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## **UK: Decision to hand torture inquiry to intelligence committee strongly criticised**

‘Today’s announcement is yet another effort by the UK to shirk its responsibility to get at the full truth’ - John Dalhuisen

Responding to today’s announcement from the Minister without Portfolio Ken Clarke that the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee will examine allegations of UK involvement in torture and other human rights violations concerning people detained overseas in the context of counter terrorism operations, Amnesty International Europe and Central Asia Director John Dalhuisen said:

“Today’s announcement about how the UK government now intends to address torture allegation is as disappointing as it is predictable.

“The interim report of the Detainee Inquiry has identified 27 issues for further examination, underscoring the need for an effective, independent, human rights-compliant inquiry.

“Combating torture requires coming clean about when and where it occurred, identifying who was involved, and holding those responsible to account.

“The Intelligence and Security Committee is the wrong body for this vital job and today’s announcement is yet another effort by the UK to shirk its responsibility to get at the full truth.’.

“Handing the investigation over to the ISC raises the prospect that much of the truth may remain buried, and that no full judge-led inquiry will ever materialise.”

### Background

On 6 July 2010, the Prime Minister David Cameron announced to Parliament that there would be an independent inquiry into allegations of UK involvement in torture and other human rights violations with respect to individuals detained abroad in the context of counter-terrorism operations.

In the period that followed the inquiry's establishment - the Detainee Inquiry, chaired by the retired judge Sir Peter Gibson - Amnesty International along with several other NGOs, repeatedly raised concerns about the inquiry's failure to discharge the UK's international legal obligation to ensure a full, independent and impartial investigation into the allegations of torture and ill-treatment. In particular, NGOs highlighted the need for an independent mechanism for determining what material should be disclosed

On 18 January 2012, the work of the Detainee Inquiry was brought to a close in light of new criminal investigations into alleged UK involvement in the rendition to Libya of Sami al Saadi and Abdelhakim Belhadj in 2004. On 27 June 2012, the Detainee Inquiry provided the UK government with a report of its preparatory work. Today, 19 December 2013 – over a year and a half later – the UK government has

published the report.

Amnesty International will consider the 115-page report in detail over the coming weeks. However, the report highlights 27 separate issues in need of further investigation, including information indicating that the government or its agencies may have become inappropriately involved in some cases of rendition.

The ISC has previously failed to fully investigate, or was not provided adequate information to fully investigate, prior allegations of torture, ill-treatment, rendition and surveillance in the context of counter-terrorism and national-security. Despite some changes to the ISC following the coming into force of the Justice and Security Act 2013, the government still retains the right to withhold information from the ISC where material is considered to be “sensitive” or on grounds of national security (Schedule 1 (4)(5)). Sensitive information includes information provided by a foreign intelligence agency which objects to its further disclosure.

The UK government has stated that following the outcome of the ISC investigation it will take a view as to whether a further judicial inquiry remains necessary to add any further information of value to future policy making and the national interest