

NI: Amnesty welcomes Derry City Council vote to ban 'torture flights' from airport

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The Council voted yesterday (Tuesday) evening to endorse a policy drafted by Amnesty International to block any possible use of the Airport for so-called 'torture flights'. The Council is instructing the Airport management to work with Amnesty International to agree detailed plans for the implementation of the policy.

The airport was one of many originally named as a stopover destination for two Gulfstream private jets, known to have been used in the past by the CIA for so-called 'rendition' flights, the illegal practice of abduction, secret transportation and detention of terror suspects.

Subsequently, Amnesty International was able to give the Airport the 'all-clear', after records for the suspicious flights were shown to members of the local Amnesty Foyle Group. The human rights organisation confirmed that, based on the information provided by the Airport, it seemed clear that the jets were in Derry for legitimate business purposes rather than on unlawful CIA flights.

(emphasis added)

At the time the local council confirmed their opposition to the practice of rendition and Amnesty welcomes the fact that the local authority has now become the first in Europe to adopt a new anti-rendition policy drafted by Amnesty International. The council has committed itself to urging other airport authorities in the UK and Ireland to adopt similar policies.

Patrick Corrigan, Amnesty International's Northern Ireland programme director, says:

"We applaud this move by the Council and look forward to working with airport management in drafting detailed implementation plans. This decision is a beacon for other airport authorities across Europe to follow."

Bridget Meehan, secretary of the Foyle Group of Amnesty International, says:

'We are very pleased by the support shown by our local council in adopting this policy and taking a lead in the campaign to stop the practice of rendition.'

Legal advisers to the human rights body, The Council of Europe, have stated that European states must inspect aircraft landing in their jurisdictions if there are "serious reasons" to believe that prisoners bound for torture or secret detention are on board. Yet it is known that neither the UK nor Irish Governments have been insisting on these safeguards.

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