Acting in all our interests

In February 2014, the Haldane Society human rights lecture was delivered by Phil Shiner, vice-president of the Haldane Society and founder of Public Interest Lawyers (PIL). Phil discussed a number of issues relating to UK human rights violations in Afghanistan and Iraq, tracking litigation over a period of 10 years and addressing ground breaking cases such as Al-Skeini.

Al-Skeini was a case heard at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg concerning the killing of six Iraqi civilians by British forces. The European Court of Human Rights found that the UK's obligations to the human rights Convention applied in Iraq and by failing to investigate abuses the UK had breached the Convention. Phil explained how the Al-Skeini decision was helpful in opening up our legal system to allow Iraqi civilians to come forward and seek justice. There are now hundreds of these cases where allegations have been made by Iraqi civilians that they suffered human rights abuses by British forces. These abuses include unlawful killing, holding civilians in detention incommunicado and torture. Phil also discussed the case of Baha Mousa who had been tortured, abused, hooded and left to die with substantial injuries all over his body. Only one person was ever convicted in relation to his death.

Between 2003 and 2008, hundreds of Iraqi civilians were held in British custody and allege they suffered human rights abuses at the hands of British forces. The evidence that corroborates these allegations includes videos of British interrogators using coercive techniques such as stress positions and degrading treatment including simulating anal and oral sex. We also learned about the increase in private military companies operating in combat zones and the increasing use of drones.

In January 2014, PIL and the Berlin-based European Centre...
Providing a supportive environment

The Haldane Society Feminist Lawyers network (HFL) is a sub-group of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. The group formed in 2013 following a resolution by the executive committee for its activities that year to focus on fighting the UK Government’s cuts, privatisation, and the economic policies of austerity.

The housing crisis, the prevalence of zero hours contracts, and the conditions under which marginalised groups are disproportionately paying the price of austerity. It has been within this context that the group arose to staunchly stand in opposition to capitalism, sexism, rape culture, racism, and discrimination. We seek to analyse the law and legal systems from a socialist and feminist perspective. We aim to give women and allies a friendly space to discuss these issues openly. We send our condolences to her family and friends.

Rebecca Harvey

May

1: Judge Anthony Leonard QC stays the “Operation Cotton” fraud trial, saying the defendants did not receive a fair trial owing to an absence of legal representation. Barristers refused work at new rates of remuneration creating another crisis for Justice Secretary Chris Grayling. The Court of Appeal later reversed the ruling.

2: The High Court finds that the Ministry of Defence breached English law, Afghan law, and international humanitarian law by allowing Afghans to be held beyond a 96-hour limit on British military bases.

2: Control orders against two men who were detained in Somalia, allegedly beaten and subjected to a mock execution before being flown to the United Kingdom, are quashed. Lord Justice Kay criticised the High Court for hearing evidence behind closed doors so that the appellants and public were denied knowledge of the extent to which their case was accepted or rejected.

3: Haldane Society members attend the 40th birthday party of News from Nowhere – Liverpool’s radical community bookshop. Held at the iconic Adelphi Hotel, music and partying followed a conference earlier in the day entitled ‘Liverpool – city of working class resilience’ at which various campaigns including the struggle against the bedroom tax convened.