Criminal Justice Act 1988

1988 CHAPTER 33

PART XI

MISCELLANEOUS

Torture

134 Torture.

(1) A public official or person acting in an official capacity, whatever his nationality, commits the offence of torture if in theUnited Kingdom or elsewhere he intentionally inflicts severe pain or suffering on another in the performance or purported performance of his official duties.

(2) A person not falling within subsection (1) above commits the offence of torture, whatever his nationality, if—

(a) in the United Kingdom or elsewhere he intentionally inflicts severe pain or suffering on another at the instigation or with the consent or acquiescence—

(i) of a public official; or

(ii) of a person acting in an official capacity; and

(b) the official or other person is performing or purporting to perform his official duties when he instigates the commission of the offence or consents to or acquiesces in it.

(3) It is immaterial whether the pain or suffering is physical or mental and whether it is caused by an act or an omission.

(4) It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this section in respect of any conduct of his to prove that he had lawful authority, justification or excuse for that conduct.

(5) For the purposes of this section “lawful authority, justification or excuse” means—

Changes to legislation: *Criminal Justice Act 1988, Cross Heading: Torture is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 10 September 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details) View outstanding changes*

(a) in relation to pain or suffering inflicted in the United Kingdom, lawful authority, justification or excuse under the law of the part of the United Kingdom where it was inflicted;

(b) in relation to pain or suffering inflicted outside the United Kingdom—

(i) if it was inflicted by a United Kingdom official acting under the law of the United Kingdom or by a person acting in an official capacity under that law, lawful authority, justification or excuse under that law;

(ii) if it was inflicted by a United Kingdom official acting under the law of any part of the United Kingdom or by a person acting in an official capacity under such law, lawful authority, justification or excuse under the law of the part of the United Kingdom under whose law he was acting; and

(iii) in any other case, lawful authority, justification or excuse under the law of the place where it was inflicted.

(6) A person who commits the offence of torture shall be liable on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for life.

135 Requirement of Attorney General's consent for prosecutions.

Proceedings for an offence under section 134 above shall not be begun—

(a) in England and Wales, except by, or with the consent of, the Attorney General; or

(b) in Northern Ireland, except by, or with the consent of, the **[**[F1]Advocate General for Northern Ireland**]**.

Textual Amendments

F1 Words in s. 135 substituted (12.4.2010) by Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 (c. 26), s. 87(1), **Sch. 7 para. 31**; S.R. 2010/113, art. 2, Sch. para. 19(e)

136, 137. . . . . [F2]

Textual Amendments

F2 Ss. 136, 137, 138(2)(3) repealed by Extradition Act 1989 (c. 33, SIF 48), s. 37, **Sch. 2**

138 Application to Channel Islands, Isle of Man and colonies.

(1) Her Majesty may by Order in Council make provision for extending sections 134 and 135 above, with such modifications and exceptions as may be specified in the Order, to any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or any colony.

(2) . . . . . [F3]

Textual Amendments

F3 Ss. 136, 137, 138(2)(3) repealed by Extradition Act 1989 (c. 33, SIF 48), s. 37, **Sch. 2**

Changes to legislation:
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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:
Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 36(2)(b)(v) and word inserted by 2019 c. 17 s. 13(3)(b)
- s. 36(3A)(3B) substituted for s. 36(3A) by 2008 c. 4 s. 46(2)
- s. 41(4A) inserted by 2004 c. 28 Sch. 10 para. 28
- s. 139AZA(1)(a)(iii) and word inserted by 2019 c. 17 s. 13(4)(b)