

**REDRESS**

Ending torture, seeking justice for survivors

BULLETIN

No. 5

cultural awareness impact  
expertise collaboration sharing  
impact expertise lasting change  
holistic victim-centred approach  
knowledge solidarity resilience  
advocacy casework  
strengthening prevention  
anti-torture movement  
justice reparations civil-society  
communications partnerships  
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strategic recovery

## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

## Strengthening the anti-torture movement by sharing our expertise



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As the world continues to mediate the lasting effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand how important it is to work together now more than ever. At REDRESS, we recognise how crucial partnerships are to our work, and we are proud to have our commitment to collaboration enshrined in our new 2025 strategy in the form of our **Solidarity** programme.

**Solidarity** covers the work we do to strengthen the global anti-torture movement through collaboration and mutual sharing of expertise. REDRESS works closely with NGOs around the world, matching their knowledge of national law and policy, experience with survivors, and cultural awareness with our expertise in the law of torture, global connections, and capacity to deliver international campaigns. By including a programme on solidarity in our new strategy we commit to strengthening and developing the anti-torture movement, and building a resilient, versatile community.

One of the first major projects that we have launched under this programme is REDRESS's series of Practice Notes on holistic strategic litigation against torture. A method that we have extensive experience in implementing, strategic litigation combines casework with civil-society techniques such as media and communications, advocacy, and activism to broaden the impact of a judgment beyond the individual case. The aim is to not only achieve justice for survivors, but create a lasting change in law, policy, or attitude to prevent further similar abuses. We also use a holistic approach, dedicated to ensuring survivors have all of the psychological, so-

cial, and medical support they need for the duration of the often-lengthy litigation process.

Alongside the release of our Practice Notes we will be carrying out a number of other projects under our **Solidarity** programme. These include a series of training modules, videos and PowerPoint presentations that will aid those participating in our strategic litigation workshops, helping our partners to develop cases that can achieve impacts beyond those that benefit the individual client. We are pleased to be able to share our expertise in this area with lawyers, activists, and medical professionals, as we have seen the incredible benefits to survivors and communities that effective litigation can have.

Published in Spring of this year, our 2025 strategy focuses on four other programmes besides **Solidarity**: **Justice**, through which we accompany survivors along their litigation procedures to secure the outcome that will best aid their recovery; **Reparation**, through which we fight to secure adequate remedy for individuals and communities affected by torture, including asset recovery and sanctions; **Dissent**, a focused programme on torture used to suppress political dissidence or protest against the State; and **Discrimination**, which aims to tackle torture based on targeted attacks against marginalised and vulnerable communities, including women, the LGBT+ community and refugees.

With a reinvigorated focus on REDRESS's particular strengths and abilities, we hope our new strategy will allow our organisation to continue having meaningful impact on the movement to contribute to ending torture.

**“The aim is to not only achieve justice for survivors, but create a lasting change in law, policy, or attitude to prevent further similar abuses.”**



Rupert Skilbeck,  
Director of REDRESS

Follow Rupert on Twitter [@RupertSkilbeck](https://twitter.com/RupertSkilbeck)

# Emblematic Decision for MENA's Women Human Rights Defenders

By Eva Nudd, REDRESS' Legal Advisor

Follow Eva on Twitter [@NuddEva](#)

In April, we celebrated an important decision in favour of one of our clients, Libyan human rights defender Magdulein Abaida. The UN body of experts that monitors implementation of the main global treaty on women's rights found that Libya violated Magdulein's rights in Libya.

The decision of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is momentous for two reasons. It is the first to be made on gender violence against a human rights defender, and the first made in response to an individual complaint from the Middle East and North Africa region. This sets a precedent for the review of similar complaints and upholds the necessity for a gender-sensitive approach to claims of torture.

After the fall of the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, Magdulein actively campaigned for gender equality to be enshrined in the new Libyan constitution. It was not long after, in August 2012, that she was abducted from her hotel room in the Libyan seaport city of Benghazi by five men belonging to the Martyrs of 17 February Brigade, a militia group affiliated with the Libyan government.

After her release, following five days of threats, insults and physical beatings at different compounds run by the government and this militia, Magdulein continued to be harassed in



© Magdulein Abaida carrying her human rights work in Libya before being forced into exile.

the form of death threats saying that she would be killed if seen out in public. This led to her fleeing Libya in 2012 and seeking asylum in the UK, unable to continue her work defending women's rights.

Initially, REDRESS filed a complaint to the Libyan Prosecutor General on Magdulein's behalf, urging him to investigate her allegations; however, this went unanswered. It was then that her complaint was filed with CEDAW.

In their decision, CEDAW requested that Libya provide her with reparations, prosecute those responsible, and take steps to address gender-based violence and discrimination against women committed by public officials and non-State actors in Libya.

**"I'm so proud to have played a part in setting a legal precedent for women and human rights defenders. It's a huge relief to have received this type of recognition of the injustices I suffered."**

Magdulein Abaida



[Watch a video](#)

## More Fear and Uncertainty for Nazanin

By Leanna Burnard, REDRESS' Legal Officer for Asset Recovery and Sanctions

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Following five years of arbitrary detention in Iran on false charges, in April the Iranian government found Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe guilty of a second charge brought against her and handed her a further one-year sentence and travel ban.

This second sentence for "spreading propaganda against the regime" is cause for significant concern as Iran has never followed the rule of law in Nazanin's case and she has never received a fair trial. Having already endured severe abuses for crimes she did not commit, there is potential that it may cause irreparable damage to Nazanin's health.

In March, REDRESS provided a medico-legal report to the UK Foreign Office of Nazanin's severe physical and psychological suffering due to Iran's treatment. The report, commissioned from the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), confirmed that Nazanin has been subject to torture.

Following this evidence submitted by REDRESS, the UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab finally recognised Nazanin's treatment to be consistent with torture in an interview for the BBC.

REDRESS also raised her case with UN experts, which resulted in the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran expressing concern about the new court case before the UN Human Rights Council.

This newest injustice necessitates further intervention, and more must be done to secure her release.

**[Please support Nazanin through the campaign Help Bring Nazanin Home](#)**

# New Accountability Platform for Human Rights Abuses in Belarus

By Anna Smith, REDRESS' Media Intern

In April of this year, the International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) was launched to help combat the widespread impunity for the serious and unprecedented human rights abuses committed in the run-up to the 2020 presidential election in Belarus and in its aftermath.

Led by the Danish Institute against Torture (DIGNITY), and co-led by REDRESS, the Belarusian Human Rights Centre Viasna and the International Committee for Investigation of Torture in Belarus, the platform will assist in the collection, verification, preservation and documentation of evidence of serious human rights violations.

The civil-society based initiative has received a joint declaration of support from 19 states, and comes in answer to recommendations made by rapporteur Professor Wolfgang Benedek, professor of international law at the University of Graz, under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Moscow Mechanism.

Professor Benedek, who was appointed rapporteur by the 17 OSCE participating states, released a report in November



© Sopa Images Limited/Alamy Stock Photo

2020 that detailed overwhelming and unprecedented reports of human rights abuses in Belarus preceding, during, and in the aftermath of the August 2020 presidential election.

Particular concern was raised over the lack of accountability in well-documented cases of torture and ill-treatment, as well as the absence of fair trials in political cases. Numerous recommendations were made in the report including the immediate end of all violence, and the release of oppositional figures, including peaceful protestors and media workers. To date, little evidence has emerged that the State has heeded any recommendations; however, Belarusian and international human rights organisations continue to advocate for accountability within Belarus.

The IAPB will work in collaboration with these established Belarusian human rights organisations, and hopes to develop the ongoing courageous work already being done.



Read more: [iapbelarus.org](https://iapbelarus.org)

# UK Sanctions on Chinese Officials for Uyghur Abuses Welcomed

By Charlie Loudon, REDRESS' International Legal Adviser

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REDRESS, along with a number of other human rights organisations and parliamentarians, appealed for the UK government to impose sanctions on Chinese officials and entities responsible for human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region.

Having submitted a dossier of evidence to the UK Foreign Office in November 2020, the imposition of sanctions on four officials and one entity in March 2021 was a welcome step to address one of the most urgent contemporary human rights crises.

The abuses against the Uyghur people and other minority populations in the region date back to late 2016. The UK Foreign Secretary was given the power to impose sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for human rights abuses in

2020, under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations. These powers were previously used in Myanmar, North Korea, Russia, Belarus, as well as against the Saudi individuals involved in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. They allow the government to impose travel bans and asset freezes on those sanctioned.

Until March of 2021, Chinese officials and entities responsible for human rights abuses in Xinjiang were absent from these designations. It was a success for the advocacy of REDRESS, our partner NGOs, and the members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, who continue to encourage a broader spectrum of action to end the violations against China's Uyghur population and seek reparations for victims.

REDRESS is also working on a new initiative which seeks to take action to seize the corrupt assets of high-profile human rights abusers and, where possible, have them assigned as reparations for the benefit of their victims.



Read more: [redress.org/financialaccountability/](https://redress.org/financialaccountability/)



Watch a video



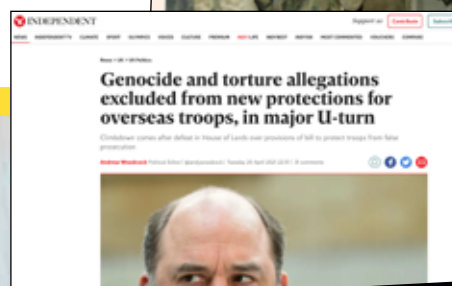
# Campaign Leads to UK Government U-Turn on the Overseas Operations Bill

By Chris Esdaile, REDRESS' Legal Advisor

Follow Chris on Twitter on [@ChrisEsdaile](https://twitter.com/ChrisEsdaile)



© Amateur video/BBC. Footage shown during The Baha Mousa Inquiry depicting British troops screaming abuse at Iraqi detainees in their custody in Iraq in 2003.



After sustained campaigning from a wide coalition, which included REDRESS and other civil society organisations, the Overseas Operations Bill passed into law in April as the Overseas Operations Act without its initial proposal that would have created an effective amnesty for serious international crimes committed by UK service personnel.

The bill originally proposed that where five years had elapsed, there would be a presumption against the prosecution of UK service personnel where they were alleged to have committed international crimes, including torture, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, crimes against humanity, and even genocide.

Although the British government argued this was to minimise so-called 'vexatious' claims brought against the armed forces, REDRESS and other human rights organisations noted that the bill, if passed, would lead to the breach of international legal standards that had become part of British law. A briefing paper produced by REDRESS outlined how the proposals would have prevented survivors of torture and ill-treatment from obtaining justice for what happened to them.

In April, the House of Lords inflicted a defeat on the UK government, with peers expressing concern that the UK government's initial proposal would have undermined the UK's global leadership on human rights. As a result, the government accepted amendments

to exclude any international crimes from the scope of the bill, in relation to such prosecutions.

This means that in cases where British personnel commit criminal offences that do not amount to international crimes the new law introduces what amounts to a five-year 'statute of limitations'.

Other human rights organisations who were part of the campaign included Freedom from Torture, Amnesty International, Liberty, Human Rights Watch and Reprieve.

As a human rights organisation which brings legal claims around the world on behalf of British citizens who have been tortured and ill-treated abroad, REDRESS is pleased that the British government eventually upheld the absolute prohibition of torture.

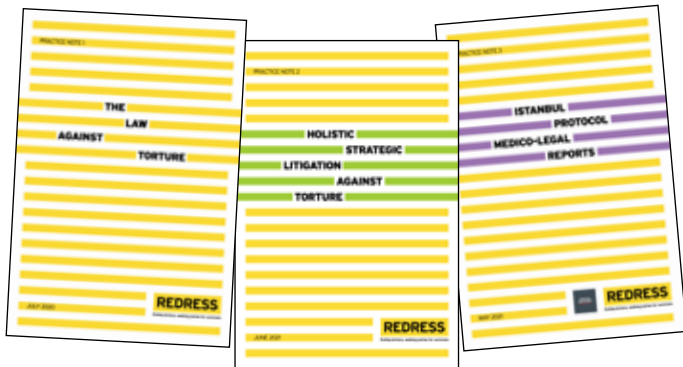
Unfortunately, the new law does restrict the ability of survivors of torture and ill-treatment to bring civil claims for damages in the UK against the Ministry of Defence (MOD), in relation to acts that have taken place abroad. These new restrictions could well impact on the ability of survivors to obtain reparations in the future, and indeed would have prevented many such cases which have been brought successfully against the MOD from being brought at all. The government has also recently announced that it will seek to introduce a similar amnesty for serious crimes committed in relation to Northern Ireland.



# Challenging Torture and Ill-Treatment Through Holistic Strategic Litigation

By Alejandra Vicente, REDRESS' Head of Law

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In May, REDRESS launched a new series of practice notes on holistic strategic litigation. These practical guides aim to help lawyers, activists, and medical professionals bring legal challenges that have a broader impact outside of the individual case. They fall under our Solidarity programme, through which REDRESS seeks to further the global movement against torture, by a mutual sharing of expertise with colleagues and other NGOs.

Holistic strategic litigation combines casework with other civil-society techniques such as advocacy, media, communications, and activism to ensure there is impact after the judgment, a community behind the client, and a cause behind the case.

This could be through a change to policy, law, or general attitude that would help deter and prevent human rights abuses.



© REDRESS. Training of human rights lawyers in Uganda.

It also enables a survivor to advocate for their own cause and sees a legal team help facilitate this through the provision of psychological, social, and medical help for the duration of the litigation process. Each practice note draws from REDRESS's extensive experience working with this method, and benefit from comprehensive case studies.

Seven practice notes are already available on the REDRESS website. They cover the law against torture; holistic strategic litigation against torture; implementation of judgments; the Istanbul Protocol; enforced disappearances in Africa; working with child victims of trauma; and facilitating strategic litigation workshops.

These practice notes go hand-in-hand with another of REDRESS's projects consisting of training modules, videos and PowerPoint presentations to deliver workshops on strategic litigation against torture. The training materials are available at [redress.org/resources/training](https://redress.org/resources/training)

We are grateful to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture as well as the Matrix Causes Fund for their support on these projects. We hope they will aid lawyers and activists in putting together legal challenges that will help bring justice to survivors and shape the global movement against torture.



**Download the training materials at**  
[redress.org/resources/training](https://redress.org/resources/training)

## Publications Round-Up



Other recent publications include: • [Year One in Numbers: UK Global Human Rights Sanctions](#) provides a data-driven analysis of the first year of the UK Global Human Rights Sanctions regime • [Policy Briefing on Domestic Accountability Efforts in Sudan](#) • [Universal Jurisdiction Annual Review 2021](#) highlights the impact of COVID-19 on prosecutions of torture, war crimes and other universal jurisdiction crimes • [Submission for the Universal Periodic Review of Sudan](#) • [Policy Briefing on](#)

[Financial Accountability for Perpetrators of Torture and other Human Rights Abuses](#) • [Financial Accountability for Torture and Other Human Rights Abuses Framework](#) serves as a tool to help identify and develop potential case strategies for pursuing financial accountability for torture and other serious human rights abuses • [Upholding the Absolute Ban on Torture: Submission to the Independent Human Rights Act Review](#) • [Policy Briefing: Legal and Institutional Reforms in Sudan](#)



# Stronger Steps for Justice Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Needed



© Gwenn Dubourthoumieu/IRIN/UN OCHA. A victim of rape during the conflict in DRC.

By **Lisa-Marie Rudi**, REDRESS' Consultant Legal Officer

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Survivors of sexual violence often experience long-lasting harm, which includes physical injuries, psychological impacts and trauma, as well as stigma and shame. Their relatives and communities can also be affected, with children and grandchildren often experiencing trauma and discriminations for decades.

Given the seriousness of the harms inflicted on victims, a combination of transformative, individual and collective reparations measures is often essential in order to enable survivors to rebuild their lives. Unfortunately, such measures are rarely granted, or their implementation is not enforced. Moreover, they are rarely designed in consultation with survivors themselves resulting in initiatives that do not fit their expectations and needs.

This is why we must highlight the significance and potential of delivering reparations to survivors of such violence. Reparations can help restore a sense of dignity and justice, address the profound consequences of sexual violence, and help break the cycle of gender-based discrimination.

Unfortunately, many survivors will not receive reparations for decades, and oftentimes even when an acknowledgement of the harm done to them is made, they do not live to see it.

In answer to this need for change, REDRESS is embarking on a new multi-country study in partnership with the Global

Survivors Fund, with the hope of understanding the scope of conflict-based sexual violence and the obstacles in the way of reparations, as well as making recommendations for the future. Studies are underway with local partners Kdei Karuna in Cambodia and ATPDH in Chad, with further countries set to participate as the project evolves.

In addition to recommendations, the project aims to create a practitioner-focused tool that supports stakeholders obliged to facilitate the implementation of reparations for victims.

Lack of implementation is an all-too-common occurrence when it comes to sexual violence in conflict. Victims of the Chadian dictator Hissène Habré have yet to see any of the 150 million USD in reparations ordered by a Senegalese court in 2016. Efforts on the domestic level have also stalled: the Chadian government and Habré-era security agents have yet to pay 139 million USD in reparations ordered by a Chadian court in 2015 when it convicted 20 of Habré's accomplices on murder and torture charges. Despite a complaint filed with the African Commission against Chad for failure to implement the reparations judgment and numerous international calls on the African Union to establish the Trust Fund, survivors are still waiting to receive the reparations they are owed.

It is clear that more needs to be done to protect victims of this abhorrent type of violence, and we hope this project can contribute to a reinvigorated global effort.



[Read a blog piece](#)



## Help Bring Nazanin Home



© Alamy. Richard Ratcliffe and his daughter Gabriella in London.

With the shocking news that Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been sentenced to a further year of arbitrary detention after five years served for a crime she did not commit, REDRESS recommits to our efforts to bring her home. REDRESS has worked to secure her release since the beginning, alongside her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, and will continue to advocate to make this a reality.

Notwithstanding this latest setback, there have been positive developments throughout Nazanin's case, with the UK government granting Nazanin diplomatic protection in 2019 based on REDRESS' legal arguments and the UK Foreign Secretary publicly acknowledging this year that Nazanin was subjected to torture, following a medico-legal report commissioned by REDRESS. This was made possible by the generous contributors to our campaign.

It is through this continued support that we will be able to sustain our efforts to reunite Nazanin with her husband and daughter and seek justice for the abuses she has endured.

Please support Nazanin through the campaign [Help Bring Nazanin Home](#)

## Become a Regular Supporter

It is the vital contributions of REDRESS' 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.



© REDRESS. Leopoldo García Lucero, who was tortured under Pinochet in Chile.

Support our ongoing cases: [redress.org/donate](https://redress.org/donate)