and he stood taller, and he said, 'This is not true; they tortured my children in front of me until I signed this statement. We are good Muslims; but we are poor farmers; what do we know about Osama bin Laden?' I can't explain what happened, it was entirely intuitive, but at that moment I was sure he was telling the truth. And he must have realised that in doing that, he was almost certainly signing his own death warrant. That gave me cause to think, as did everything else I was learning.

I reported the trial and everything I'd seen back to London. I received a reply back from the Foreign Office which I shall never forget; it said 'Dear Ambassador; we have received your report; we think you are perhaps over-focussed on human rights.' Anyhow, I continued to be over-focussed on human rights; the fact that the Ambassador had been to a dissident trial was a kind of ray of hope to the dissidents in Uzbekistan, to the oppressed, because the west had been completely ignoring them, because of their country's position as an ally in the 'war on terror'. Think about it, unless you received some specific information from Amnesty International, and there wasn't much of that in 1999-2000, when did you ever hear about human rights in Uzbekistan? Almost never; these people felt ignored. Once they found that the British Embassy was taking an interest, people started to beat a path to my door. Victims of torture, relatives of victims, people with photographic evidence of torture, even people with letters smuggled out of the gulags. And I began to build up a picture of torture carried out on an industrial scale, affecting thousands of people in jail. One of the first things I received was an envelope containing photographs of a dead body. This man was a member of Hizb ut Tahrir, the fundamentalist but non-violent Islamic group. He'd been in one of the gulags, and his body had been returned to his mother with instructions not to open the casket but to bury it the next day. But she felt there were certain religious duties to be performed in terms of washing the body. So in the middle of the night she got the body out and took photographs of it, and when she heard that the British Embassy was now taking an interest she got them to us. When I saw them, I couldn't work out what had happened to this corpse, I'd seen nothing like it in my life. So I sent the photographs to the pathology department at the University of Glasgow. They did a report based on the photos, and they said his fingernails had been pulled out, that he had been beaten about the face and neck, and that he had died of immersion in boiling liquid. It was immersion not splashing because there was a clear tide line around the upper limbs and upper torso, with 100% scalding underneath. He had been boiled alive. I only came across one or two other examples of people being boiled alive that I could definitely verify. But people having a limb inserted into boiling liquid was very common. As was suffocation, as was beating,

particularly smashing of the knees and elbows. As was rape, and particularly common was the torture or rape of family members in front of the person. But as we gathered all this evidence, which London didn't want, and they told me so every time I sent it to them, we also got evidence of what people were being forced to confess to under torture.

They were being forced to confess to membership of Al Qaida. They were often being forced to confess to going to Afghanistan and meeting Osama bin Laden in person. And they were being forced to sign up to long lists of other people, and say, yes, I know these people, they are members of Al Qaida. More often than not, they had no idea who any of these lists of names were, and they were by no means all Uzbeks. People were being tortured in Uzbek cells, and admitting that all sorts of people they didn't know, all over the world, were Al Qaida members. At the same time I was seeing all the CIA intelligence coming out of Uzbekistan. Under agreements which the US has with the UK, MI6 and the CIA share all their intelligence. Now I didn't have any intelligence to share. I don't want to spoil the new James Bond film for you, but we didn't have an MI6 station in Tashkent because it was too dangerous. In real life, MI6 do not serve in countries where you can't buy a cappuccino – it's a very aristocratic organisation. But I saw the CIA material. It said that detainees had confessed to being members of Al Qaida. It said they had travelled to Afghanistan and met Osama bin Laden. It gave lots of names of other people they had said were members of Al Qaida. And it wasn't difficult to put two and two together and work out that this material had come direct from Uzbek torture chambers. It was being put together and passed to the USA. It wasn't difficult to work it out because we actually asked the American Embassy, and they said we get it from the Uzbek security services, and they almost certainly get it from the torture chambers, and we don't see that as a problem in the context of the war on terror. I did see it as a problem.

I reported back to London by telegrams to Jack Straw, saying, 'we're getting intelligence from torture; it's illegal, it's immoral and it's useless, because the information's no good. It became increasingly plain to me that London were very angry with me. I was summoned back to a meeting which took place on either the 7th or the 8th of March 2003, whichever of those is a Friday. At that meeting I was told three things. Sir Michael Wood, the Home Office's chief legal advisor, told me it is not illegal for us to get intelligence gained under torture as long as we don't do the torturing ourselves. The second thing I was told was that Jack Straw had met with Sir Richard Dear, the head of MI6, and they had decided that, in the context of the war on terror, we should obtain intelligence based on torture as a matter of policy, and that that policy had been confirmed by the Cabinet. So I was a civil servant, and I should shut up and get on with it. Now those are two very chilling things to tell you. But the third thing, in a sense, is even more chilling. Because when I said that the information is untrue, it's rubbish, why do we want it, there was a guy from MI6 called Matthew Kidd, who was speaking very very carefully from a prepared written brief, not deviating at all from the official line, and every time I said to him 'it's untrue information' he said 'it's operationally useful.' Now my arguments with the Foreign Office about this went on for over a year, before they sacked me, but they never once claimed to me that the material was true. They always stuck to this line 'it's operationally useful'. I want you to think of the ramifications of that.

Intelligence in the war on terror is not judged on whether it's true or not, but whether it's 'useful' or not; does it paint the picture the government wants to have painted? Now apply that idea to the intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Was it true? No. Was it operationally useful? You bet – if we wanted to concoct a spurious legal defence justification for an entirely illegal war it was the most useful intelligence they ever had. And I can promise you as an insider and as a member of the FCO section that was monitoring Iraqi arms procurement in the first Gulf crisis, I can promise you that the FCO knew very well that that dossier on weapons of mass destruction was a load of nonsense. But it was operationally useful. And I want you to think as well about when Eliza Manningham-Buller claims that there are 1600 actual Islamic terrorists active in the UK; not supporters or sympathisers or people prepared to give a bedroom or a safe haven to them, but people actually prepared to commit acts of violence; 1600 of them in the UK, based on intelligence. Is it true? No! That would be 30 times the level of violence present in the Northern Irish community at the height of the troubles. It's about one in 400 of the number of active male Muslims in this country; it's a number which anyone with any security background knows is rubbish, basically. But it's operationally useful, because it's useful to fear people, to get more fear into society, to do more to alienate the Muslim community from the British public, to stir up Islamophobia, to justify – remember she said this a week before the Queen's Speech – John Reid (who looks more and more like Mussolini) introducing yet more draconian legislation of the kind that removes human rights in this country. When you hear that it's based on intelligence I want you to remember that it almost certainly came from someone screaming in a torture chamber, in Uzbekistan, in Pakistan, in Algeria, in Syria, in Morocco, in Diego Garcia, in Guantánamo, in Abu Graib, in Poland, in one of the many, many locations around the world. Because that's what we are doing; we are creating ...the material I saw in Uzbekistan vastly exaggerated the presence of Al Qaida in central Asia. There was almost no Islamic militancy of a violent kind in central Asia until we embarked on our policy of strong support for the dictatorship; then people started to hate us.

This endless war on terror is a self-fulfilling prophecy; if we keep invading people's countries (600,000 dead in Iraq) ... I'm not sure how many of you saw Martin Bright's report in the New Statesman, about a party in Number 10, at which Blair was asked by someone, 'with 100,000 dead in Iraq, how can you sleep at night?' And he replied, 'well, actually I think you'll find it's more like 50,000'. The public are being conditioned to think all those dead people are only Muslims, and they are out to kill us. And by a whole string of fake plots – like the ricin plot, where intelligence came from someone who was tortured in Algeria, as Eliza Manningham-Buller has publicly said, and it turned out to be completely false; there was no ricin, there was no plot. And the Forest Gate 'plot', the chemical weapons plot; there was no chemical vest, and you wouldn't use one with a chemical weapon, you would go for air dispersal, you don't wrap the chemical weapon round a human torso and swathe it in fabric. The idea was nonsense, but because there was 'intelligence' about a chemical weapons vest, it was enough to keep anti-Muslim propaganda on the front page for days and days. There have been loads of them. I'm sure you've been hearing today about 1200 Muslims, maybe more, arrested under terrorist legislation, with hardly anyone charged and virtually no-one convicted of anything to do with terrorism. And so much of it goes back to that willingness to employ torturers overseas to produce false lists of members of Al Qaida in this country and elsewhere, to keep stoking the fires of Islamophobia. We've got to resist it and we've got to get the truth out to people.