Miscarriages of JusticeUK (MOJUK)
22 Berners St, Birmingham B19 2DR
Tele: 0121- 507 0844 Email: mojuk@mojuk.org.uk Web: www.mojuk.org.uk

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John Bowden: I Leave Prison Unbroken My Political Integrity Uncompromised and Unyielding

On the 20th February, the Parole Board finally agreed to my release after forty years of my imprisonment and four previous parole hearings when my release was denied not because I represented a risk or danger to the public but because I was labelled an "anti-authoritarian" prisoner with links to anarchist and communist groups on the outside, specifically Anarchist Black Cross and the Revolutionary Communist Group.

Following a parole knockback of my release last year, I instigated a Judicial Review of the decision. Which although it did not succeed fired a judicial shot across the bows of the Parole Board and Ministry of Justice. And persuade them that future decisions on my release or not would have to be based on proper legal criteria. Specifically, whether my continued imprisonment could be justified in the Interests of public protection and-not just because I was labelled a "difficult prisoner" by the - prison authorities.

So, the parole panel considering my case in February of this year had to admit there was no real lawful justification for my continued imprisonment and so reluctantly agreed to my release. However, in its written decision, the Parole Board claimed that my "current risk factors" included "anti-authority views" and "attitudes supportive of the use of violence." It also wrote: "During your sentence, you have evidenced that you have a mistrust of those in authority and professionals have previously reported that if you felt unfairly treated or discriminated against, coupled with any engagement with anti-social peers, then this could increase your risk of violence. Your attitude towards authority and your personality characteristics have also been considered by professionals to present a potential challenge in your future risk management."

Focusing specifically on my contact with prisoner support on the outside the parole decision report says:. 'it is clear from official reports that you have passionate political views and during your sentence, you have engaged with groups that have been described as anarchist groups (specifically Anarchist Black Cross). You stated that these groups could be forthright and radical in their protests, but they were not terrorist groups and did not advocate violence.

You told the panel that you've had a lot of time on your hands in prison, and this has facilitated your contact with such groups and your general interest in criminal and social justice, equality, unfairness and inequality." It then concludes with "The panel accepted that your passion for standing up for people whom you believe need support is unlikely to impact adversely on your risk to the outside community. However, the panel was mindful that when you were previously at large having escaped you were helped considerably by associates you had met through these groups and therefore it would need to be borne in mind that you might be provided with assistance if you disengage with supervision in the community". However, in its final decision, the parole Board admitted that my actual risk or danger to the public was minimal and therefore there was no lawful reason why I should remain imprisoned, and on the 13th March the Ministry of Justice agreed to my release.

Despite 40 years of imprisonment I finally emerge from prison unbroken and my political integrity uncompromised and unyielding, and I want to deeply thank all the comrades who have supported me during my long imprisonment and provided me with the strength to maintain my struggle, especially comrades in Anarchist Black Cross and the Revolutionary Communist Group. I salute you, comrades! *John Bowden Out and About*

Response to Government Plans Not to Prosecute Acts of Torture After 5 Years

On Wednesdaty 18th March 2020 – the Government published legislation which would create a presumption against prosecution for any acts of torture undertaken by UK personnel which took place more than five years ago. Amnesty International UK, Freedom From Torture, Liberty, REDRESS, the Rendition Project, Reprieve, and Rights Watch UK, issued the following joint response: "It cannot be right that the UK will not prosecute acts of torture if they took place more than five years ago. For decades the UK military has opposed the use of torture and enshrined this in the army field manual and MoD doctrine. The UK and its armed forces helped establish standards like the Geneva Convention after the atrocities of world war two and the horrors of the holocaust, and every day British personnel risk their lives to uphold these standards. The erosion of global rules against torture would put UK personnel at risk by endangering British soldiers detained by foreign forces overseas. Any perceived license to torture will compromise our cooperation with military allies who maintain categorical opposition to such abuses. The Government should act on the suggestion in its previous consultation on this issue, and make clear there will be no quarter or concession for those who engage in torture."

Law in the Time of Coronavirus

UK Human Rights Blog: The coronavirus-19 pandemic gives rise to such a volume of material as to justify a slightly more detailed examination of its consequences. In time, the response of governments across the globe to the disease will no doubt be the subject of detailed study by academics across the fields of biology, history and law. For the time being, however, blog readers will have to tolerate the following words of speculation, much of which will probably suffer the cruel fate of being shown to be out of date and/or inaccurate within hours of publication.

In particular, the impact on criminal justice may be significant. Israel has already suspended criminal trials, which is presumably convenient given the Prime Minister was due to attend one today on charges of fraud, breach of trust and bribery. Similarly, the Australian state of Victoria has suspended all jury trials due to the risk of transmission during the process of empanelling jurors. Should the virus begin to spread in British jails, the head of the Prison Officer's Association has stated that prisoners may need to be released early.

How the UK's already stretched criminal justice system will accommodate this in the context of widespread anticipated absences due to illness amongst court staff, judges and lawyers remains to be seen. If trials are delayed, aready happening in Northern Ireland, no new Jury trials, concerns must exist around custody time limits and prolonged periods of detention without charge. Similarly, how can an individual's right to justice delivered at a public hearing under the ECHR be maintained at a time when the rest of society is taking measures to prevent the movement and mixing of individuals?

The government has announced its intention to bring before Parliament this week emergency laws to help control the outbreak. Whilst at the time of writing, such draft legislation had not been published, press reports suggested it would include new powers to allow the police to detain those breaking quarantine measures. Where the police might take such recalcitrant citizens is not known, however the prospect of detaining in close proximity those suspected of carrying the highly infectious airborne disease presumably fills neither the police nor public health officials with much joy.

At present, a constable's powers of arrest are premised on the concept of committing "an offence" (s 24 PACE 1984). It would presumably be possible to define breaking quarantine as an offence, although this would obviously require the individual concerned to know they were subject to quarantine measures in order for them to regulate their behaviour accordingly. Whether

or not such a status would be imposed upon them (i.e. by a doctor telling the patient they were to be legally quarantined) or, as the government introduced last week, by the patient self-identifying as subject to quarantine, would be fundamental to how the legislation functions.

The former would likely exert a heavy burden on medical staff, reducing the number of people subject to quarantine and limiting its effectiveness as a public health tool. The later approach, thus far the one employed by the government, would require the citizen to conduct their own assessment of whether or not their behaviour is criminal against a set of medical criteria with which the majority are likely to be unfamiliar. Unlike most criminal offences, the unacceptability of which are usually reflected in a degree of consensus across society, such an exercise would require the individual to assess their conduct on a matter which previously would have been within the field of personal judgement rather than criminality. The scope for innocent infringements in asking people to assess whether their cough is "new and persistent" would thus seem high.

An alternative would be to introduce legislation akin to s 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983, affording novel powers to the police to remove those they consider unwell. Such an approach would not however be without its own problems. If the purpose is to dissuade mentally competent citizens from breaking quarantine, it would seem sensible to attach a punishment or deterrence to non-compliance. The Mental Health Act quite rightly does not function in this way. Furthermore, the MHA 1983, broadly speaking, acts as an instrument by which people can be removed from free society and committed for treatment because the very nature of their condition makes their consent to such a process unreliable. How similar legislation would act for a physical condition, and how those detained for breaking quarantine could be held and for what purpose, is unclear.

Quarantine measures are not the only legal sphere in which the impact of Covid-19 is being felt. The Guardian reported that cleaners at a hospital in Lewisham walked out over pay, however tensions were heightened because of the risk posed by the disease. Employers have a responsibility to protect employees under health and safety legislation from dangers in respect of the work they do, yet personal protective equipment in hospitals is in short supply. The outbreak raises the question of what steps are reasonable for employers to take to protect their workers. S 100(1)(d) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 establishes that where an employee is dismissed for leaving work or refusing to return in circumstances where the employee reasonably believed there to be a serious and imminent danger, it will constitute unfair dismissal. Will a doctor, or a nurse, be in breach of their contract if they refuse to work? Is a higher standard expected of those individuals than say, a hospital cleaner, or a waiter in a restaurant?

It may be that ultimately, whilst employment law confers protection on such individuals, their own professional regulators do not. It is not hard to imagine the General Medical or Nursing and Midwifery Councils holding their members to a higher standard than that required by their employment contracts, and deeming those who have fallen below it to have brought the profession into disrepute. Many members of the public might consider such an approach to be quite reasonable. Yet could such an analysis extend to other professions with similar regulators? Would a teacher who felt keeping schools open in an epidemic was unreasonable and refused to teach be subject to disciplinary proceedings? Or a lawyer who refused to attend a public hearing?

In particular, the impact on criminal justice may be significant. Israel has already suspended criminal trials, which is presumably convenient given the Prime Minister was due to attend one tomorrow on charges of fraud, breach of trust and bribery. Similarly, the Australian state of Victoria has suspended all jury trials due to the risk of transmission during the process of empanelling jurors. Should the virus begin to spread in British jails, the head of the Prison Officer's Association has stated

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As with speculation concerning the public health response, a lot of this is conjecture. The outbreak may worsen, or it may settle down. What seems likely however is that the next few months will bring numerous challenges, and the fleet footed responses required will likely require a radical departure from previous norms.

Secret Policy Change by CPS Cut Number Of Rape Trials

Owen Bowcott and Caelainn Barr, Guardian: A legal challenge over alleged changes to Crown Prosecution Service policy on bringing charges in rape cases has been dismissed by the high court. The judges, Dame Victoria Sharp, president of the Queen's Bench Division, and Lord Justice Singh, denied permission for the case to proceed to a full hearing on Tuesday. The challenge by a coalition of victims' organisation sought to prove that the CPS had raised the bar for charging suspects in rape cases. The high court heard arguments that there had been a "precipitous drop" in the number of rape cases brought to trial due to a secret and unlawful change in policy adopted by the CPS.

The CPS adopted an internal conviction rate target of 60% of cases charged and became increasingly risk averse although it consulted with no one outside the organisation about the new approach, Phillippa Kaufmann QC told judges. Her application on behalf of the End Violence Against Women Coalition follows concern over steep falls in rape charges and convictions in recent years at a time when an increasing number of women have been making rape complaints to police.

"This change [in policy] was brought about in secrecy and no one was told even afterwards," Kaufmann told the court. The changes were introduced from late 2016 after an internal review by the CPS's director of legal services, Gregor McGill, it was alleged. It resulted in refresher training of prosecutors that in effect abandoned the established policy of a what is known as a "merits-based approach" to assessing whether to charge suspects in rape cases, Kaufmann said. "The easiest way to [raise the conviction rate]," she added, "is to whip out those cases that are a bit weaker … No one knew about it until it was leaked by an individual inside the CPS." The consequence, Kaufmann said, was that some prosecutors reverted what had been known as the bookmakers' approach – guessing the probability of a jury convicting on the evidence and becoming reluctant to press ahead with more difficult rape cases.

However, the CPS, which successfully, resisted the challenge, argued that courts should not become "an arbiter of prosecutorial policy". In written submissions, lawyer for the director of public prosecutions (DPP), Max Hill QC, said it was factually wrong to allege that prosecutors have now adopted a "bookmaker's test" approach. The CPS maintained that the courts should dismiss the claim at this preliminary stage and not proceed to a full judicial review of the arguments. "There has not been a change in policy," Tom Little QC, for the DPP, told the court. "The fall on conviction rates is due to a far wider range of factors involving the police that are now the subject of a government review."

Rape victims who donated to the legal challenge, because they felt failed by the CPS, are set to see their donations go towards the institution's legal costs. The CPS is pursuing legal

costs against the women's rights' charity the End Violence Against Women Coalition, and asked for a request to cap legal costs to be denied. The CPS were awarded £35,000 – £41, 000 in legal costs by judges ruling on the request for a judicial review into the claims.

The coalition's director, Sarah Green, said: "We have no regrets about bringing this case. It was the right thing to do, and it was entirely necessary to challenge our justice system institutions when they are failing to keep women safe and deliver access to justice. "We have been approached by so many women who have been let down by the CPS as we prepared this case. We know there are really serious problems. But instead of working with us, the CPS chose to fight us. "It is a long way from the kind of leadership we need in our public institutions The CPS is arguably failing to keep with the times on expectations for justice after sexual violence. The situation as it is cannot hold, it amounts to the effective decriminalisation of rape."

The charity received hundreds of donations, many for £10 and £20, via a crowd justice campaign ahead of the hearing. Many messages left with the donations were from women who said they had been raped but denied justice. One donor wrote: "Having been through the system myself and being failed on every level I so wish you every success." Under the anonymous donation of £10, someone simply wrote: "I never got justice." The legal challenge also received £10,000 from the family of Jill Saward, the Ealing rape victim who became a leading figure in the fight against sexual violence.

Harriet Wistrich, director of the Centre for Women's Justice, who supported the claim, said: "We are deeply, deeply disappointed that [the judges] didn't see there was a basis on which the case arguable. "We feel they were just not prepared to grapple with all the detail and ultimately they saw it as a factual dispute. The court was not prepared to get involved." Wistrich said they were considering appealing against the ruling at the court of appeal. "We don't see this as a loss because we think we won in the court of public opinion." On the heavy costs of £41,000 imposed on the claimants, she added: " It's astounding that the CPS have pushed for as much in costs against a small women's charity."

Right to Silence in Cases of Contempt

Christopher Sykes, Doughty Street Chambers: The Court of Appeal hashanded down judgment in Andreewitch v Moutreuil [2020] EWCA Civ 382. The courts have long since recognised the "absolute right of a person accused of contempt to remain silent" (Comet v Hawkex [1971] 2 QB 67). The Andreewitch judgment establishes that a judge must warn alleged contemnors of that right before they give oral evidence. The dispute between Mr Andreewitch (PA) and Ms Moutreuil (MM) arose from family proceedings. In brief, MM applied to have PA committed for contempt due to his alleged breach of a freezing order. PA attended the contempt proceedings as a litigant in person. The judge strove for procedural fairness but did not warn PA of his right to silence. PA went on to give oral evidence that harmed his case. The judge subsequently ruled that PA had indeed been in contempt.

PA argued on appeal that the judge should have warned him of his right to silence before he gave oral evidence. Counsel for MM argued that the absence of this warning was a technical fault, especially since PA was an experienced litigant. That fault did not invalidate the fairness of the proceedings. I argued on behalf of PA that the right to silence is at the heart of fair procedure. It is an essential safeguard that should be available to all alleged contemnors, but especially litigants in person.

The Court found in favour of the Appellant: 16. The starting point when striking the balance in this case is the duty upon a court hearing committal proceedings to ensure that the accused person is made aware that they are not obliged to give evidence and also warned that adverse

consequences or inferences may arise from exercising the right to silence. Those messages may indeed contain a tension, but what matters is that the choice of how to proceed belongs to the litigant and not to the other party or to the court. This is of particular importance when the litigant is unrepresented, and it does not apply any the less to the seasoned litigant in person, or to the litigant who appears eager to enter the witness box. The last mentioned individual may be the one who most needs to be reminded of his or her rights. [W]hat matters is that the choice of how to proceed belongs to the litigant and not to the other party or to the court.

Andreewitch is significant for emphasising that the court must ensure an alleged contemnor is clearly warned of their right to silence. Those who hear the warning may decide it is better to stay silent and be thought to be in contempt, rather than speak up and remove all doubt. "78. Before any court embarks on hearing a committal application, whether for a contempt in the face of the court or for breach of an order, it should ensure that the following matters are at the forefront of its mind: (1) There is complete clarity at the start of the proceedings as to precisely what the foundation of the alleged contempt is: contempt in the face of the court, or breach of an order. (2) Prior to the hearing the alleged contempt should be set out clearly in a document or application that complies with FPR rule 37 and which the person accused of contempt has been served with. (3) If the alleged contempt is founded on breach of a previous court order, the person accused had been served with that order, and that it contained a penal notice in the required form and place in the order. (4) Whether the person accused of contempt has been given the opportunity to secure legal representation, as they are entitled to. (5) Whether the judge hearing the committal application should do so, or whether it should be heard by another judge. (6) Whether the person accused of contempt has been advised of the right to remain silent. (7) If the person accused of contempt chooses to give evidence, whether they have been warned about self-incrimination. (8) The need to ensure that in order to find the breach proved the evidence must meet the criminal standard of proof, of being sure that the breach is established. (9) Any committal order made needs to set out what the findings are that establish the contempt of court, which are the foundation of the court's decision regarding any committal order. 79. Counsel and solicitors are reminded of their duty to assist the court. This is particularly important when considering procedural matters where a person's liberty is at stake." The revised procedure rules that are currently subject to consultation should be a further source of assistance for litigants, lawyers and judges in ensuring the procedural integrity of committal proceedings.

Met Police Officers 'Shredded Documents Linked to Undercover Policing Inquiry'

Lizzie Dearden, Independent: Metropolitan Police officers shredded documents that could be relevant to a probe into alleged abuses by undercover police, a watchdog has found. Members of a "domestic extremism" unit destroyed material after an order was sent out telling officers to preserve anything relating to the Undercover Policing Inquiry (UCPI). The probe, which was announced in 2014 amid public outrage over accusations that officers took fake identities from dead children, has been beset by delays and legal arguments. The first evidence hearings were scheduled to start in June, but have been postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak. But the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) said it had completed three investigations into allegations against members of the Met's National Domestic Extremism and Disorder Intelligence Unit (NDEDIU), which operated between May 2013 and November 2015.

"We also found that a former officer would have had a case to answer for gross misconduct had they still been serving, for failure to take action after being informed that a unit within the MPS may have destroyed material relevant to the UCPI," a spokesperson added. The IOPC

found Scotland Yard had not been clear about what materials should be retained and did not bring its guidance “forcefully to the attention of officers” or use clear procedures in May 2014. The second investigation examined a complaint by Green Party politician Baroness Jenny Jones. She claimed that in 2014, the NDEDIU destroyed information relating to her after she made subject access requests in an effort to find out if she had been targeted with intelligence gathering. The IOPC concluded that there was “insufficient evidence that any of the subject officers breached the standards of professional behaviour regarding material related to Lady Jones”, but said there were references to her on the unit’s database. Lady Jones called the decision “infuriating” and accused the government of failing to hold the police to account, while giving them increased powers over coronavirus.

“My name should never have been on this database, nor should the names of thousands of other people who had broken no law and simply had beliefs that the police saw as radical," she added. “These investigations were hindered all the way by a lack of cooperation and there are numerous unanswered questions." Her barriester Jules Carey, of Bindmans, said the IOPC's findings would " further promote the view that this was a unit that was out of control". A third investigation found no evidence of allegations that NDEDIU staff sourced email passwords from counterparts in India and used them to unlawfully access and monitor email accounts of environmental activists and journalists. Sarah Green, regional director of the IOPC, said the watchdog “uncovered serious failings” in the NDEDIU. “It is extremely unfortunate that a number of former police managers have refused to engage with this investigation to provide evidence about what steps, if any, were taken to ensure the documents were preserved for the inquiry,” she added. “The investigation had no power to compel them to do so, although the inquiry may do if it considers their evidence on these issues may be relevant.”

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police said it had “provided every assistance to the IOPC throughout its investigation”. The force said that when the UCPI was announced, officers and staff were notified of the need to preserve documents by email, an internal website and supervisor briefings. “We are fully aware of our legal obligations and duties in respect of assisting public inquiries, and we are not complacent in making sure staff and officers know what they should do with material which may be useful for an inquiry,” a statement added. “The Met has provided over one million pages of documents to the UCPI since it was announced in 2014, and we will continue to cooperate fully.” “We will take on board the IOPC’s feedback around how the instruction to retain certain documents was communicated and enforced, and continue to review how we do this going forward to ensure the procedures are as robust as possible.”

The inquiry was established more than five years ago by Theresa May, then the home secretary, amid public outrage over accusations that officers took fake identities from dead children, had relationships with campaigners and fathered children while undercover. In 2017, it revealed officers had been deployed to spy on more than 1,000 groups, political organisations and gangs. High-profile cases include that of Mark Kennedy, who spent years posing as an activist known as Mark Stone to infiltrate environmental campaigns. Other targeted groups include anti-war activists, animal rights organisations, the far right and far left, and anti-racism campaigners. The UCPI aims to investigate “serious and widespread concerns about the behaviour and the use of undercover police officers” stretching back to 1968.

The inquiry has not yet heard any evidence, amid pushes by police forces for hearings to be held in private and the identities of officers involved to be withheld. The first hearings were scheduled to start in June, but on Tuesday officials announced that they had been postponed

because of new government advice on coronavirus. They were to focus on officers and managers active in the Special Demonstration Squad between 1968 and 1982. Sir John Mitting, chair of the inquiry, said: “The majority of proposed witnesses from whom the inquiry would expect to hear at that time are in the group identified as being subject to increased risk from infection, and the necessary preparation for and attendance at a hearing venue would expose them to an unacceptable threat of infection.” He said the inquiry’s investigative work would continue, with the aim of holding evidence hearings in September or “as soon as possible”.

Torture and 'Bribery': Extradition of Manchester Bomber's Brother

Nazia Parveen, Guardian: It took more than two years for British diplomats to secure the extradition of Hashem Abedi, the brother of the Manchester Arena bomber, amid claims the UK government paid £9m in “bribery” aid and was complicit in his torture under Boris Johnson’s watch as foreign secretary. Abedi, now 22, the younger of the two brothers, was arrested in Libya alongside his father, Ramadan, shortly after his older brother, Salman, carried out the attack on 22 May 2017. Counter-terrorism officers had been granted a warrant for Abedi’s arrest – so he could face mass murder charges for his role in planning the deadliest terrorist attack on UK soil since the 7/7 bombings – but it would take them years to negotiate his extradition.

In closed court hearings, which could not be reported under UK law until the jury reached its verdict, the British government was accused of bribing Libyan authorities with a multimillion pound aid deal in return for Abedi’s extradition. Abedi was finally extradited in July 2019, almost two years after Boris Johnson – the then foreign secretary – visited Tripoli and allegedly offered a £9.2mpackage to help Libya deal with the terrorist threat and tackle illegal migration. During the visit in August 2017, Johnson’s second to the country in less than six months, he met the prime minister, Fayyez Al-Serraj, the foreign minister, Mohamed Siala, and the president of Libya’s high state council, Abdurrahman Swehli. The four men discussed how the UK could support Libya in combating terrorism.

However, Abedi’s barrister, Stephen Kamlish, told the Old Bailey in London that the aid money was a bribe to secure his client’s extradition, and that the process had been illegal under Libyan law. “The British were effectively having to bribe the Libyans,” he said. After their arrest, Abedi and his father were held by Rada Special Deterrence Force, the most powerful of Tripoli’s militias, at its base at Mitiga airport alongside dozens of other terrorist suspects and fighters. With the jail being repeatedly attacked by rival militias trying to free their members, the race to extradite Abedi to the UK began.

In October 2017, the then British ambassador to Libya, Peter Millett, handed over extradition documents to the Libyan attorney general beginning the “long drawn-out process”. One of the obstacles was that the extradition request was made under a treaty, signed during the Muammar Gaddafi era, which does not allow Libya to extradite its own nationals to the UK. One western source said Abedi had entered Libya on a British passport, and that Libya’s justice officials had eventually decided he could be regarded as British and extradited within the terms of the treaty.

In an account reminiscent of episodes in which British security services were implicated in serious human rights abuses in the years after 9/11, Abedi claimed he was held in solitary confinement from the moment he was arrested. Shackled and blindfolded, he was allegedly forced to sign a 40-page confession with a fingerprint under “extreme duress”. Officers from MI5 and MI6 visited him twice at the detention centre that his British lawyers described as “a torture establishment”. His claims of torture were supported by medical evidence, including photographs

taken by a British consular official showing marks on his back, arms and ankles. He is also said to have been taken from the detention centre to a clinic for treatment to a groin injury.

Kamlish said MI5 and MI6 must have known Abedi was being tortured but they continued to feed questions to his torturers on key aspects of the UK investigation. He said: “He was arrested the day after the bombing, and until the end of May he was asked questions about people in Manchester and addresses, none of which could have been known to his [Libyan] torturers – it would not have been possible. “They must have received the questions from either Operation Manteline [the name of the Manchester bombing investigation] or the security services or both. Those questions under torture went on for almost a month.”

Abedi’s older brother, Ismail, who remained in the UK, had alerted the British government that his sibling and father were being tortured in Libyan custody. At one point, Kamlish said, British intelligence officers questioned Abedi in the presence of members of the militia that was allegedly torturing him. After Abedi signed the confession on 23 June 2017 the worst of the torture allegedly ceased, the court was told. Kamlish alleged the extradition in conjunction with Abedi’s torture amounted to an abuse of process and called for the trial to be halted. The prosecuting lawyers did not deny the allegation of British complicity in Abedi’s torture but went on to successfully argue that his trial should proceed regardless of his treatment in Tripoli.

In the aftermath of 9/11, British intelligence officers were repeatedly implicated in involvement with intelligence agencies known to use torture, but these allegations were routinely denied by the government. However, the UK parliament’s intelligence and security committee confirmed in 2018 that MI5 and MI6 officers had engaged in human rights abuses, but concluded these abuses were a historical issue. An apology was issued to a Libyan couple for the British security services’ involvement in their kidnap and rendition to Tripoli, and a second Libyan family received an out-of-court settlement after bringing proceedings over MI6’s involvement in their kidnap. Since 2017, a judge known as the investigatory powers commissioner has been responsible for reporting to the government on whether intelligence officers are following the appropriate guidance. However, his report covering the period when Abedi was allegedly being tortured raised no serious concerns.

Strippers are 'Workers' Not Independent Contractors

UVW and Decrim Now are celebrating after a judge at an employment tribunal ruled that dancers in a London strip clubs Browns and Horns have worker status. Until now, dancers were misclassified as 'independent contractors', which means they had no access to even the most basic rights at work. The new ruling now opens the door for dancers to claim workers' rights such as paid annual leave, a guaranteed pay for all hours worked, the right to take maternity or sick leave without the risk of termination, protection against workplace harassment and the right to organise through a trade union. The club owners defended their claim that the dancers were not workers, but the tribunal rejected this claim.

Sonia Nowak, the claimant in this case, said: "I'm really happy about the ruling. I hope this is a great beginning for all dancers, who will now see that we can fight for our rights. In the current system, we followed club rules and instructions, but had no rights or protections. For example dancers had to pay a fine for missing a shift if they were ill or had no childcare and on bad days, dancers paid more in house fees than they earned in a whole shift. Accepting we are workers means that we can have the same rights as people in all other industries."

Shiri Shalmy, union organiser for the strippers branch, said: "This is a significant victory for the

strippers union and all workers in the gig economy. Our members, organising in strip clubs and pubs across the UK, are delighted by the ruling and inspired to increase their unionising efforts. We look forward to working together with the club owners on implementing the small adjustments that would make Browns and Horns the first workplaces where dancers have proper rights at work."

Ava Caradonna, an organiser with Decrim Now, said: "Decrim Now is delighted by this verdict – it is our first big victory for our legal strategy. Decrim Now has always seen sex workers' struggle for decriminalisation and safety as intertwined with workplace organising, and this verdict shows that when we organise, we win. Sex workers deserve workers' rights like all other workers, and these demands are increasingly unignorable".

Anna, a sex worker involved with Decrim Now, said: "This victory is so inspiring. Sex workers and other women are working together to create the Sex/Work Strike on International Women's Day, and to get this affirmation that sex workers are entitled to workers' rights in the final days before the strike will light a fire under our organising. With sex workers organising to claim rights such as maternity pay and protection against workplace sexual harassment, it should be clear that the struggle for sex worker rights is a workers' rights struggle and a feminist struggle". Decrim Now and the union work in close coalition, alongside other feminist groups, to campaign for worker status for all eligible dancers.

Sorce: Strippers Union United Voices of the World and sex worker advocacy group Decrim

Veronica Logan’s Drugs Conviction Quashed Over ‘Unfair’ Police Questioning

Scottish Legal News: A woman found guilty of being concerned in the supplying of heroin and speed after the drugs were found during a police search of her home has had her conviction quashed following an appeal. The Appeal Court of the High Court of Justiciary ruled that the sheriff erred in refusing a preliminary challenge to the admissibility of the evidence recovered because the police failed to caution the appellant before questioning her. Lord Menzies, Lord Malcolm and Lord Turnbull heard that the appellant Veronica Logan was convicted in September 2019 appellant was convicted on three charges of being concerned in the supplying of the controlled drugs Etizolam, Diamorphine and Amphetamine following a trial at Falkirk Sheriff Court. The evidence led against the appellant comprised the recovery of quantities of these drugs with a minimum value of around £32,000 at her flat at 22 Douglas Street Bannockburn on 4 February 2019.

However, prior to her trial the appellant raised a preliminary issue under section 71(2) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 objecting to the admissibility of the evidence. The court was told that on 27 January 2019 an anonymous call was made to Police Scotland by a male caller, who reported that he had been called by a female named Veronica 20 or 22 Douglas Street, Bannockburn asking for his help, stating that she had been forced to house £250,000 worth of valium in her house.

Attempts by officers to test the veracity of the information conveyed by the anonymous caller were unsuccessful and senior officers concluded that the source of information was insufficiently reliable to request the procurator fiscal to seek a search warrant. In these circumstances two uniformed officers came to be tasked to visit the accused to enquire after her welfare and if she was being coerced into criminality against her will.

The evidence accepted by the sheriff was that after the two police officers were invited to join the appellant in her bedroom, where one officer told her that they were there to check on her welfare as they had received information that she was being coerced into holdings drugs against her will. She was asked whether by the other officer she was being coerced into storing drugs, to which she

replied: “That’s not the case”. The officer then said: “We are not here to get you into trouble, are you being coerced into doing anything, will you be honest with us so we can help you?” The appellant didn’t answer but became visibly upset, following which the officer said: “I’m getting the impression you want to tell us something, are you being coerced into storing drugs?”

At this stage the appellant said she had two bags while pulling the cover off two bags on the floor and lifting them up onto the bed, and the officers could see that they contained white tablets. At that point the appellant was cautioned, said nothing incriminating, was arrested and taken to Falkirk Police Station. Thereafter the officers obtained a search warrant and the formal recovery of the items took place. At the trial, the only evidence led was in the form of a joint minute of agreement which set out that the various controlled drugs were recovered from the appellant’s property in the course of a search carried out under warrant on 4 February 2019 in her presence. The joint minute having been read, the sheriff directed the jury that they were required to find the accused guilty, which they duly did.

The appellant appealed, arguing that the evidence as to the comments made by the appellant and the evidence recovered as a result of what she said was “inadmissible” and the sheriff “erred” in refusing to uphold the preliminary issue minute. It was submitted that the evidence which the sheriff accepted made it plain that the appellant was suspected of being involved in criminal activity by the police prior to their arrival at her home, meaning she ought to have been cautioned before being questioned at all.

Furthermore, it was submitted that the officers “deliberately misled” the appellant as to the purpose of their questions, having contended that they were there to help her and not to get her into trouble, when the reality was that when she confirmed their suspicions she was immediately arrested. In the whole circumstances it was argued the evidence ought not to have been admitted as it was obtained in circumstances which were “unfair” to the appellant Allowing the appeal, the judges ruled that the sheriff “erred” in his assessment of whether or not the evidence objected to was admissible.

Delivering the opinion of the court, Lord Turnbull said: “In our opinion, the combination of a failure to caution the appellant at any stage and the encouragement given to her to respond upon the premise that the police officers would provide her with help, resulted in unfairness such as ought to have led to the objection being upheld. The appeal shall be allowed and the appellant’s conviction quashed.”

Surrealism of the Information War

Gilbert Mercier, Junkie Post: The flow of knowledge and information is commonly considered the main vector of humanity’s progress through history. One would think that in our era, which is rightly called the time of the information super-highway, the sheer mass of information available to all humans, anywhere at any given time, would have exponentially increased our understanding of our world and each other. This is, however, not the case. As a matter of fact, paradoxically, one can easily argue that an overload of information has made the majority of people not more but less knowledgeable, less critical, more isolated, and more alienated from themselves and each other. The control and manipulation of narrative in the era of the information war has created a universal malaise that reaches even basic human issues such as masculine-feminine identities.

Well-compensated propagandists package information and ideas like products for mass consumption. The advance of technology was supposed to free mankind; instead it has created invisible chains. The fact of being constantly wired is an assault on our free will and

cognitive functions, which behavioral information warriors study and harvest, to put them in giant blenders where all comes out inoffensive and predictable. The goal is to turn the rich and diverse human experience into a tasteless and colorless intellectual mush, and then make it palatable with artificial additives. Foie gras is considered a French gastronomic delicacy. It is nevertheless a form of cultural perversity. In the process, the geese are force-fed, to provoke a cirrhosis of their liver. In many ways, the gatekeepers of mainstream information use the same force feeding technique with people’s brains.

Unless people tightly lock themselves mentally into the delusions of dogmas, either religious or ideological, and seek comfort in a universe of magical thinking, the truth is never an absolute. This being said, in order to allow an acceptable level of conviviality in human society, thinkers should seek truth in the subjective reality while knowing that the holy grail of pure truth is the ultimate lie. If one would be so naive or foolish enough to think he has found the absolute truth, looking at it would be like staring straight into the sun at midday, without shields and with eyes wide open, for a full hour. In the process, the believer of absolute truth would go blind.

For anyone who is neither blind nor fully color blind, the distinction between a red object and a green one is not only instantaneous but also unquestionable. The difference between green and red is not open to interpretation or debate. It is in the rare realm of tangible facts. Staying in the field of the color spectrum: all hues of green in the natural world are a secondary color that can be obtained by mixing the primary colors yellow and blue. Green can be argued endlessly to contain more yellow than blue, or vice versa, as well as a fraction of black, white, or brown to alter the shades and tones. In nature or on an artist’s palette, there are countless shades of green and our perception of these shades, while it can be analyzed and quantified scientifically, is largely subjective.

Colors, just like words, have an emotional impact. Hospital walls and other medical facilities are often painted in light tones of greenish-blue, for their soothing effect on people. Bright red has the opposite impact. It is used to attract maximum attention either from traffic lights, bull fights or firetrucks. And so greens are the calming hues of nature and relaxation, whereas reds are synonymous with alarm, blood, excitement, and sometimes the anger and urgency of an adrenaline rush, as illustrated by the popular expression “seeing red.” The near-infinite range of the color spectrum is similar to the countless narratives expressed by languages. In linguistics, words and their clumsy or astute associations are used to convey information or emotions. Like colors, words carry messages, fragments of information that impact people differently and cannot be objectively quantified. It’s all “in the eye of the beholder.”

One can make an analogy between the false notion of an absolute truth and the vanishing point in a perspective drawing. A vanishing point is an optical illusion, just like the concept of pure truth is a cognitive illusion. In our surreal predicament of fake-news for some, which are true-news for others, it is as if we have moved into an absurd and nightmarish three-dimensional drawing with a multitude of vanishing points designed by the generals of the global information wars.

The people who conduct the information war are numerous. They can be the global media moguls like Rupert Murdoch; the journalists employed by corporate entities or governments; the policymakers who build a considerable influence within countless so-called think-tanks; the elected politicians and their cohorts of advisers and lobbyists; the super-rich businessmen, philanthropists in their own eyes, such as Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos, Bob Mercer, George Soros and Pierre Omidyar, who want to impact world affairs; and even show-business celebrities. All have deep pockets and want maximum impact in the fight to shape the discourse and steer public opinion, often globally, in the directions that suit their specific needs.

Unless they are ideologues, the information warriors are mercenaries. Therefore it is money that shapes the global mainstream discourse in television, radio, newspapers and social media. Independent or dissident narratives are generally squashed by a lack of public exposure. The money talks and writes as the viewer-readers, hypnotized by a multitude of screens, become mere consumers to be sold, convinced, or subliminally seduced into a specific mindset. The job of the information warriors is to observe, condition, and predict behaviors. In this massive brainwash of the public, big money is at the same time the washing machine and laundry detergent.

Gates and Soros openly sponsor the prime fake-left publication, The Guardian; Bezos owns The Washington Post; and the Murdoch press empire's crown jewel is Fox News. Other information warriors who claim to know the truth are on the fringe, at least in appearance. This is the case for media provocateur Alex Jones, who has claimed in court to be a performance artist, but who is nonetheless adulated by millions worldwide and treated like a Guru of truthful information. Jones runs, with his trademark manic energy, the raucous populist far-right conspiracy-theory laced Infowars. Mercer's money gave birth to the populist far-right site Breitbart. Meanwhile Omidyar sponsors the soft-left, so-called progressive publication, The Intercept. All these lead information warriors want to take as many people as will follow them to their own vanishing points, on a journey towards their illusionary truth.

In their confusion and thirst for truth, people get caught like flies on tasty propaganda glue. The intricate labyrinths built by the information warriors prevent the real discourse, which should be about how to survive the imminent systemic collapse of global capitalism. It cannot be otherwise when global corporate imperialism itself controls the discourse worldwide. Hypnotized by a myriad of vanishing points, humans might be on a course to vanish.

Coronavirus Aka Covid-19 A Panic Pandemic?

When President Donald Trump at his daily press conference on Wednesday 18 March 2020 used the phrase " ••• the Chinese flu" it was a déjà vu moment. In 1919 it was the then US President who called the flu epidemic that killed 50 million people worldwide the "Spanish Flu" only because it killed the leading member of Spain's Royal. Family. The so-called "Spanish flu" originated from a farm in Kentucky, USA and a farmworker who joined the US Military and took it to the trenches in France.

If anything, it should have been the "American Flu", but that would not have been good for the US Public Relations Machine post World War One.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson in his press conference on Thursday 19 March 2020 gave a semblance of Pandora's Box saying that "we can beat this flu thing in 12 weeks if all pull together and follow the direction of our experts."

As of Thursday, 19 March 2020 worldwide, there are some 207,000 retarded cases of Coronavirus and just over 8,600 deaths. Most of the deaths are in China, Italy and Spain. What is interesting to note that in, the whole of the African Continent, there are only 640 recorded cases and zero deaths. Of course, that figure might change, but it seems that Covid-19 is attracted to China, Italy and Spain. There are recorded cases in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and the mortality numbers are unfortunately rising. However, China, Italy and Spain are bearing the brunt of the 'attack'.

There are just under 8,000,000,000 people in the world. And a virus that has inhabited to date 207,000 in under three months should not be of any real concern.

Consider the facts and figures: - Since January 2020 deaths from Tuberculosis has been placed· at 314,000, deaths from HIV/AIDS. has been placed at 154,000, deaths from

Seasonal Flu has been placed at between 58,000 - 130,000, deaths from Malaria has been placed at 80,000, deaths from Coronavirus is 8,600

When one considers the facts and the evidence, as opposed to conjecture and speculation, the question that requires an immediate reply from all governments is simple: why all the panic? The advice from experts are relatively easy to follow: * Move around as much as possible in your' house or garden * Get fresh air regularly but do not leave your house * Drink plenty of water * Take paracetamol to "alleviate" the symptoms * Stay busy with activities in the house * Clean your toilet thoroughly each time you use it Those instructions do not seem to be from any kind of illness. Infection or disease that can remotely cause: * Europe USA/Canada to close its borders * Suspend flights worldwide * Keep citizens worldwide in a form of home detention * Wipe the Stock markets worldwide * Close all sports worldwide

Burt Bacharach wrote: *"What's it all about Alfie? Is it just for the moment we live?"*

What is known about Coronavirus that has achieved such a turmoil with journalists using superlatives galore in the damages caused by this virus?

What are required are facts and not scare stories. It is evident from the facts that tuberculosis kills many more people than Covid-19 because the deaths reported are from 9 January 2020. What is actually known about this crown-like pipsqueak that has placed the entire world on hold?

Corona is Latin for Crown, and the coronavirus is aptly named because when the virus is, viewed using electron microscopy, crown-like spikes are protruding from its surface which literally 'snatch' human cells. Once in the grip and bound to the cell, the spikes uncoil puncturing the cell wall so the virus can enter. Once in the cell, the virus releases a fragment of genetic material called ribonucleic acid (RNA), and the infected cell then responds by making proteins that foil or frustrate the immune system's attempts to attack it and as the infection progresses the cell machinery is ambushed and forced into making copies of the virus. They then target the protein molecules that make up the spike. The virus is hard to provide conventional vaccines such as those for Ebola and Zika because Covid-19 mutates rapidly. That is why flu vaccines have a seasonal lifespan.

What scientists have developed leads to the production of an essential vaccine which can be quickly, easily and cheaply tweaked to combat the genetic information from any newly emerged virus. In theory, it should thus be relatively easy to find a solution, and it follows that as President Trump has announced a miracle has happened. So, what is this miracle and all in record time?

The Sar's virus raged through, yet again, China in 2002-2004 and the Mers virus raged through Saudi Arabia in 2012. China and Saudi Arabia? Investigative journalists will have to look at the relationship between China-USA/UK in 2002-2004 and Saudi Arabia-USA/UK in 2012. Many questions will require proper explanations after proper research is carried out.

In 2002 when another strain of coronavirus (yes- it has been around a long time) it took almost two years for the U.S. health officials to start human testing for a vaccine. No one asked why the USA should want to look for a vaccine when Sar's was limited mostly, if not solely, to China. Could it be that the USA sought to profit on a calamity?

Why such interest in vaccines? What is a vaccine? Well, a vaccine works by pushing the body's immune system to recognise micro-organisms, including bacteria and viruses that cause disease. What a vaccine does is it tricks (defrauds if necessary) the body into thinking it is under attack. As with most vaccines, a dead or live form of the virus is grown inside living cells in a laboratory, then introduced into the body by injection. The immune system recognises the virus as "enemy" and creates extra proteins called antibodies to fight it off. If then a real virus attacks the body it is ·instantly recognised and attacks it.

The interesting aspect to all of this is quite concerning. On January 10, 2020 scientists in China cloned the new coronavirus that originated (accepted but not conceded) in Wuhan and published online a map of all its 30~000 plus genetic material or 'letters' of its genetic code. This is now the concerning factor: - other scientists around the world were all able to grow their synthetic version of the virus using the codes that the Chinese had posted online. That should have been solely for scrutinising it and trying to identify any potential weakness, but who knows?

By placing the information online, the Chinese tantamount gave to all and sundry a recipe for an atomic virus bomb. The Chinese did it with good intentions, but as all know the road to hell is paved with good intentions. China is now, it says, out of trouble with coronavirus and no new domestic cases are being reported whereas Italy and Spain are suffering the brunt of the mortality rates. So, what is being done concerning a solution? Both Trump and Johnson have announced discoveries of a vaccine which should soon be in circulation.

There are about 40 companies - the list is growing daily - of companies and institutions worldwide working 24/24 to develop a vaccine for commercial use. Moderna is Boston (USA) based and strangely backed by, yes you guessed it, UK investment, which has started human trials. The UK's Chief Scientific Officer has expressed how quick and significant progress is being made in the UK with a vaccine. CureVac from Germany has attracted the attention of the USA owing to Trump offering unlimited funding if the vaccines were made available exclusively" to the USA. CureVac has been promised 80 Million Euros from the European Commission and 50 Million Euro's from Bil and Melinda Gates Foundation to produce a vaccine quickly. Novavax, a US-based biotech company, is developing a new vaccine by tweaking those developed by the two previous coronaviruses, namely Sars and Mers.

Trump has undertaken that Covid-19 vaccine will be ready before, the presidential elections in November 2020. What a political goal that is which will for certain secure re-election. It will also secure the United States of America victory over the whole world without going to a state of war.

Whoever gets their first in the vaccine manufacture controls the world. That is what we are led to believe. That, however, will only work if we all believe that we are in such a danger that we need the cavalry to rescue us. You only need saving if you think you are going to die.

Moderna's share price has already hit the roof, so they are winners regardless. Strange to know that Moderna's vaccine research was funded by the Oslo based Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations a three-year-old partnership of governments (including the UK) industry and charities that were formed post-Sars/Ebola/Mers/Zika. The funding for Moderna and three other research facilities including one at Oxford University comes to some £2 billion.

With an average retail cost of between £500 - £1000 depending on how rich the country is and with a world population of 8 Billion it is easy to see the commercial sense.

Sars/Zika/Ebola/Mers were only local issues, yet they altered much around the world. But they were still only local issues. Ebola did not hit the UK or Italy. · A nurse contracted it but not in the UK.

Within days of the UK coming out of Europe and with a newly elected Conservative Government, it faced the "Covid-19" crisis. The whole world has been shut down owing to a virus that we are asked to help alleviate it paracetamol, costing some 20 pence for 16 tablets. *Can an ant really down a rubber tree plant?* Not by itself. What had to occur was that the whole world had to be indoctrinated into the "Goebbels" methodology of public relations. Make the public believe that there is an enemy, and they will fight it for you. To do that all other news had to be culled. So, all sporting events were called off worldwide, and the Japanese who want to go ahead with the Olympics are labelled serial killers on social media. There is no more talk on terrorism, Syria, Iraq, Isis, crime, and on the plus side, the environment is greener.

All the world news is about coronavirus 24/24 and as any good psychologist will tell you it is tantamount to catching the "Stockholm Syndrome" and the consequences thereof!. Two countries that seem to be more "in the know" as to how to deal with the covid-19 are the USA and the UK. Both Trump and Johnson are very cool, calm and confident, notwithstanding that China, Italy and Spain have to deal with the dead. The big question is how many copy that formula and grew in laboratories covid-19 virus? Who stands to profit from any vaccine and who has funded the search for the vaccine? Once some answers are forthcoming, and the panic stops then, and only then, can some form of normality be restored and any wrongdoings be prosecuted.

Giovanni Di Stefano, A9460CW, HMP Highpoint, Stradishall, Newmarket, CB8 9YG

CAJ Response to UK Government's 'New Approach' To Legacy

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) shares the dismay of victims' groups and others at the statement on legacy given by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

This statement appears to envisage the abandonment of the structures proposed in the Stormont House Agreement (SHA) in favour of a new 'fast-track' process, the detail of which is entirely unclear. It seems that this is a solo run by the UK government, which sits in direct contradiction to many commitments made in the past five years.

As recently as January 2020, in the New Decade, New Approach document, the UK Government reasserted its commitment to the Stormont House Agreement. Barely two months later, it appears to be reneging on this. There is a level of vagueness in the statement from the NIO and it is still possible that sensible proposals will emerge. However, in the absence of swift and positive clarification, it looks as if, for the British government, truth, justice and good faith come a poor second to grubby political calculation. Though dressed up as best meeting the needs of all victims, it has been apparent for some time that this shift in policy is really grounded in shielding the actions of security forces from meaningful investigation and scrutiny.

The same can be said for the approach to human rights violations by the UK military elsewhere, as embodied in today's Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill. This bill limits the application of the Human Rights Act by courts in NI and therefore conflicts with the duty under the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) to ensure that the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is incorporated into NI law, with direct access to the courts and remedies for breaches.

Whatever NI proposals finally come forward, the British government needs to be aware that the struggle for justice and human rights and resistance to cover-ups and impunity will continue locally and internationally.

CAJ was established in 1981 and is an independent non-governmental organisation affiliated to the International Federation for Human Rights.

Serving Prisoners Supported by MOJUK: Walid Habib, Giovanni Di Stefano, Naweed Ali, Khobaib Hussain, Mohibur Rahman, Tahir Aziz, Roger Khan, Wang Yam, Andrew Malkinson, Michael Ross, Mark Alexander, Anis Sardar, Jamie Green, Dan Payne, Zoran Dresic, Scott Birtwistle, Jon Beere, Chedwyn Evans, Darren Waterhouse, David Norris, Brendan McConville, John Paul Wooton, John Keelan, Mohammed Niaz Khan, Abid Ashiq Hussain, Sharaz Yaqub, David Ferguson, Anthony Parsons, James Cullinene, Stephen Marsh, Graham Coutts, Royston Moore, Duane King, Leon Chapman, Tony Marshall, Anthony Jackson, David Kent, Norman Grant, Ricardo Morrison, Alex Silva,Terry Smith, Hyrone Hart, Warren Slaney, Melvyn 'Adie' McLellan, Lyndon Coles, Robert Bradley, Thomas G. Bourke, David E. Ferguson, Lee Mockble, George Coleman, Neil Hurley, Jaslyn Ricardo Smith, James Dowsett, Kevan & Miran Thakrar, Jordan Towers, Patrick Docherty, Brendan Dixon, Paul Bush, Alex Black, Nicholas Rose, Kevin Nunn, Peter Carine, Paul Higginson, Robert Knapp, Thomas Petch, Vincent and Sean Bradish, John Allen, Jeremy Bamber, Kevin Lane, Michael Brown, Robert William Kenealy, Glyn Razzell, Willie Gage, Kate Keaveney, Michael Stone, Michael Attwooll, John Roden, Nick Tucker, Karl Watson, Terry Allen, Richard Southern, Peter Hannigan.