



YEARS

**REDRESS**

Ending torture, seeking justice for survivors

BULLETIN

No. 9



# 30 YEARS OF IMPACT: CELEBRATING THE WORK OF REDRESS



DIRECTOR'S LETTER

# Uniting the Anti-Torture Movement to Defeat Torture

With the unwavering support of our allies and the survivors we represent, REDRESS remains resolute in its pursuit of a world without torture. On 26 June, as we marked 36 years since the UN Convention against Torture came into effect, the landmark treaty which reminds us of our collective responsibility to eradicate torture, REDRESS and five other international anti-torture NGOs launched the [United Against Torture Consortium](#).

For example, the [International Accountability Platform for Belarus](#), an innovative civil society platform led by Belarusian and international organisations, including REDRESS, has been collecting evidence since 2021 on human rights abuses committed during the 2020 presidential election and its aftermath, and preserving it in digital archives to ensure that it will be available one day to hold perpetrators of these abuses accountable.



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The Consortium will pool our organisations' expertise in torture prevention, protection, rehabilitation and strategic litigation, and will work together with over 200 civil society organisations in more than 100 countries, to strengthen and expand the anti-torture movement and provide much-needed support to survivors.

The Consortium will provide a robust and united response from the anti-torture movement to tackle the unprecedented levels of systematic and widespread torture around the world, from Myanmar to Ethiopia, to Russia and Belarus. REDRESS is already working in some of these countries to hold perpetrators accountable and deliver justice for survivors.

On 13 July, we were joined by supporters, clients and friends at a [celebratory event](#) at Calthorpe Community Garden in London, to mark REDRESS' significant milestones over the last three decades, including holding perpetrators to account, obtaining justice for survivors, promoting the right to reparation for torture, and giving survivors a voice. Highlights included jazz music by the band [Permission to Appeal](#) and a photography exhibition that offered a glimpse into survivors of torture's perceptions of justice. REDRESS also recognised the commitment and energy of the survivors and family members we work with, who have trusted us to take on their cases

and campaigns, often for many years.

Together, we are more than the sum of our parts, and united and invigorated as an anti-torture movement, we will rise to the new challenges that we are facing.

**“REDRESS also recognised the commitment and energy of the survivors and family members we work with. They trusted us to take on their cases and campaigns, often for many years.”**



Rupert Skilbeck,  
Director of REDRESS

Follow Rupert on Twitter [@RupertSkilbeck](#)

# United Against Torture Consortium Energises Global Movement against Torture

By Naoual Sahel, Media Intern  
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On 26 June, six prominent anti-torture organisations formed the [United Against Torture Consortium](#) to challenge the prevalent use of torture worldwide.

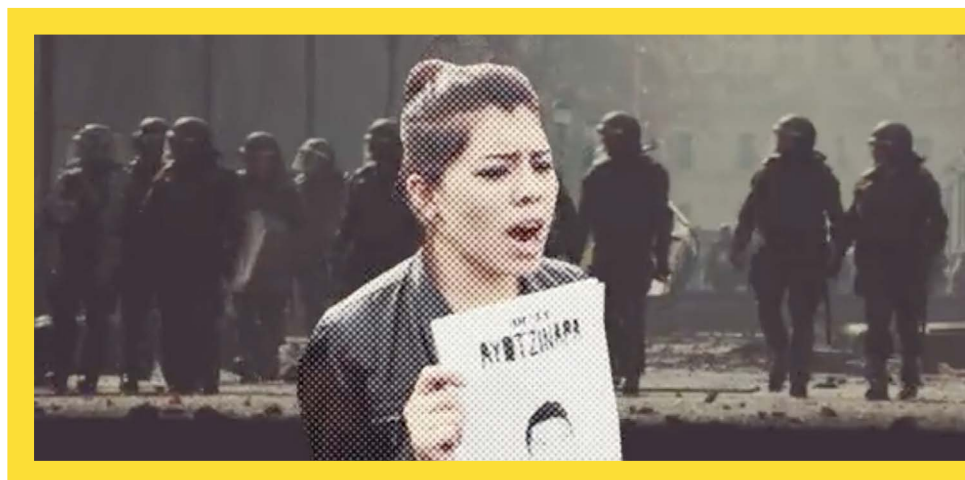
The Consortium is led by REDRESS, the World Organization Against Torture, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, the Association for the Prevention of Torture, and the Omega Research Foundation.

With funding from the European Union, the €8.5m project aims to strengthen the anti-torture movement by partnering with more than 200 civil society organisations in more than 100 countries.

Over the next three years, the Consortium will provide grants to directly assist thousands of torture survivors, enhance the capacity of national partners to advocate for torture prevention and rehabilitation, and centre survivors in its work on torture prevention, rehabilitation and justice processes.

The Consortium seeks to create a united front to respond to the rise of autocratic regimes, the shrinking space for civil society, the growing acceptance of torture in some sectors of the public, and the urgent need to address widespread torture in countries like Myanmar, Ethiopia, Russia, Belarus, Venezuela, and The Philippines.

Shyrete Sulimani, a survivor of torture who underwent rehabilitation at the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre, under-




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scored the importance of collective efforts in combating torture and supporting survivors.

**“Torture is a big problem, and it needs a big response. Everyone needs to work together to fight for an end to torture and to support survivors like me.”**

**Shyrete Sulimani**

Each organisation will pool their unique expertise in torture prevention, protection, rehabilitation and strategic litigation. As a global leader in achieving justice and reparation, particularly for torture related to discrimination and dissent, REDRESS will work with national partners to develop strategic litigation against torture around the world.

 [Watch a video about the Consortium](#)

## Museum in Chile Dedicates Archive to Leopoldo García Lucero

As the 50th anniversary of General Augusto Pinochet’s military coup in Chile approaches on 11 September 2023, the [Museum of Memory and Human Rights](#) in Chile has dedicated a [permanent archive](#) in their collection to the case of Leopoldo García Lucero, a REDRESS client. Leopoldo was tortured under Pinochet’s regime and forced into exile in the United Kingdom with his wife and three daughters.

In 2013, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered Chile to provide him with reparations in a [landmark](#)

[judgment](#). It was the first time the Court had decided the case of a living survivor of torture under Pinochet’s dictatorship, opening the way for similar cases to be brought by other exiled torture survivors.

This initiative reinforces the museum’s commitment to shedding light on the human rights violations that occurred under the Pinochet regime, and construct a better future, thereby acting as a further form of reparation and redress to the victims.

# Belarus Platform Advances Accountability Efforts



© Sopa Images Ltd/Alamy Stock photo. Belarusian activists holding a protest in Ukraine in 2020.

By **Dianne Magbanua**, Communications Assistant  
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Two years after its launch, the International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB), co-lead by REDRESS, is advancing accountability efforts and justice for victims and survivors in Belarus.

The latest IAPB progress report showed that the information and evidence provided to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) contributed to its recent findings that human rights violations in Belarus may constitute crimes against humanity.

The UN High Commissioner presented his findings to the UN Human Rights Council in March, drawing from interviews with 207 victims and witnesses and an analysis of over 2,500 documents. Of these, the IAPB facilitated access to more than 100 interviewees and 1,300 documents. In addition, the IAPB submitted documentation on 180 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, which led to the UN High Commissioner concluding that sexual and gender-based violence has been committed in Belarus.

The IAPB continues to grow its collection of information and evidence on alleged crimes under international law, preserving them in tailored-made digital archives, ensuring they will be readily accessible in the long term. To date, the IAPB has collected information and evidence from over 2,300 survivor-victims and witnesses inside Belarus and elsewhere and over 750,000 open-source intelligence files. Given that there is no reasonable prospect for justice for victims in Belarus, preserving this evidence is crucial.

The platform is also assisting criminal justice authorities in four States exercising or considering exercising universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction over crimes under international law allegedly committed in Belarus, ensuring that viable criminal cases are brought in the future to hold perpetrators accountable and deliver reparations to victims.

REDRESS is co-leading the IAPB with the Danish Institute Against Torture (DIGNITY) and the Belarusian organisations the Human Rights Centre “Viasna”, and the International Committee for the Investigation of Torture in Belarus.

## UK Tribunal to Probe Complaint of Guantanamo Detainee

By **Chris Esdaile**, Legal Advisor  
 Follow Chris on Twitter [@ChrisEsdaile](https://twitter.com/ChrisEsdaile)

The UK Investigatory Powers Tribunal, the judicial body which probes complaints against the UK intelligence services, will investigate the complaint brought by Mustafa al-Hawsawi against the UK intelligence services for their alleged complicity in his torture by US agents.

Al-Hawsawi, who is already being represented by REDRESS in separate proceedings at the European Court of Human Rights, has been detained in Guantánamo Bay since 2006, after having been tortured for several years at Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) black sites.

REDRESS understands that there have not been any previous full investigations undertaken by the Tribunal in

relation to those held in the CIA’s black sites programme, therefore, this investigation could potentially shed light on the UK’s role in the CIA programme.

The complaint, brought by REDRESS on behalf of Al-Hawsawi, seeks to obtain documents and information held by UK agencies regarding his torture and ill-treatment; a declaration that UK agencies or their agents were involved in his torture and ill-treatment and that their conduct was unlawful, and compensation for their conduct.

REDRESS is grateful for the assistance of barristers Richard Hermer KC, Edward Craven, and Florence Iveson, all of Matrix Chambers, for their continuing work on this case.

# Increasing Access to Justice for Victims of LGBTIQ+ Torture

By **Renata Politi**, Legal Officer

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In many countries, discriminatory laws and deeply rooted attitudes often expose LGBTIQ+ persons to violence, which can often amount to torture and other ill-treatment.

International law is clear that when violence is used against a person for a discriminatory purpose it can amount to torture, provided this violence is severe, intentional, and there is the involvement of a State official.

Torture against LGBTIQ+ persons can take many forms, including physical and sexual abuse by State officials or non-State actors, forced medical examinations, conversion therapy practices, ‘corrective’ rapes and other forms of harassment.



© Marcus Rose/Panos Pictures. Pride Parade in Durban, South Africa.

Under the UN Convention against Torture, States must investigate allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. However, torture against LGBTIQ+ persons is often not investigated and goes unpunished. National authorities frequently fail to recognise discriminatory motives, treating such cases as ordinary cases of violence or assault.

Knowing if the torture was motivated by discrimination is key for LGBTIQ+ victims to access justice and obtain reparations, and to address the root causes of such discriminatory violence.

REDRESS is working in different regions, including in Africa, to bring attention to the torture of LGBTIQ+ people and identify policy and law changes needed to increase access to justice, focusing on the need to investigate such violence and the discriminatory element.

As part of this work, we have recently published a briefing paper, which explains how violence against LGBTIQ+ persons can amount to torture, and highlights the steps States must take to investigate effectively such cases. In addition, we have produced an animated video which covers the key concepts.

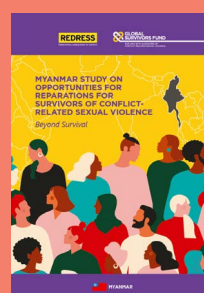
The new materials will also enhance the current set of free training materials on our website which seek to help human rights lawyers and anti-torture activists around the world who are challenging torture and ill-treatment wherever it occurs.

 [Watch the video](#)

## A Roadmap for Reparations for Victims of Sexual Violence in Myanmar and Chad

Following the launch of our report on Cambodia, Left Without Calla, which identified opportunities for reparations for survivors of the prevalent sexual violence during the Khmer Rouge regime, REDRESS has published new reports for Myanmar and Chad.

Produced under our Discrimination programme, which challenges torture that is used to oppress marginalised and excluded minorities, these reports are part of a multi-country study led by the Global Survivors Fund to fill the gap that exists around the world to provide reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

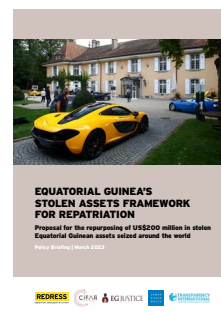


The findings of the report on Myanmar, Beyond Survival, were presented during a session with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, which took place during the UN Human Rights Council’s 52nd session in March. The report drew from detailed research and interviews with experts and civil society organisations working with survivors.

As 30 May marked seven years of Hissène Habré’s landmark conviction in Senegal, REDRESS called once more for justice for victims of the pervasive sexual violence under his regime. We also published a new report, Breaking the Silence, with the Global Survivors Fund and the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, which highlights how victims urgently need reparations, as they have received no financial compensation or other forms of reparations.

# Returning Obiang's Ill-Gotten Assets to the People of Equatorial Guinea

By Lucia Coerman, Legal Officer



© Will Sands. School on Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea.

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema and his family have ruled Equatorial Guinea with absolute power for over 40 years. Despite being an oil-rich nation, there is widespread poverty in Equatorial Guinea and the country has accumulated billions of dollars' worth of debt in loans. This is due to rampant embezzlement and human rights violations that deny Equatorial Guineans their fundamental rights.

At the same time, millions of dollars in corrupt assets from Vice President Teodoro Nguema Obiang ("Teodorín"), valued at US\$200 million, have been seized in Brazil, France, Switzerland, and the US in recent years. These include 25 luxury cars sold for US\$24 million in Switzerland, US\$16.5 million in cash and luxury watches in Brazil, a US\$6-million Malibu mansion in the US and assets worth €150 million in France, among other assets.

Even though the majority of the funds seized in the US were used for COVID-19 vaccines in Equatorial Guinea, there is still significant uncertainty about how remaining US funds and assets seized in Switzerland, France and Brazil will be returned to their rightful recipients.

Can we transform the proceeds from the sale of ill-gotten luxury assets, purchased with public funds for the indulgence of one man, into reparations for survivors of torture, and support education, artistic expression, independent news and a more vibrant society?

A [new briefing](#) published by REDRESS and an alliance of Equatorial Guinean and international organisations, activists and experts shows that this is possible. Our briefing proposes avenues to repatriate those assets for the benefit

of Equatorial Guineans in a way that helps provide reparations for survivors of torture and combat corruption, while empowering victims through participating in the design of reparations and disbursement of funds to their rightful recipients: the citizens of Equatorial Guinea.

We urge States that have seized Obiang's assets to apply the [Civil Society Principles for Accountable Asset Return](#).

This will safeguard against funds feeding back into the country's corrupt system by ensuring that assets returned are traceable throughout disbursement, that those involved in corruption cannot benefit from them, and that monitoring processes are put in place.

We also highlight the important role that civil society can play, and we recommend that States engage meaningfully with independent civil society in determining how the funds are spent in a way that provides redress to the victims of torture, human rights abuses, and corruption. For example, through scholarship programmes, community-based activities, journalist training programmes and social justice programmes.

## Repurposing Russian Assets for Victims in Ukraine

REDRESS is working with partners in Ukraine and around the world to explore potential legal routes for financial accountability and the delivery of reparations to victims affected by the conflict in Ukraine. As part of this work, we are pursuing investigations and litigation for viable financial accountability routes for victims of the conflict; raising awareness of the reparations landscape in Ukraine, including among survivors; increasing the capacity of civil society organisations and survivors to engage in the reparations mechanisms available or being created; and strengthening the capacity of civil society to submit sanctions submissions under the UK framework.



[Learn more about this work](#)

# New Treaty will Fight Impunity for the Most Serious International Crimes

By Julie Bardeche, Legal Advisor  
Follow Julie on Twitter [@JulieBardeche](#)



© Photo by [WorldslandInfo.com](#) (CC BY 2.0)

REDRESS welcomed the adoption in May of a new treaty that will help fight impunity for core international crimes by enhancing legal cooperation among States in the investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

Following a diplomatic conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, over 70 states agreed on the new Ljubljana-The Hague Convention, the result of a decade-long endeavour. The new treaty sets out the obligations on States regarding legal cooperation and extradition in the investigation of cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other international crimes.

Crucially, the new treaty also contains important provisions towards achieving victims' rights to reparation, echoing recommendations made by REDRESS and other organisations to the States negotiating the text of the treaty in recent years.

The new treaty recognises the rights of victims of international crimes to reparation and to participate in

criminal proceedings. It also provides avenues for States to cooperate towards the implementation of reparation awards and orders, including through the confiscation of assets. REDRESS has urged States to sign and ratify the Convention without reservations to make it effective.

## The Ljubljana-The Hague Convention

As recent decades have seen increased efforts by States to investigate and prosecute individuals and companies responsible for the most serious international crimes, since 2011, a group of States had advocated for a new multi-lateral treaty to enhance cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. The MLA Initiative was supported by 80 countries from all regions of the world. The new treaty was adopted on 28 May by over 70 States and will be open to States for signature in 2024.

## UK Government Urged to Change its Approach on Hostage-Taking

In April 2023, the UK Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) published a highly anticipated report, [Stolen Years: Combatting State-Hostage Diplomacy](#), which urged the UK government to change its approach to State hostage-taking, echoing several recommendations made by REDRESS to the Committee.

These included the need to establish a special envoy to oversee cases where UK nationals are detained for diplomatic leverage (as already exists in the US) and the need for better parliamentary scrutiny of consular cases.

The FAC opened its Inquiry into State-Hostage Taking following the release in 2022 of British nationals Nazanin

Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a client of REDRESS who was arbitrarily detained in Iran for six years, and Anoosheh Ashoori, after the UK paid an outstanding £400 million debt to Iran. In 2022, REDRESS submitted evidence to the Inquiry in collaboration with the Ratcliffe family and counsel John Dugard KC, Alison Macdonald KC, and Dr Tatyana Eatwell.

REDRESS continues to advocate for a change in approach, following the UK government's recent refusal to accept the main recommendations of the report.

# 30 Years of REDRESS



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Since 1992 REDRESS has worked to deliver justice and reparation for survivors of torture - many targeted because of discrimination or to suppress dissent - and to promote solidarity in the anti-torture movement.

Supporting REDRESS means helping us bring legal claims for survivors and the prosecution of perpetrators. It also means standing with marginalised individuals and movements challenging injustice by supporting us challenge

torture that is used to suppress these groups. You will also be strengthening the anti-torture movement, as we work in collaboration with local partners around the world, many of whom operate in extremely difficult circumstances.

As we celebrate 30 years, we are growing our programmes, and you can support this important work.

Please contact Anoushka Canagaretna, Programme Development Manager, on [anoushka@redress.org](mailto:anoushka@redress.org).

## 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](https://redress.org/donate)