

Reprieve appeals to lawyers' sense of justice by asking for one hour's pay

By Tom Phillips

REPRIEVE, the charity that gives legal help to prisoners in Guantánamo Bay or on death row, is calling on lawyers to donate the monetary equivalent of their time.

The 'One Hour' campaign offers lawyers a bill of costs form that they can use to donate the cost of their time in six-minute, 30-minute and one-hour blocks.

Magic circle lawyers and the bar are supporting the scheme, backing the charity for its work with prisoners including British Guantánamo Bay detainee Binyam Mohamed (see box).

Lawyers can also become a 'friend' of One Hour by giving monthly donations.

Jason Glover, global head of private equity at Clifford Chance, says the reasons to back the scheme are staring lawyers in the face.

"As lawyers we should all be champions of justice," he insists. "And despite commencing a legal career with this in mind, many of us no longer possess legal skills which can directly help with the pursuit of justice.

"It was this dilemma which led me to think, 'how can I give my time in a way which maximises the benefit to Reprieve?'"

"The answer was obvious – my contribution shouldn't be my time but rather the value of my time. The One Hour campaign enables all of us to contribute."

25 Bedford Row's Kim Hollis QC also supports the scheme.

"The international value and commitment of Reprieve's work should never be understated," Hollis says. "It's always present to remind us of the obligation on all of us who practise law to ensure that the human rights of the individual are paramount in any democratic society and must never be compromised by the state. Because they're my conscience I've supported them for the past 10 years and will continue to do so."

Reprieve founder Clive Stafford Smith has asked lawyers to remember why they entered the profession.

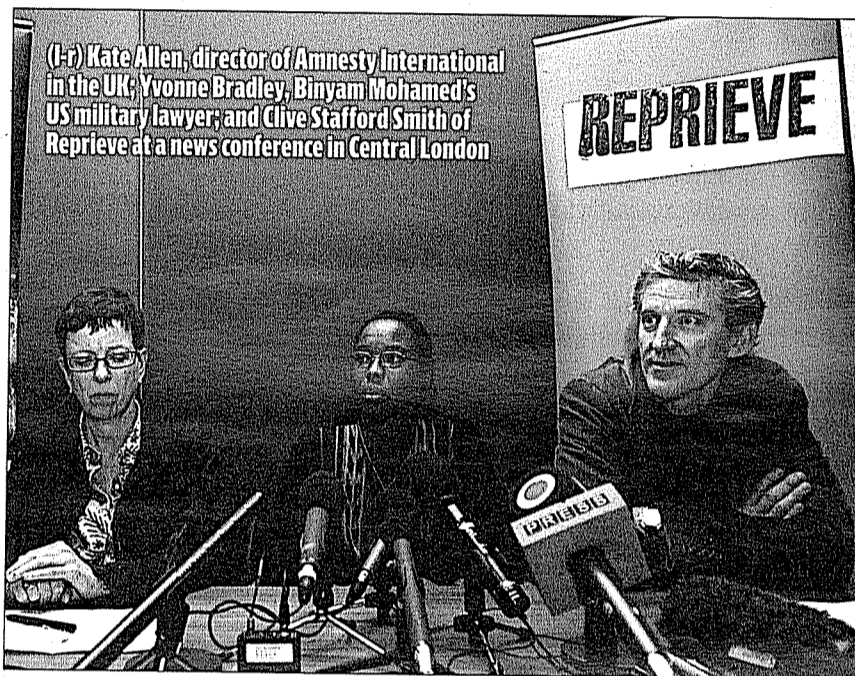
"Many of you will have chosen to go into law in order to help people across the world who are in dire need of support. I know that

As lawyers we should all be champions of justice

Jason Glover,
Clifford Chance

I did," he says. "At Reprieve, we spend every day assisting people who find themselves in the worst situations imaginable. Ours is a struggle for justice, standing up for civil liberties in the face of oppressive regimes and authoritarian punishment.

"So many people depend on Reprieve for a fair deal – it really is life-and-death work."



(l-r) Kate Allen, director of Amnesty International in the UK; Yvonne Bradley, Binyam Mohamed's US military lawyer; and Clive Stafford Smith of Reprieve at a news conference in Central London

CASES IN POINT

For a fairly small organisation, Reprieve punches far above its weight.

Founded by Clive Stafford Smith 10 years ago, its 19 employees, which include lawyers and investigators, make a huge impact, with a £1.3m turnover in 2008. The charity acts for those detained in Guantánamo Bay and other secret prisons throughout the world, as well as for British prisoners on death row worldwide.

Binyam Mohamed, the first prisoner to leave Guantánamo Bay under President Obama, is perhaps the charity's highest-profile case. Reprieve's lawyers are continuing to litigate on Mohamed's behalf in the UK to obtain from the UK

Government proof of his torture, in which it was found to be complicit.

Last month Reprieve also issued proceedings against the Government for Diego Garcia's part in rendition flights.

The charity's death penalty work includes the case of Samantha Orobatur, who was arrested on a drugs charge in Laos in August 2008. Orobatur, who became pregnant while in a Laos jail, was held for several months without access to lawyers and eventually convicted at a very brief 'show trial', during which she was prevented from presenting any defence.

Reprieve says the Laos government has consistently

violated her legal rights, including coercing her into signing statements by withholding her right to a trial, exploiting her vulnerability as a pregnant woman desperate to return to the UK and preventing confidential access to independent legal counsel.

Together with London law firm Bindmans, Reprieve has applied for a judicial review of her detention in Holloway Prison, where she has been held since August.

In September the charity was featured on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, highlighting the case of Linda Carty, a British grandmother who is facing death by lethal injection in Texas.

Reprieve is incredibly efficient at taking all of the resources that it's offered and turning them to effective use

Paul Lomas, Freshfields

Executive director at the charity Clare Algar praises the pro bono work of many lawyers, but adds that the expense of undertaking legal work often hampers the charity.

"To fly out to Guantánamo Bay and get people on the ground who can really get to grips with the cases that we're fighting, we need cash donations," says Algar.

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer litigation partner Paul Lomas said: "Reprieve's work has had an enormous impact in many areas, as has its flair for picking up and advancing human rights issues. It's incredibly efficient at taking all of the resources that it's offered and turning them to effective use."

Reprieve patron Lord Bingham has given his full support to the campaign.

"Reprieve is doing an indispensable job for people facing inhumane prospects no one should ever have to confront, and its successful record is self-evident," he emphasises. "It's the natural charity for lawyers because it stands for so much that we as a profession stand for."

For more information go to www.reprieve.org.uk/onehour

One Day Conference, 17th November 2009, Thistle Marble Arch, London W1

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