**No More Deaths Campaign Motion – Background Paper**

In 2022 The Foy Society held a conference on the subject of institutional racism in Britain, led by Rev Winnie Gordon. One of the speakers, Ian Minter, presented a paper detailing his extensive research into 150 state related deaths between 1980 and 2020. Ian’s findings shocked those of us present at the Conference. Many of the cases involved asphyxia brought about by inappropriate use of restraint, often on people with serious mental health issues. Particularly distressing is the fact that there were a disproportionate number of people from black and minority ethnic families who had lost their lives at the hands of the state.

Ian’s research was not confined to cases involving the police. He studied tragic deaths across the entire custody estate, including young offender institutions, secure training centres for children, both men’s and women’s prisons, secure mental hospitals and immigration detention centres. He found that in many cases these deaths received little media attention. He studied newspaper resources, inquest reports, coroner reports, court judgments and judicial opinions, parliamentary debates and papers in order to dig out the details of these cases. Ian’s paper has been printed by the GA’s Social Justice Network (formerly the PSAP) and will be available on the SJN stall at the Annual Meetings. Warning – it contains distressing details of brutal and inappropriate treatment by agents of the state.

The charity ***Inquest*** has also published a number of reports with similar findings to Ian’s. ***Inquest*** state that, while public and private bodies have a duty to keep us safe from harm and protect our lives, every year hundreds of people die preventable state related deaths. These include deaths of people in police and prison custody, mental health settings as in the cases studied by Ian Minter, and also those resulting from disasters such as the Grenfell Tower fire and Hillsborough Stadium. In recent times we could add the sad death of headteacher Ruth Perry and deaths arising from the Post Office Horizon scandal as further examples.

**The key point is that, as Ian found, hundreds of vital recommendations are made following inquests and inquiries. Yet there is no system in place to oversee them or ensure changes are made. Potentially life-saving recommendations are too often forgotten, dismissed or simply not implemented. This leads to yet more preventable deaths and harms.**

To remedy this, ***INQUEST*** is calling for a**National Oversight Mechanism** to be established. This would be a new independent public body responsible for collating, analysing and following-up on recommendations arising from inquests, inquiries, official reviews and investigations into state-related deaths. A **National Oversight Mechanism** would:

* **Collate** recommendations and public bodies’ responses in a new database.
* **Analyse** responses from public bodies & issue reports.
* **Follow up** on progress, escalate concerns & share thematic findings

The Foy Society believes that this proposal, if adopted, could make a real difference leading to fewer state related deaths and injuries; and is therefore worthy of Unitarian support.

Part a) of our motion affirms the GA’s support for the ***Inquest*** campaign.

Part b) instructs the EC to add Unitarians to the list of 58 respectable national organisations which already support the campaign.

Part c) urges Unitarians at large to do what they can to promote the campaign.

This motion is supported by the GA **Social Justice Network**.

Footnotes:

1. Further details of the ***Inquest*** campaign, including a list of supporting organisations, can be found on the following links:

<https://www.inquest.org.uk/no-more-deaths-campaign>

<https://www.inquest.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b480f898-7fbd-4c9c-a948-50dd3fad3a04>

1. At present the campaign applies to England and Wales only. This is because different coronial and investigative systems apply in the devolved administrations. ***Inquest*** hope that the proposal can be repurposed for these legislations in due course.