



Speech by

Hon. J. FOURAS

MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE

Hansard 13 December 2001

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
Take a Step to Stamp Out Torture Campaign

Hon. J. FOURAS (Ashgrove—ALP) (3.39 p.m.): Torturers do not discriminate between men, women and children. Torturers do, however, discriminate on the basis of ethnicity or political beliefs. Torture is carried out using weapons such as fists, sticks, gun butts, makeshift whips, iron pipes, baseball bats and electric flex. Amnesty believes that other methods of torture that people are forced to endure include: electric shocks, reported in more than 40 countries; suspension of the body, reported in more than 40 countries; beating on soles of the feet, reported in more than 30 countries; suffocating, reported in more than 30 countries; mock execution or death threats, reported in more than 50 countries; and prolonged solitary confinement, reported in more than 50 countries.

Manufacturing, trading and promoting equipment which is used to torture people is a money-making business. Providing training in the techniques of physical and mental torture can be equally profitable. Companies and individuals throughout the world manufacture and market devices and expertise that enable the act of torture to be carried out. Devices such as leg irons and shackles and electroshock devices are traded throughout the world under the disguise that their purpose is for security and crime control.

Torture is a criminal act under international law, and those who commit torture must be brought to justice. According to Amnesty International, at least 150 countries have used torture in the last four years. In more than 80 countries people have died as a result, and in more than 70 countries torture by police officers, prison guards and soldiers is widespread and persistent.

In Sierra Leone, a young girl was stripped naked and sexually assaulted by state officials. Ignoring her pleas for them to kill her, instead they cut off both her hands with machetes. They then told the young girl to take the message to a nearby town. Other girls were abducted and suffered amputations of their hands, arms, lips or ears. However, torture is not carried out only by state representatives but also by family members, employers and others in countries where authorities choose to do nothing to protect people. I would like to read Peter's story, which is quite horrendous. He states—

I come from Jammu/Kashmir. India and Pakistan are fighting over my country. When I was a little child, my father was arrested and tortured several times. When I was five years old, he disappeared and we never heard from him again...

My life was hard and frightening. Soldiers from both sides would come into my village, which is on the border, and start shooting, looking for their 'enemies'. In most cases, innocent people, including children, are killed, women gang raped and our houses set on fire.

When I was 17 I was arrested for trying to stop the soldiers come into the village. They abused me and tortured me. They made me undress completely. Tying my ankles together with rope and laying me on the ground. Hitting me with wooden sticks and a leather belt. I had a sore face and broke my tooth. I still have a broken tooth from being hit on the face.

They crushed my legs with heavy wooden roller. Several times they put my head in a bucket of water for about one and a half minutes. They pulled my hair. I was laid face down on the floor and they used a machine that had a leather belt attached to it, which whipped me on the back repeatedly.

They put chillies on a bottle around the top and pushed it into my backside. It was very painful and I had swelling and sores.

I received no medical treatment and I was not given much food to eat. I was kept in jail for more than one week. I had bruising all over my body and when I urinated there was blood in my urine. They kept asking me for information. I did not know what they wanted.

I escaped and my family paid for me to be taken to Australia. If they had caught me I would have been killed.

I am pleased to support the motion that joins with Amnesty International in its 2001 campaign to stamp out torture.
