

Review of UK Torture Policy Launched in U-turn From Theresa May

By [Reprieve](#)

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A public consultation [has been launched](#) into changes to the UK's torture policy or "Consolidated Guidance", which tells UK personnel how far they can go in participating in the interrogation suspects held by a foreign country or receiving intelligence that could have been obtained through torture.

This move follows [a leaked Foreign Office memo](#) which revealed that the Prime Minister, Theresa May, was planning to ignore a recommendation to hold a consultation and instead have only a "light-touch" review of the policy. This will be the first public review of the guidance since its publication in 2010.

The Consultation is being overseen by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO), the regulator for the intelligence services. It comes shortly after [a report by Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee](#) revealed systemic UK involvement in mistreatment and just three months after the Prime Minister [issued an unprecedented apology](#) to former Libyan dissident Abdul Hakim Belhaj and his wife Fatima Boudchar over the Government's role in their torture and rendition.

Last December, the [Intelligence Services Commissioner revealed](#) that in a single year GCHQ had wrongly failed to apply the Guidance in a total of 35 cases, and that in 8 of those cases the Guidance would have blocked information being shared as the risk of torture and mistreatment was too great.

Commenting, Dan Dolan, Head of Policy at Reprieve, said:

"This review is sorely needed and long overdue. At a time when the US President has endorsed the use of 'waterboarding and a hell of a lot worse', the UK should stand firm against any involvement in torture. Unfortunately, the current torture policy is so riddled with loopholes that it is simply not fit for purpose.

"The most recent figures from the UK's intelligence watchdog showed that on average GCHQ officers wrongly ignore the Guidance every eleven days, and that this risks involving the UK in torture once every seven weeks. It cannot be right that these errors come to light months if not years after they happen. We now need a strong system of prior oversight of the UK's torture policy, by which regulators can pre-emptively halt actions which could see the UK mixed up in torture."

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