



All-Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Press release – 28 November 2018

“What is the government trying to hide?” says APPG Chair Ken Clarke, reacting to the government’s attempt to bury their “woeful” response to shocking evidence of UK involvement in rendition and torture.

Ken Clarke MP, Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition, has today reacted to the government’s attempt to bury its inadequate [response](#) to the Intelligence and Security Committee reports into detainee mistreatment and rendition.

On 28 June 2018, Parliament’s Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) published two reports into detainee mistreatment and rendition. The reports revealed shocking levels of UK complicity in rendition and torture, with UK involvement in or knowledge of hundreds of cases of mistreatment and over 70 cases of rendition. However, the ISC were unable to get to the full truth due to government obstruction, with access to key witnesses blocked. Outrage at the details contained in the reports led to calls for a judge-led inquiry from senior Conservatives, including APPG Chair Ken Clarke, and from the Labour and Liberal Democrat front benches. In response to an urgent question in the Commons, the government promised to give “careful consideration” to calls for a judge led inquiry and “update the House within 60 days of publication of the reports” – ie. by 27 August 2018.

On Thursday last week, a full 147 days after the reports’ publication, the government tried to bury its response by releasing it at the same time as, not only the ISC’s new report into the 2017 terror attacks, but also the agreement by the European leaders of the British Withdrawal Agreement in Brussels.

The response fails to engage in any meaningful way with the ISC’s findings, nor does it announce whether or not the government will hold a judge-led inquiry.

Ken Clarke said today:

“This was a classic case of smuggling out bad news on the day when everyone is distracted by a big political event.

It is no surprise that the government tried to bury their woeful response to the ISC reports. The response is an exercise in evasion and an attempt to whitewash the past. In the face of overwhelming evidence of UK complicity in rendition and mistreatment, the government has failed to engage in any meaningful way. Their answer to most of the issues raised by the ISC is either to state how difficult things were at the time, or to assure us that things are better now. This is not an adequate response. Frequently, they do not even acknowledge that the

actions criticised by the ISC were a mistake. For example, in response to the finding that our secret services outsourced rendition by financing rendition operations carried out by others, the government only acknowledges that ‘one of the cases concerned’ was a mistake. What about the other cases? This seems tantamount to supporting what the ISC called a ‘corporate policy of rendition’. This is completely unacceptable.

What’s more, the government has not even sought to address the calls that I and others have made for the re-opening of the adjourned judge-led inquiry. Worryingly, the secret services are trying to assert that ‘all detainee-related cases of potential concern have been scrutinised.’ This ignores completely that the Belhaj case – where a man and his pregnant wife were rendered with MI6 assistance to Gadaffi’s torture chambers – has not been scrutinised by any independent body at all. And with the recent revelations about the CIA torture of Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi (where UK officials fed questions to the CIA for use in the interrogation, despite having witnessed al-Libi being rendered in a sealed coffin-like box) it is clear that we don’t know how many more such cases lie hidden. Rendition and torture are evil and abhorrent practices in and of themselves. The consequences are catastrophic for the victim and the perpetrator. But they can also be catastrophic for us all: it seems that reports show that Al-Libi’s torture produced false intelligence that was used by the US and UK to justify war in Iraq.

The question that must now be asked, in light of the government’s continued failure to announce a judge-led inquiry is: what is the government trying to hide?” [ENDS]

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Note to editors

- Ken Clarke is the chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition (APPG), a cross-party group of MPs and Peers that was founded in 2005. It aims to establish the facts about the scope and scale of UK involvement in rendition, and to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.
- The Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) released two reports on 28 June 2018: “Detainee Mistreatment and Rendition: 2001-2010” and “Detainee Mistreatment and Rendition: Current Issues,” revealing much greater UK involvement in detainee mistreatment and rendition than was previously known. Key findings by the ISC include:
 - 13 incidents where UK personnel witnessed first-hand a detainee being mistreated by others.¹ This includes witnessing a detainee being rendered on the back of a jeep in a “six foot, sealed box”.²
 - 25 incidents where UK personnel were told by detainees that they had been mistreated by others.³
 - 128 incidents where Agency officers were told by foreign liaison services about instances of mistreatment.⁴

¹ ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.31.

² ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.32.

³ ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.38.

⁴ ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.39.

- 232 cases where UK personnel continued to supply questions or intelligence to liaison services after they knew or suspected mistreatment,⁵ and 198 cases where UK personnel received intelligence from liaison services which had been obtained from detainees who they knew had been mistreated.⁶
- Over 70 cases of UK involvement in rendition.⁷
- On 2 July 2018, in response to an urgent question by Ken Clarke, the Minister for Europe and the Americas (Sir Alan Duncan) stated that the Government would give “careful consideration” to calls for a judge-led inquiry and update the House within 60 days of publication of the reports.
- On 6 November, [journalist Ian Cobain revealed in Middle East Eye that](#) “British intelligence agencies fed questions to the interrogators of a captured terrorism suspect whom they knew was being seriously mistreated in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and ministers then relied upon his answers to help justify the 2003 invasion of Iraq.”
- On 22 November 2018, the government released its [response](#) to the ISC reports, but failed to make any announcement as to a judge led inquiry.

⁵ ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.52.

⁶ ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.55.

⁷ ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.99, 101 and 106.
ISC Report 2001 – 2010, p.101.