

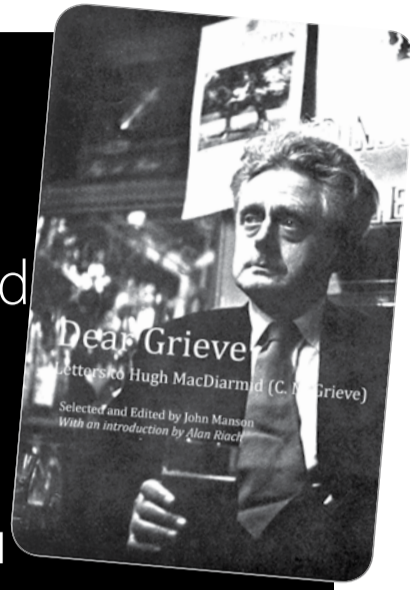
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GADDAFFI OPPONENTS TAKE ON EX-MI6 CHIEF

Two vow to sue former head for alleged role in torture

by Paddy McGuffin
Home Affairs Reporter

TWO leading opponents of the Gaddafi regime who allege British complicity in their rendition and torture are to sue the former head of MI6 for his role in their ordeals.

Abdel Hakim Belhaj and Sami al-Saadi both allege that they were detained with the complicity of MI6 and flown to Libya where they suffered torture at the hands of the regime.

In a highly unusual decision lawyers representing the pair announced yesterday they are to bring action against former MI6 counter-terror director Sir Mark Allen personally after documents appeared to show his direct involvement in the operation.

The documents, which came to light in Tripoli following the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime, included correspondence between Mr Allen and Muammar Gaddafi's foreign minister Moussa Koussa in which the MI6 man congratulates his Libyan counterpart on "the safe arrival" of Mr Belhaj.

The papers also show Mr Allen suggesting that MI6 had carried out the rendition to "dem-



ACCUSATIONS: Sami al-Saadi (left) and Abdel Hakim Belhajj allege British complicity in torture *pics: Reprieve*

onstrate the remarkable relationship we (Britain and Libya) have built over recent years."

Leigh Day solicitors and legal action charity Reprieve have now sent a letter of claim to Sir Mark seeking his response to allegations that he was complicit in torture and misfeasance in public office.

Leigh Day & Co partner Sapna Malik said: "We are taking this unusual step of preparing a



legal action against an individual as the documents we have in our possession suggest Sir Mark was directly involved in the unlawful rendition of our clients and their families.

"The documents, which have so far come to light, raise serious questions to answer, particularly in light of the horrendous treatment to which our clients were subjected. There must be full accountability for this dark episode."

Both Mr Belhaj and Mr Saadi were rendered from East Asia along with their families, having tried to reach Britain to seek asylum.

The two men have each stated that they were interrogated by British and US agents and suffered torture during their detention in the notorious Tajoura prison.

The director of public prosecutions and the Metropolitan Police announced last month the launch of a criminal investigation into the allegations, which could reach the highest levels of government.

Reprieve legal director Cori Crider said: "Abdelhakim Belhaj and Sami al-Saadi and their families deserve an explanation for the appalling abuse they suffered.

"The documents showing British involvement in their rendition to Libya appear to have Mark Allen's name all over them — yet we've not had a word out of him since they became public last year.

"We need to know whether MI6's plan to deliver Gaddafi's opponents into his hands was authorised from the top. If it was, let Sir Mark bring that defence and let's hear who signed off on this shameful affair."

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Plea to Obama over extradition

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