



Thursday 27th January, 2004

Press Release

ONE STEP FORWARD TWO STEPS BACK

FAIR is delighted that the four Muslim men who were held at Guantanamo prison for at least three years have finally been subject to British justice and allowed back home to their families.

It is alleged that all four men have been subjected to ordeals that many of us cannot even imagine, which include torture, ill treatment and detention in solitary confinement in breach of the Geneva Convention. “The main priority now is for the relevant authorities to aid these men to ensure that they can resume their life with the fullest dignity and health”, said Samar Mashadi, Director of FAIR.

Contrary to the allegations of the US government, a mutual decision between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service held that there was no evidence to prove that these men were any sort of security risk.

Although it took far too long for these men to have had the opportunity to face the British criminal procedure, we welcome the UK government’s efforts in bringing British nationals home, and we hope that their efforts stretch to the other British residents who

undoubtedly are suffering to the same extent. We are hopeful that it will be the UK government's influence that will bring Guantanamo to its demise.

However, while progress was made in one arena, in other developments regarding Britain's very own 'mini Guantanamo', the new Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, in conjuring up a response to the recent House of Lords ruling that condemned the practice of indefinite detention without trial of foreign nationals, announced that all terror suspects will be subjected to what he called executive-imposed "control orders". These have already been dubbed anti-terrorism ASBOs and include curfews, tagging and being placed under indefinite house arrest.

FAIR has tirelessly lobbied the Government to have the indefinite detention laws repealed. We are very disappointed that what now has been proposed makes for no progress whatsoever. Indefinite detention without trial is still in place, albeit not always in a prison, but the very essence of our rule of law requires, 'no man should be punished or lawfully interfered with by the authorities except for breaches of law'. Once again there need be no charge; evidence will be untested and unknown to the suspects or their lawyers. All practices which have been highly condemned. The government has claimed that its interest lies in protecting their security sources.

Samar Mashadi stated, "If we are to truly protect the British state from any acts of terrorism, the government must be aware that as well as wanting to quite rightly protect their security staff, this must not be done at the expense of someone who may be entirely innocent. Protecting a nation from acts of terrorism should always be high on the agenda, but nothing that has been proposed is proportionate". She continued by adding, "Indefinite detention is a measure that has no place in 21st century democracy, we seem to be sanctioning what we have been condemning around the world, this practice must be immediately stopped".

[Ends]

Notes to editors:

1. See FAIR's previous submissions calling for review of anti-terror legislation.

<http://www.fairuk.org/policy.htm>

2. Intelligence services of the United States, France, Israel, Canada and Australia have allowed the contention of secret evidence in courts, with no threat to its security services. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/leaders/story/0,3604,1399206,00.html>

FAIR FUNDING APPEAL

FAIR is an independent charitable organisation established for the purpose of raising awareness of and combating Islamophobia and racism, monitoring specific incidents of Islamophobia and racism, working towards eliminating religious and racial discrimination, and campaigning and lobbying on issues relevant to Muslims and other multi-ethnic, multi-faith communities in Britain.

We have several projects to address each of these areas.

1. Faith & Positive Images
2. Equality Casework Monitoring
3. Media & Popular Culture Watch
4. Policy Research & Lobbying

Further details on each of these projects are available on our website, <http://www.fairuk.org/>

FAIR is always in need of charitable donations in order to continue our work. Donations of any size are always valued and much appreciated. At the end of every year we will be able to give you a breakdown of exactly where the money you have donated is spent.

To make a donation, please visit our website at <http://www.fairuk.org/howtohelp.htm> or contact us on the details below

FAIR
Suite 11
Grove House
320 Kensal Road
London
W10 5BZ

t: 020 8969 7373
f: 020 8969 7358

e: fair@fairuk.org
w: <http://www.fairuk.org/>
Registered Charity No. 1100985

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