



All Party Parliamentary Group on Extraordinary Rendition
House of Commons

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Andrew Tyrie MP comments on the forthcoming investigation of the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) into allegations of British complicity in torture.

“The ISC has announced that they will soon begin an inquiry into allegations of British involvement in kidnap and torture. This is welcome.

The ISC must show it is now up to the task of investigating rendition. It starts on the back foot. The ISC has already examined the issue but failed to get to the truth. It erroneously concluded in 2007 that Britain was not complicit in rendition, only to be flatly contradicted by a High Court ruling the following year.

Since then, the ISC has improved its investigative capacity somewhat. Among other things, it now has the authority to probe recent operations by the agencies.

The ISC must now demonstrate that it is sufficiently independent of the executive, wields appropriate investigatory powers and is willing to ask difficult, probing questions.

Implementation of the following suggestions can increase its prospects of success with the rendition inquiry:

1. require Permanent Secretaries of all relevant departments and agencies personally to certify that they have taken all reasonable steps to supply the Committee with all relevant information held by their department;
2. create a high quality investigation Panel to examine documents and ensure that all relevant information has been provided;

3. examine the issue of detainee transfers in Iraq and Afghanistan, both whether anyone captured by the UK had been handed over to the control of the US or another country or transferred out of the country and whether the UK was involved in or had knowledge of subsequent mistreatment of these detainees;
4. where necessary and feasible, seek access to non-UK and non-government bodies to obtain information;
5. clarify that the ISC will decide whether and in what form information is published, subject to a final determination by the Prime Minister;
6. publish as full an explanation as reasonably possible of the Committee's intended overall approach to the inquiry, and do this as soon as reasonably possible.

The public need to have confidence that the truth on British involvement in rendition will come out. It is in the British national interest and in the interest of the security services, as well as of those who may have been maltreated, that the new inquiry should get underway immediately. It is now the best part of a decade since some of these allegations first surfaced. The delay in fully investigating them is itself threatening to become something of a scandal.”

Ends.

Notes to Editors:

On 11 September 2014, the Intelligence and Security Committee issued a Call for Evidence for its Further Inquiry into the Role of the UK Government and Security and Intelligence Agencies in Relation to Detainee Treatment and Rendition.

The APPG on Extraordinary Rendition submitted its response and accompanying appendix, specifically setting out its proposals to increase the likelihood of a successful investigation.

In 2007, the ISC concluded in its *Report on Rendition* that the UK agencies were complicit in any extraordinary rendition operations. However, successive court judgments over the next two years directly contradicted this finding and made clear that the UK facilitated the maltreatment of Binyam Mohamed. The Committee similarly failed to get to the bottom of credible allegations about the use of Diego Garcia in extraordinary renditions and about detainee transfers in theatre. These failures have tarnished the ISC's standing as an effective tool of parliamentary scrutiny, as well as one that is independent from the executive and accountable to Parliament.

The APPG has long called on the Government to adopt the proposals of the 2009 Wright Committee on parliamentary reform, by which the ISC chairman would be elected by MPs, subject to a prime ministerial veto over initial nominations. This would both bolster accountability to Parliament and give it the independence from the executive it needs.

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