

Press Statement re. arrests on 15th September 2005

A number of wholly innocent Algerian refugees rightly acquitted by a jury in April 2005, or against whom all charges were dropped long before trial, were this morning abruptly arrested and informed they will be deported to Algeria, a country where all face death or torture. At least one of these men was horrifically tortured in that country and bears the scars today.

Algeria feels free to operate entirely outside any international constraints on grotesque actions towards its own citizens. In the world league table of torturers it frequently heads the list.

What is this government doing to these refugees? Its actions make a mockery of jury trials and verdicts, a mockery of judicial decisions and a mockery of guarantees intended to be inalienable. In doing so it forfeits for this country all international respect just as Algeria did long ago. It has abandoned the rule of law, lock stock and barrel.

As a footnote we are told the men have been taken to Long Lartin prison in Worcestershire where today one Algerian man interned for three years and driven mad in Belmarsh was found hanging this afternoon in his cell. We are told he is alive but we have the most serious fears for him and for the mental and physical health of all who have sustained long periods already in prison, have been released only to find they are again locked up until they are to be returned to a country that will torture them.

Gareth Peirce
Birnberg Peirce & Partners