Fahad Ansari spoke about Babar Ahmed, who has now been in custody for over seven years. His continued detention without charge or trial is an affront to anything calling itself justice.

John Carlos started by remarking on the applause that had met his introduction as an Olympic medalist: ‘My life is not about winning medals,’ he said, ‘it is about being a freedom fighter’. Tommy Smith, John Carlos and others tried to organise a boycott of the 1968 Olympic games but failed to get enough support from fellow athletes. John argued that doing something noble and worthwhile for fellow blacks suffering poverty and discrimination back home was worth a lot more than fifteen minutes of fame on the track or in the field. ‘I am not afraid to offend my oppressor’, he proclaimed.

Matt Wrack, the General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, which had sponsored the meeting, declared, ‘You cannot separate sport and politics’. He spoke powerfully about the tradition of struggle in Britain and especially in east London where the 2012 Olympics are being held against a backdrop of militarisation and erosion of civil rights. We can look to past victories in Cable Street and Brick Lane, he said, and we must never simply sit back and let things happen to us.

Unjum Mirza of the RMT observed that the Olympic torch was introduced by the Nazis for the 1936 Games. Finally, the socialist sports writer Dave Zirin, who co-authored The John Carlos Story, looked to Greece, the birthplace of the Olympics and said, ‘Greece has now given us a new torch – the anti-austerity torch.’

Throughout, the meeting was enthusiastic and involved, with regular standing ovations and shouts of encouragement and anger when speakers referred to another injustice.

Nick Wrack

The Rendition Project

On 21st May 2012, two academics in participation with the legal non-governmental organisation (NGO) Reprieve launched the website ‘The Rendition Project’.

Dr Ruth Blakeley and Dr Sam Raphael have created a resource aimed at bringing together and analysing the extensive amount of data that exists on rendition and secret detention. This followed a collaborative research project funded by the UK’s Economic and Social Research Council.

A database is being developed of all known victims of rendition and secret detention in the ‘War on Terror’ and its aftermath, as well as the facilities in which these individuals have been held. Also being compiled is the largest publicly available database of flight records for those aircraft associated with rendition. The duo highlight how they are indebted to Reprieve, who have provided access to large amounts of data, as well as guidance and advice on public source materials.

The website is to feature:
- A comprehensive timeline of key events;
- Detailed profiles and analysis of detention facilities used by the US and its partners, integrating all public data on their construction, location and operation;
- Detainee profiles, which will bring together available evidence on their detention, movement and treatment in the system;
- The world’s largest public access database of flights by CIA aircraft connected to rendition, fully searchable, and based upon the compilation of all public source information about the renditions programme;
- Profiles on the aircraft used to move detainees from site to site, and the companies which were often involved in operating these aircraft;
- Access to the key primary documents made available by those researchers that have worked to uncover the renditions programme, including prisoner lists, flight logs, and land purchase agreements. Many of these have become available through the use of Freedom of Information legislation;
- An extensive library of governmental and intergovernmental reports and inquiries in relation to rendition and secret detention, as well as major investigative reports by NGOs and others working in the field.

For more info go to: www.therenditionproject.org.uk

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