

**Shrewsbury Diocese Justice & Peace Commission**  
**Statement for Parish Justice & Peace Groups**  
**Concerning Amnesty International**  
**October, 2007**

The Justice & Peace Commission deeply regrets the decision made by Amnesty International (AI) to change its position to one of regarding access to abortion as a human right in certain circumstances, notably when women have been victims of the use of rape as a weapon of terror.

Whilst condemning such brutality and having concern for the plight of women in such circumstances, the Commission cannot condone the stance Amnesty has taken on abortion. The Catholic Church's teaching on the sanctity of all life is unambiguous.

The Commission has never been a member of AI, although it has commended its valuable human-rights work and promoted its greetings card campaign.

Several high profile Catholics have resigned from the organisation, whilst others have chosen to retain membership, seeking to change its policy from within. It is for individuals to make their own decision whether to express their opposition to the new policy by resigning or remaining a member and lobbying whenever possible for a reversal of the policy. However, the Commission considers that Catholic Church groups would need to consider very carefully how they could justify continuing membership of an organisation that espouses a policy directly in opposition to Church teaching, particularly when the Church so strongly opposed the introduction of the new policy.

In the view of the Commission there seems no good reason why cards and letters may not be sent to/prisoners of conscience whose details are taken from the AI website. By doing this we **are not** supporting AI, we **are** supporting the prisoners of conscience, for some of whom these cards and letters may be a matter of life and death.

Those wanting to support other human-rights initiatives may wish to consider one or more of the organisations listed below. The descriptions given are taken from the websites of the organisations, but the Commission does not have detailed knowledge of their policies and you may wish to investigate more fully.

In considering these issues, parish groups will naturally wish to consult with their parish priests.

**Action for Christians for the Abolition of Torture**

01752 843417 [www.acatuk.org.uk](http://www.acatuk.org.uk)

ACAT(UK) was formed in 1984 by the then British Council of Churches, with the active support of Amnesty International. It has a greetings card campaign.

**Anti-Slavery**

020 7501 8920 [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

Anti-Slavery International, founded in 1839, is the world's oldest international human rights organisation and the only charity in the United Kingdom to work exclusively against slavery and related abuses.

### **Christian Solidarity Worldwide**

020 8942 8810 [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is a human rights organisation specialising in religious freedom. CSW works on behalf of those persecuted for their Christian beliefs and promotes religious liberty for all. It has a letter-writing campaign.

### **Jubilee Campaign**

[www.jubileecampaign.co.uk](http://www.jubileecampaign.co.uk)

Jubilee Campaign is an effective human rights pressure group bringing lasting change to children at risk and persecuted Christian families worldwide. It has a letter-writing campaign.

### **Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture**

020 7697 7777 [www.torture.care.org.uk](http://www.torture.care.org.uk)

Founded in 1985, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture provides care and rehabilitation to survivors of torture and other forms of organised violence.

### **Redress**

020 7793 1777 [www.redress.org](http://www.redress.org)

Redress is a human rights organisation that helps torture survivors obtain justice and reparation. Redress works with survivors to help restore their dignity and to make torturers accountable. We seek a variety of remedies, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition. Redress' national and international programmes are aimed at ensuring that the rights of torture survivors, whoever they are, and wherever they are located, are realised in practice.