

Britain's Complicity in Libya Rendition and Torture. Evidence Should Be Heard in Secret - Cameron Government

By [RT](#)

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Image: ARCHIVE PHOTO: Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair (L) shakes hands with Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi near Gaddafi's home town of Sirte May 29, 2007 (Reuters / Leon Neal)

Westminster is pushing for evidence relating to Britain's alleged complicity in Libya torture and rendition to be presented to a high court judge in secret. It concerns 12 men who are attempting to sue the British state.

Government lawyers say the secret evidence they wish to present would disprove the allegations of five of these claimants. A move to have the allegations thrown out of court in January was shot down after Justice Irwin said the assertions were of "public concern" and should be dealt with by Britain's courts.

Observers have described the case as unique and unprecedented in the history of the British state. Irwin is expected to decide Wednesday whether to allow evidence to be presented in secret.

The case relates to a collection of files seized from Libyan archives following the overthrow of longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi. The documents uncover clandestine links between UK and Libyan intelligence officers during ex-Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair's premiership.

Among the files are MI5 accounts of Libyan exiles, an intelligence document marked "UK/Libya Eyes Only - Secret" and accounts of meetings between UK and Libyan intelligence officers, The Guardian reports. London-based lawyers representing the claimants say these documents support their clients' case for suing the British government.

Among the allegations leveled at the British state are corruption in public office, conspiracy to cause harm, imprisonment on false grounds and blackmail.

During Tuesday's court proceedings, Thomas de la Mare QC, who is representing the claimants, said government lawyers' request to present evidence in secret is strategic.

He argued that the government's case relies on sensitive documents that view the claimants through a national security lens, but fails to consider material relating to their human rights. He stressed the claimants' rights are central to their case against the British government

Roy Phillips QC, representing the government, said a secret court session would pave the way for sensitive material to be presented to the court in support of the state's case.

The documents seized in the wake of Gaddafi's fall reveal a group of five men were assessed by UK intelligence officers and subject to control orders. Under British law, a control order is issued by the Home Secretary to restrict a person's civil liberties in an effort to protect the populace from terror threats.

However, the intelligence assessments which sparked this intervention are now alleged to have been based on information gleaned during the interrogation of influential Libyan dissidents Sami al-Saadi and Abdel Hakim Belhaj. Both men claim to have been subjected to UK-Libyan rendition operations.

This practice of dispatching foreign terror suspects to be interrogated in states with less robust human rights reputations has been condemned worldwide. Both al-Saadi and Hakim Belhaj say they were tortured by Gaddafi's security police in 2004.

London-based lawyers representing the claimants argue Britain's high court and the Special Immigration Appeal Commission (SIAC) were never informed about the UK's role in the capture of al-Saadi and Hakim Belhaj. They say this information casts their claimants' case in a markedly different light.

Frosty relations between Britain and Libya began to thaw in 1999. Following this reconciliation, intelligence services from both states began to cooperate in targeting opponents of Gaddafi's regime who were offered asylum in the UK and elsewhere.

The men who have brought a claim against the British state were members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). The political organization attempted to assassinate Gaddafi on three separate occasions since its founding in the early 1990s. Its influence had waned considerably by the turn of the millennium.

Official claims were brought against the British government on behalf of these 12 Libyan men in January 2013. But much of the case remains to play out as government lawyers seek to have it thrown out of court before the allegations are fully considered.

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