

The British Government's Complicity in U.S. Torture and Rendition Programme

Jack Straw's Comments Do Not Fit With Facts

By [Reprise](#)

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Former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw has [reportedly today claimed](#) that “the British government never condoned, nor was complicit, in the torture or ill-treatment of detainees, wherever they were held.”

Mr Straw's reported claims are directly at odds with a range of evidence, including [MI6 correspondence](#) relating to the kidnap and rendition of Gaddafi opponents; judgments from the High Court; and even the admissions of his own colleagues in Government.

Documents found in Libya after the fall of the Gaddafi regime show a senior MI6 officer taking credit for an operation, conducted alongside the CIA, which saw a Libyan dissident and his [five-months' pregnant wife](#) kidnapped, tortured, and forcibly flown to Gaddafi's prisons in 2004. The operation took place while Mr Straw was Foreign Secretary, with responsibility for MI6, and is the subject of a Metropolitan Police investigation which has passed files to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision.

The documents include a letter from Sir Mark Allen, then director of counter-terrorism at MI6, to Libyan spy chief Moussa Koussa in the wake of the kidnap and rendition of Abdulhakim Belhadj and his wife Fatima Boudchar, in which he emphasises that while “I did not pay for the air cargo,” “the intelligence...was British.” Sir Mark adds that “This was the least we could do for you and for Libya to demonstrate the remarkable relationship we have built over the years. I am so glad.”

Mr Straw's comments also appear to be at odds with a 2009 High Court ruling in the case of [Binyam Mohamed](#), who was rendered by the CIA to a secret prison in Morocco where he faced extensive torture. The High Court found that “the relationship of the United Kingdom government to the United States authorities in connection with Binyam Mohamed was far beyond that of a bystander or witness to the alleged wrongdoing.”

Finally, two of Mr Straw's Cabinet colleagues admitted to the House of Commons in 2008-09 that British personnel and territory had been involved in the US rendition programme, which saw people flown to secret prisons around the world in order to be tortured. 2008 saw then-Foreign Secretary David Miliband admit that CIA rendition flights, carrying prisoners, had used the British territory of [Diego Garcia](#) on two occasions in 2002. In 2009, then-Defence Secretary [John Hutton admitted](#) that, in 2004, UK personnel had captured people in Iraq and handed them to the US, who then ‘rendered’ them to a secret prison in Bagram, Afghanistan, where they faced torture.

Commenting, Cori Crider, a director at international human rights charity Reprieve – which is representing the Libyan rendition and torture victims – said: “Mr Straw’s claims seem to be an attempt to re-write history. We already know that Britain was complicit in the US torture programme – the only questions remaining are how far this went, who knew about it, and who signed it off. As the minister responsible for MI6 when it helped render a pregnant woman and four young children to Gaddafi’s prisons, maybe Mr Straw could start giving us some answers.”

Notes:

- For further information on any of the cases referred to above, please contact Reprieve: +44 (0) 207 553 8166
- Mr Straw’s comments have been reported in multiple outlets, for example [ITV News](#) and the [Guardian](#).

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