

FIGHTING IMPUNITY THROUGH FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Enhancing Opportunities for Accountability for Torture

This bulletin contains many positive updates in our five areas of work. REDRESS starts 2022 with several new strategic projects, a strong and growing team, and a range of successes from the previous year we continue to build on.

Several of our new initiatives are being carried out under our [Reparation programme](#), which seeks to increase opportunities to secure reparation for survivors of torture, including compensation. One of them is our [Magnitsky Sanctions project](#), where we seek to utilize sanctions, such as travel bans and asset freezes, to deter torture and other human rights abuses through imposing a financial cost on the perpetrators. As part of this project, REDRESS has carried out investigations into abuses and submitted evidence to sanctions authorities, using data-driven analysis to shape public policy, and supporting NGOs across the world on using sanctions.

Last year, following our submission of a dossier of evidence to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office that implicated several Chinese officials in gross human rights abuses against the Uyghur and other minorities in Xinjiang, [the UK government sanctioned](#) four Chinese officials and one entity, in a multilateral campaign with the US, Canada and the EU.

More recently, together with the Free Nazanin campaign and supported by victims of hostage-taking, REDRESS [has submitted evidence](#) to the UK Foreign Secretary asking her to impose Magnitsky sanctions on several Iranian officials involved in state hostage-taking. The request followed the imposition of a second prison sentence against Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, which confirmed fears that she might be held indefinitely by Iran for diplomatic leverage.

An interlinked initiative is our [Asset Recovery project](#), where we have been working on several pilot cases to explore viable legal routes to seize assets from human rights abusers and redistribute them as reparations to their victims, or when this is not possible, to freeze perpetrators' resources.

But much remains to be done to deliver justice and effective reparations to survivors of torture, as the [story of Tariku Asefa](#), who is featured in this bulletin, reminds us. Tariku was tortured and subjected to forced labour in an illegal detention centre in Libya in 2014, while seeking safety from persecution in Eritrea. His case is far from unusual. More than a decade later, he has not received justice, and we have brought his case to the attention of the United Nations.



© TAO Images Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo. Uyghurs have suffered widespread human rights abuses in China.

Our growing team will help us continue this important work. Eight new staff members have recently joined REDRESS. They will reinforce our Communications, Fundraising and Finance teams as well as our corruptions and sanctions work and projects in Sudan and Belarus. We are also delighted to welcome the former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Méndez and renowned British lawyer Sir Howard Morrison as our Patrons, and Yemsrach Hailemariam and Evan Williams as Trustees.

Thank you for continuing to engage with our mission and work, as without your support we would not be able to do this important work.

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Rupert Skilbeck,
Director of REDRESS

Follow Rupert on Twitter [@RupertSkilbeck](#)

In Focus: Victims of Enforced Disappearance in Africa

By Julie Bardèche, REDRESS Legal Advisor

Follow Julie on Twitter [@JulieBardeche](https://twitter.com/JulieBardeche)

After a lifetime of fleeing religious persecution, Eritrean Tariku Asefa began a journey to the UK to seek asylum. In 2014, as he was undergoing the perilous journey to Europe, he was forcibly disappeared in Libya for over a year in an illegal detention centre where he was tortured and subjected to forced labour.

Enforced disappearances are often being perpetrated by governments across Africa, but also by non-state actors, to suppress dissent and political opposition, as well as in the context of migration and mass displacement.

States' denial of their use and a lack of official data makes it hard to know the full magnitude of this practice on the continent. However, the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances has, since 1980, received over 4,000 claims from victims in Africa.

Victims are put outside the protection of the law, frequently tortured, and often killed. For their families, the uncertainty about the fate of their loved ones causes intolerable suffering as they continue to live without knowing what happened to their loved one, hoping for their return. Yet the perpetrators often go unpunished, and victims can't access justice.

With our dedicated Enforced Disappearance in Africa project, REDRESS and partners working in Africa have sought to eradicate this practice by raising awareness of its prevalence and addressing the factors which allow it to thrive. We have published several reports with recommendations for legal and policy reforms, highlighting the plight of those seeking justice and the lack of remedies available to victims, including *The Forgotten Victims: Enforced Disappearance in Africa*, and a [Q&A](#) to assist journalists reporting on this issue.

We have engaged with key stakeholders, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, UN bodies, human rights lawyers, victims, civil society and journalists, through webinars, workshops, and remote discussions.

Following concerted efforts, in August 2020 the African Commission tasked the drafting of regional Guidelines for



© Alamy Stock photo. Zimbabwean healthcare workers hold a candlelight vigil to protest over the disappearance of Peter Magombeyi, the leader of their union, in 2019.

the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in Africa to a working group. The guidelines, which are expected to be published later this year, will offer guidance to African states on the measures necessary for eradicating and preventing enforced disappearance and to improve the situation of victims.

REDRESS is working together on this project with the African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies, Lawyers for Justice in Libya, MENA Rights and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. The law firm Linklaters is providing invaluable pro bono support on the project.

Justice for Tariku

REDRESS and Lawyers for Justice in Libya have asked the UN Human Rights Committee to request Libya to provide reparations to Tariku Asefa, including compensation, rehabilitation, an investigation of the events and a public apology. We have also recommended that Libya adopt legislation to prevent violations against migrants and train public officials on the rights of migrants. Tariku's harrowing experience is far from unusual. For years, countless migrants and asylum seekers attempting to travel through Libya have faced similar ordeals, as official collusion and corruption have allowed smuggling and trafficking operations to flourish in Libya with impunity.

Ending Hostage-Taking for Diplomatic Leverage

By **Leanna Burnard**, REDRESS Legal Officer

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A second sentence against Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, handed down in April 2021, confirmed fears that the Iranian authorities may continue to unlawfully hold Nazanin indefinitely as a means of exercising diplomatic leverage over the UK.

Like Nazanin's first prosecution, her second was based on groundless charges, this time one of "spreading propaganda against the regime". The result was a further one-year prison sentence and an additional one-year travel ban, dashing hopes that she could finally be reunited with her husband and daughter after completing her previous five-year sentence in full.

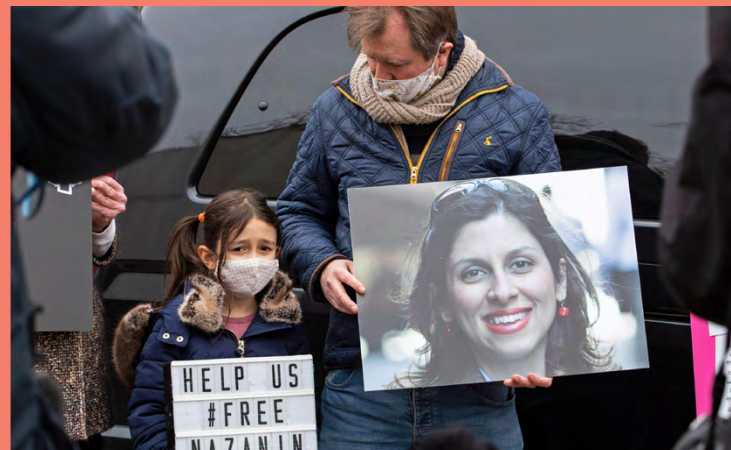
In response, REDRESS and Doughty Street Chambers filed an urgent action request and a complaint to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, asking the UN body to intervene urgently and engage both the UK and Iran to secure her release.

REDRESS and the Free Nazanin campaign took further action by submitting to the UK Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, a dossier based on testimony from former hostages and the families of current hostages in Iran, detailing their horrific experiences in detention, and asking the UK government to impose Magnitsky sanctions on 10 Iranian officials allegedly involved in this practice.

In October, Nazanin's husband Richard Ratcliffe began a hunger strike and spent 21 days camped outside the UK Foreign Office in protest of the UK government's failure to secure Nazanin's return home and to highlight the arbitrary nature of her detention. REDRESS supported Richard throughout the strike and joined him when he was invited to meet with the Foreign Secretary to discuss what more could be done to secure Nazanin's release.

REDRESS and the Free Nazanin Campaign have called once more on the UK government to pay a military debt that the UK owes to Iran, which Nazanin has been told by Iranian officials is key to her release, as well as to use human rights sanctions against those responsible for hostage-taking in Iran.

© Joshua Bratt/Alamy Stock photo. Richard and Gabriella Ratcliffe.



What the UK Government Must do to Bring Nazanin Home

To secure Nazanin's return home, the UK government must:

- Take assertive action by holding Iran accountable to its obligations under international law, including requiring Iran to investigate and prosecute torture.
- Escalate the matter to the United Nations, such as pursuing a commission of inquiry into Iran's torture of foreign nationals.
- Freeze the assets of, and impose travel bans on, individual perpetrators of Iran's hostage-taking through using targeted human rights sanctions.



Listen to the REDRESS Podcast:
Hostage Diplomacy

- Recognise Nazanin, and other innocent British citizens detained for diplomatic leverage over Iran as "hostages", demonstrating that it stands ready to defend the rights of its citizens.
- Pay the £400 million military debt it owes to Iran, for which Nazanin has been told she is being detained.

What the government must not do is continue its current approach; after more than five years, it is abundantly clear that it is not working.

Fighting Impunity for Torture Through Financial Accountability

By Charlie Loudon, REDRESS Legal Advisor

Follow Charlie on Twitter on [@CharlieLoudon](https://twitter.com/CharlieLoudon)



© Alamy Stock photo. A woman holds a placard with a portrait of Sergei Magnitsky, who exposed fraud by Russian government officials, during a rally in Moscow.

As part of our [Reparation programme](#) under REDRESS's new strategy, we have focused on several interlinked initiatives for ensuring that perpetrators of torture are held accountable for their actions through financial means.

Our [Asset Recovery project](#) explores the viability of legal routes to seize assets from human rights abusers and redistribute them as reparations to their victims. The connection between grand corruption and human rights abuses is well-documented, with recent examples of powerful human rights abusers who have illicitly amassed vast amounts of wealth during their rule including Muammar Gaddafi, Hissène Habré, and Omar al-Bashir. Even when redistribution of assets to victims is not possible, freezing perpetrators' resources can deliver a measure of accountability for their crimes.

REDRESS has developed a [Framework for Financial Accountability for Torture and Other Human Rights Abuses](#), a tool to help identify, develop, and evaluate potential case strategies for pursuing financial accountability for torture and other serious human rights abuses. It was supported by the Knowledge Platform for Security and the Rule of Law and was developed in consultation with NGOs specialising in corruption and international accountability, the Crown Prosecution Service, the National Crime Agency (NCA), the Metropolitan Police, the Foreign, Commonwealth & De-

velopment Office (FCDO), litigation funders, and specialist lawyers.

A related form of achieving financial accountability for torturers is by imposing sanctions upon them. Human rights and anti-corruption (Magnitsky) sanctions, which were first introduced by the UK government in 2020, enable states to target individuals who have committed serious violations of human rights or corruption by restricting their travel and freezing their assets.

In March 2021, the [UK government responded](#) to our calls for sanctioning those responsible for the widespread human rights abuses perpetrated against the Uyghur population of Xinjiang, China, after REDRESS submitted a dossier of evidence to the FCDO implicating various Chinese officials and entities. In a joint action taken alongside the US, EU, and Canada, they imposed sanctions on four Chinese officials and one entity.

More recently, the Free Nazanin campaign and REDRESS, supported by victims of hostage-taking in Iran, [submitted a dossier](#) to the UK Foreign Secretary asking her to impose Magnitsky sanctions on 10 Iranian officials involved in 'state hostage-taking'.



Watch a video on [How to Secure Financial Accountability for Torture](#)

New Parliamentary Group on Magnitsky Sanctions

In October, a cross-party group of MPs and Peers [came together](#) to maximise the use targeted sanctions to prevent the UK from becoming a haven for the worst human rights abusers and kleptocrats.

The new All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Magnitsky Sanctions is co-chaired by MPs Sir Iain Duncan Smith and Chris Bryant, and is supported by the Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign, the Free Nazanin Campaign, the World Uyghur Congress and REDRESS, which acts as its secretariat.

The APPG seeks to raise the profile of Magnitsky sanctions in Parliament, examine situations where they may be appropriate, and improve the impact of the legislation in the UK going forward.

During a parliamentary debate in December, the new APPG identified several actors for sanctions, including several individuals responsible for hostage-taking in Iran; the kidnap and torture of the subject of the film *Hotel Rwanda*, Paul Rusesabagina, and the violent military coup in Sudan.

Protecting Civilians after the Coup in Sudan



© Mahmoud Hjjaj/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images. A relative gestures in the Sudanese capital Khartoum while paying tribute to killed anti-regime demonstrators.

By **Emma DiNapoli**, REDRESS Legal Officer

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On the morning of 25 October 2021, at least five civilian members of Sudan’s transitional government, including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and key political leaders, were arrested by Sudanese security forces.

Later that day, Lt. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese Armed Forces and chairperson of the Sovereign Council, repealed the provisions of the 2019 Constitutional Declaration which provided for a joint transitional civilian-military government. As the Sudanese people reacted to the news, dozens of civilians were arbitrarily detained, while hundreds of others were injured or killed by live gunfire and other weapons during peaceful protests.

In the months following the military coup, political leaders, activists, and human rights defenders have been arrested on a daily basis and held in unknown detention centres by security forces using methods similar to those under the former al-Bashir regime.

As the ongoing intermittent Internet blackout makes collecting verifiable information particularly difficult, REDRESS has sought to raise awareness about the ongoing violations, including torture and enforced disappearances, to the appropriate international and regional audiences.

In the UK, REDRESS briefed members of the UK Parliament and called on the UK government to condemn the Su-

danese military’s actions and impose sanctions on those involved in the coup. REDRESS also published a call for action in anticipation of the “March of Millions” protest planned for 30 October, reiterating the need for Sudan’s international allies to demand the release of all arbitrarily detained leaders and activists, and to call on Sudan’s military to refrain from torture and other forms of violence against protestors. Furthermore, we urged Sudan’s international partners to provide support to civil society groups documenting human rights violations against Sudanese protestors.

In October, we joined more than 35 Sudanese, African and international civil society organisations in calling on the UN Human Rights Council to convene a special session on Sudan and appoint an independent expert to monitor the worsening human rights situation.

This recent work in Sudan builds on our legal reform work of two decades, including REDRESS’s longstanding advocacy calling for the ratification of several major human rights treaties, such as the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances (ICPPED). Sudan ratified the UNCAT and ICPPED in August 2021 and must now comply with its obligations under both treaties.

Sri Lanka Found Responsible for Torture of Young Man by Police

By **Alejandra Vicente**, REDRESS Head of Law

Follow Alejandra on Twitter on [@AVicente_Carr](https://twitter.com/AVicente_Carr)



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Police torture has been routine in Sri Lanka for decades, but victims of torture and their families often spend years seeking justice and redress with little hope of success.

One such case is that of Asantha Aravinda, who was arbitrarily arrested and tortured by police 14 years ago after he was involved in a road traffic dispute.

The events took place in 2008, when Ashanta was riding a scooter with a friend and they almost collided with a truck, whose driver missed a traffic light. After both parties argued, and the two young men left, the truck driver followed them, knocking down their scooter, and leaving them severely injured.

Shortly after, the truck driver returned with some officers of the Pitabaddara police station. They tied their hands and beat them, and the truck driver poured acid into Ashanta's face, causing him to permanently lose sight in one eye. They were then taken to the Pitabeddara police station where they were severely beaten and denied access to medical care. The police also falsified charges against them, accusing them of the attempted murder of the truck driver and possession of arms.

After numerous complaints were submitted in Sri Lanka by Asantha's father and none of the perpetrators was

ever tried, REDRESS and Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) brought his case before the UN Human Rights Committee, which examines human rights complaints, in 2011.

It took 10 years for the UN body to issue its findings on the case, but on 24 November 2021, it found Sri Lanka responsible for Asantha's arbitrary arrest and torture by the Sri Lankan police.

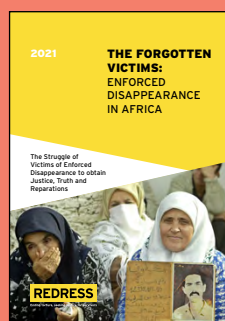
The Committee ordered Sri Lanka to launch a proper investigation into the events, prosecute those responsible, provide him with adequate reparation and take steps to prevent similar violations in the future.

“The Sri Lankan authorities should take a long, hard look at the decision of the Human Rights Committee and bring forward the necessary legal and policy reforms to protect people in Sri Lanka from torture and other abuses by the police without delay”

Alejandra Vicente, REDRESS Head of Law

Publications Round-Up

Our recent publications include: Submission to the International Development Committee: Inquiry into the Effectiveness of the UK Government's Response to Atrocity Prevention • Briefing Paper: All-Party Parliamentary Group on Magnitsky Sanctions • REDRESS Trustees Annual Report • Q&A on Enforced Disappearances in Africa • Annual Review 2021 • UK Parliament Briefing: Action Needed Following the Coup in Sudan • Roadmap to Release: AI and REDRESS Briefing on Anoosheh Ashoori and Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe • The Forgotten Victims: Enforced Disappearance in Africa.



Single from the Christians to Help REDRESS free Nazanin

Last Christmas was Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe’s sixth separated from her family. To send her a message of hope, the 1980s pop band The Christians have released a new single, *Naz Don’t Cry*, a rework of their 1991 single *Man Don’t Cry*, released in aid of British hostage John McCarthy, kidnapped for five years in Lebanon.

On 1 December lead singer Garry Christian, band members Joey Ankrah and Neil Griffiths, and writer Henry Priestman, with Richard and his daughter Gabriella backing vocals, recorded the track at Coastal Sound studios in Liverpool (with all parties including studio owner Tim Speed agreeing to waive all fees). Download proceeds will go to support REDRESS and the work that we have done to seek Nazanin’s freedom since 2016.

As The Christians explained, it was after seeing Richard Ratcliffe undergoing a second hunger strike in



© Darius Bazargan. The Christians during the recording session with Richard and Gabriella Ratcliffe.

October, that they decided to record the song, which according to the band, “couldn’t be more appropriate in describing the Ratcliffe’s distressing predicament.”



If you wish to support our work to free Nazanin, please download the single here



© Chris Esdalle. Human rights activist and REDRESS Trustee Yemi Haillemariam.

Become a Regular Supporter

It is the vital contributions of REDRESS’s supporters that enable us to continue to redress torture where and whenever it occurs. In order to maintain ongoing casework to represent those wrongfully imprisoned or targeted for their identity or activism, we rely heavily on donations that can support our legal team.

Litigation of this nature often takes several years to reach a judgement, so sustained support allows us to see these cases through to fruition, supporting survivors with the assistance they need to pursue justice. Your contributions also help us to strengthen the global anti-torture movement.

We are constantly striving to strengthen resilience within communities affected by torture and the organisations assisting them, increase awareness and advocate for judgements that will prevent further abuses from taking place. Supporter donations facilitate this work to realise our vision of a world without torture.

Support our ongoing cases: redress.org/donate

REDRESS
Ending torture, seeking justice for survivors

