

Reprieve

**Strategy
2024- 2025**

About this document

Because of Reprieve's agile nature (as set out below), this strategy document acts as a rolling plan or framework for who we are and what we do. It is not a fixed-term or static document. The Board of Trustees will review and approve it each year, and the Joint Executive Directors will inform the Board of any significant changes as the work progresses. In conjunction with the Strategic Plan, Reprieve develops annual Operational Plans, which include the goals of each team's projects, the means by which those goals will be achieved, who is accountable for overseeing the project, performance indicators, and external variables. Our Operational Plans feed into individual employees' work plans and result in sets of specific outputs that contribute to the attainment of project goals. These are used to assess progress against goals by line managers at monthly management meetings and in annual project evaluation sessions.

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1. Reprieve's Vision, Mission and Values

Vision: Reprieve's Vision is a world without the death penalty or extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of "counterterrorism" or "national security".

Our Mission: Reprieve's Mission is to use strategic interventions to end the use of the death penalty globally, and to end extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of "counterterrorism" or "national security".

We are: Agile; Creative; Fearless; Effective; Resilient; Resolute.

2. Reprieve's Strategy / Modus Operandi

Reprieve is a registered charitable organisation (No. 1114900) comprised of lawyers, campaigners and human rights defenders (42 full-time staff on average throughout 2023, and £3,581,757 income in 2023).

We use strategic interventions to end the use of the death penalty globally, and to end extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of “counterterrorism” or “national security”.

We promote and protect the rights of those facing the death penalty and those who have experienced extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of “counterterrorism” or “national security”, with a focus on arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial executions.

Underlying all of Reprieve's work is a refusal to accept state abuse of power, a belief in the rights of individuals and the rule of law, and a commitment to holding governments to account and bringing power to those without / who have had it taken from them.

Reprieve focuses on the UK and USA, alongside the geographic regions detailed elsewhere in this plan, because many of the grave human rights abuses our clients face today are the devastating legacy of colonial-era and imperialist laws and policies, or stem from abusive policies and practices developed and exported by the UK and the USA in the modern era of securitization. Their responses have ripple effects worldwide, and are frequently used to justify the continuation of the death penalty, extrajudicial executions, torture, rendition and arbitrary detention globally.

Our Death Penalty work focuses on specific regions in North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and South East Asia. Within these regions, we determine our focus on countries by balancing the following factors:

- Whether we have local or regional partners and experience of investigating / litigating / carrying out work in the country in question
- How rife the use of the death penalty is in that country / the rate of executions and / or size of the country's death row
- Our assessment as to the likely impact of our work, both in-country and for abolition regionally or globally
- Our assessment as to whether the activities we undertake in-country will further our objects to an extent which justifies the resources committed
- Our ability to have a reliable and secure presence on the ground working with local partners, and access to the individuals we assist.

In considering these factors, we make an assessment on where we think our work is most needed and is most likely to achieve meaningful change. This necessarily involves surveying the presence and impact of other local and international organisations working to end the death penalty in those countries, and working collaboratively where possible.

Our work fighting extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of “counterterrorism” or “national security” is guided by a similar balancing assessment. This work originally stemmed from our death penalty work, in that all those rendered, tortured and unlawfully detained at Guantánamo Bay Prison post 9/11 were facing possible death sentences. Over time, as the so-called “War on Terror” morphed into a combination of human rights abuses wider than the imposition of the death penalty, and so too did our work broaden. We now focus on abuses in three areas: secret prisons and arbitrary detention, which incorporates our work on the cases of foreign nationals unlawfully detained in North East Syria as well as our work in Guantánamo; extrajudicial executions, which includes our work on lethal drone strikes and unlawful and arbitrary detentions; and torture and renditions work, which focuses on accountability for past abuses, with a goal of preventing such abuses from taking place again. We focus on misconduct by the US, the UK and their allies, based on the premise that we cannot expect other countries to demonstrate respect for human rights and the rule of law / espouse broader notions of human rights if the countries that champion these values in principle renounce them in practice. We prioritise those countries where:

- We have a history of working, strong local partners and understand the local context

- The abuses in question are prevalent
- We believe our work is likely to significantly impact positively on preventing or stopping those abuses, domestically and internationally (by way of knock-on effect)
- On our assessment, the activities that we propose to undertake will further our objects to an extent that justifies the resources committed
- We are able to conduct our work safely, securely and effectively.

It is our investigation of, access to, and representation of victims of human rights abuses – be they on death row, in detention camps in North East Syria, or the survivors of a drone strike – that differentiates us from other well-known international human rights organisations, and gives us the ability to effect change through our strategic casework and advocacy. We are committed to engaging and involving people we support and their clients, families and communities, as well as our colleagues in partner organisations, at every level of our work.

As lawyers and investigators, we are uniquely placed to make the voices of these individuals heard: where possible we meet with them in person, thereby developing a factual portrait of their case and conditions of imprisonment, as well as an understanding of their personal story. Our Fellows, partner organisations and consultants are renowned for their work, and are key to developing trust and gaining access to those whose rights we seek to defend.

We advocate for the people we assist in the courts of law where we can, but importantly we also advocate in other ‘court’ fora – including the ‘court of public opinion’ and ‘political courtrooms’ – both on behalf of victims and in relation to the abuses they face. Using strategic litigation, we effect systemic change and through our clients’ stories, we can change the minds of influential decision-makers and the public.

We are strategic in terms of the cases we take on and how we use work to effect change. Where it becomes apparent that a particular case or campaign is successfully capturing the public imagination and thereby shifting the debate on the issues with which we engage – for example through increased press focus – we invest more resources in it and fine-tune our approach in order to maximise our ability to have an impact for that individual and the broader issue. If a strategy is not working, we stand back from it until a better time, or we re-evaluate and adapt.

Key to our mutable strategy is our agile team of expert investigators, policy and campaigning experts, and lawyers who take our cases to decision-makers and our skilled communications team that takes our message to the public. The importance of public education in Reprieve’s work cannot be overestimated. Many of the people assisted by Reprieve do not have access to meaningful courts of law: their best hope of justice lies in the court of public opinion. By humanising victims of extreme human rights abuses, their families and communities through supporting them to tell their stories and emphasising the value of the rule of law, fairness and due process, extraordinary shifts can be brought about in these audiences.

Agility

The area in which Reprieve operates is dynamic and fast moving. Reprieve’s agility is core to its strategy and approach to the work. All of our staff are familiar with our key objectives. The aim is then to develop creative cases and campaigns that will get us closer to achieving those objectives. We track what is going on in the world and take action accordingly.

Reprieve captures the zeitgeist: we change the debate and we change peoples’ minds. That is our product – it is the thing we do brilliantly, it is the reason our funders fund us and the reason we punch so much above our weight.

3. Current Aims:

(A) Casework and Campaigns

Mission:

Reprieve's mission is to use strategic interventions to end the use of the death penalty globally, and to end extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of "counterterrorism" or "national security".

Specific Aims:

- Limit the use of the death penalty across the world by undertaking investigations, casework and/or litigation – in partnerships with other organisations and individuals – on cases with the potential to create systemic change;
- Engage institutions, governments, civil society, corporations and the public in the fight for abolition of the death penalty worldwide and the end to extreme human rights abuses, focusing specifically on the US, Asia, the Middle East and Africa;
- Continue our work preventing the misuse of medicines; working with stakeholders across the pharmaceutical industry who do not wish their life-saving drugs to be used in life-ending executions;
- Stop ongoing rendition, unlawful detention and torture/cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment associated with "counterterrorism" and "national security";
- Work to secure the release and repatriation or resettlement of men still detained in Guantánamo Bay and offer targeted support to prevent further harms / abuses;
- Secure the repatriation of foreign nationals held in detention camps and prisons in North East Syria, countering the current narrative and building a network of allies;
- Support individuals who have been released from death rows or unlawful detention to engage in strategic advocacy where this is in their interest and they are able to;
- Investigate, expose and seek justice for victims of extrajudicial killings in the name of "counterterrorism" or "national security", including off-battlefield use of weaponised drones and the use of, or collusion with, other mechanisms for state-sponsored assassination;
- Shine a light on UK complicity in abuses within Reprieve's remit, and expose and challenge government policies which may lead to abuses;
- Hold to account those who perpetrated or colluded with past human rights abuses, ensuring a public record of abuses committed and that lessons are learnt from past injustices;
- Hold the US, the UK and their European allies accountable to the highest standards in their responses to allegations of extreme crime;
- Remain agile and responsive to emerging threats associated with the use of the death penalty and human rights abuses carried out in the name of "counterterrorism" or "national security";
- Work with our clients, their families and communities, and others to support those with lived experience of the abuses we work against to share insights into the devastating impact of these abuses, and to explore how we can work together to change the negative public portrayal of their relatives and communities;
- Protect the rule of law and ensure justice is delivered fairly and justly and for all;
- Build global public awareness and support for the issues Reprieve works on; shifting the debate, highlighting individual cases and umbrella themes of abuse and injustice;

- Work with partner organisations across the world, building a network of organisations tackling similar issues;
- Identify and work with other organisations, activists, lawyers and other allies across our geographic areas of work.

(B) Operations

Mission: Create the most efficient, nimble and effective organisation possible, where staff are fully supported to achieve Reprieve's mission.

Specific Aims:

- Ensure that Reprieve's resources - which comprise its people, funds, and physical or digital equipment - are selected, harnessed and deployed efficiently, effectively, securely, ethically, and in compliance with all applicable laws, policies and standards.
- Provide a positive and energising working space that is conducive to the Reprieve team achieving to their maximum potential.
- Provide operational and security support to staff, Fellows, and consultants working outside of the Reprieve office.
- Ensure organisational safeguards are in place to enable Reprieve to do its work to the best of its ability, whilst always keeping the interests of its clients front and centre.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Reprieve's work, and ensure that resources are utilised most efficiently in order to achieve the impact that we seek.
- Ensure that Reprieve's information technology systems and processes best support all staff, Fellows and consultants, working both in the office and remotely, and that technology is an aid in the pursuit and achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives.
- Maintain a close working relationship with Reprieve's Board and its committees, and ensure that the organisation carries out its Mission through its Strategic Plan and Operational Plan, as set by the Board.
- Ensure that Trustees are kept apprised of all significant developments at Reprieve, and that their skills, experience and expertise are harnessed and deployed.

(C) Development and Outreach

Mission: Generate the right level and types of income - by converting public interest in our work into funds - to support Reprieve's work and facilitate its achievement of its mission.

Specific Aims:

- Build public support for our work, and galvanise key audiences such that they are able to take action to assist us in furthering our mission.
- Ensure that Reprieve has the quantum and composition of funding needed to carry out its work efficiently and effectively.

- Gather and analyse data on Reprieve's performance and the impact of Reprieve's work, and communicate that to prospective and current funding sources.

4. Who We Are

Leadership

Reprieve's leadership is provided by its Joint Executive Directors Anna Yearley and Maya Foa.

The senior leadership team (SLT), comprised of Anna and Maya, the team Directors and Deputy Directors, has a close relationship and meets fortnightly. There is a great deal of communication between the SLT and across the organisation generally, and both Anna and Maya are very engaged with the organisation's day-to-day activities. There is also a wider management team, which comprises Project Leads, Project Managers and Heads of. Overall strategy for Reprieve is set by the Board and captured in this strategic mission document, which the Board reviews annually. Anna and Maya are responsible for carrying out Reprieve's strategic direction, its organisational functioning, its management of its resources (including its funding), and its interaction with the Board.

Board

Our Board of trustees holds ultimate responsibility for Reprieve and its work. The skill mix of the trustees is designed to bring a balance of legal, charitable, commercial and communications experience and expertise to underpin the strategy of the organisation. The Board delegates some of its powers and functions to sub-committees comprised of trustees, and, in some cases, individuals with subject matter expertise.

Reprieve's Board meets at least four times a year. With the Joint Executive Directors and Reprieve's Directors, it sets and monitors overall strategy for the organisation, and monitors the budget. Reprieve's various sub-committees, including its Finance Committee, Risk Committee, Development Committee and Nominations Committee, report to the Board on their deliberations, decisions, and matters of organisational significance. As of July 2024, the Board comprises Dame Elish Angiolini – Chair, Stephen Kinsella – Deputy Chair, Luca Bosatta - Treasurer, Alexandra Pringle, Ayesha Hazarika, Jane Lush, Matthew McGregor, Christopher Duckett, Helen Marshall, Simi Arora-Lalani and Rupert Welchman.

The Board regularly conducts a skills audit and arranges for each member to meet with the Chair to review their position and input. Trustees have 3-year terms, renewable once, and the Board discusses replacing trustees as far in advance as possible prior to the end of their term. These discussions take place with reference to the skills audit results.

Staff and Structure

Reprieve is a small, committed and dynamic team. The skill mix divides between legal, investigative, communications, finance, fundraising, digital and operations skills.

The casework and advocacy – in the areas of death penalty, extrajudicial executions and secret prisons – continues to develop under the direction of the Joint Executive Director, Maya Foa, with the support of the casework and advocacy and policy Directors and Deputy Directors.

Reprieve's casework and advocacy is supported by its Operations team, the Deputy Director, Legal and Governance, the Deputy Director of Development and Outreach, the Head of Finance and the Head of Operations. This ensures that Reprieve's casework has solid and stable operational, security, resource, and legal foundations.

Reprieve has a clear and tight structure, with strong lines of communication and accountability between its senior management team, managers and officers / caseworkers. Being lean and agile ensures that we maximise information flows and conserve as much resource as possible for advancement of the cases of the clients that we assist. There are five levels of report flowing upwards to the Joint Executive Directors: 1) Officer / Caseworkers; 2) Project Leads/ Project Managers; 3) Heads Of; 4) Deputy Directors; 5) Directors.

These levels are differentiated both in terms of remuneration, and by specific and transparent criteria. As staff are promoted at Reprieve, their level of accountability increases, with the senior team having significant oversight and responsibility for a range of areas, as well as some delegated powers and functions of the Board. The pay structure remains comparatively flat, governed by a policy of a 2:1 ratio between the highest paid member of staff and the lowest paid member of staff.

Fellows and partner organisations

We have learned that the swiftest and best way to address human rights abuses is by working closely with human rights defenders on the ground. We seek to partner with organisations and individuals who know the law, custom and language of the country in question who are best placed to guide and advise on how to assist the clients we work with and effect change in the country in question. We endeavour to support these individuals and organisations, including through skills sharing and trainings, and by amplifying the work (where appropriate) through international mechanisms.

Our Fellows, partner organisations and consultants are renowned for their work, and are key to developing trust and gaining access to those whose rights we seek to defend. Typically, our Fellows and consultants will identify people who have experienced human rights abuses and we will then bring those people and their stories to decision-makers. Consultants, Fellows and staff at partner organisations also carry out in-country work. For example, our Malawi Fellows and partners have played a vital role in the immediate releases of prisoners formerly sentenced to the mandatory death penalty in Malawi.

External Support

Reprieve has a considerable amount of support from external sources. We are given significant pro bono assistance by various law firms, in terms of advice for the organisation, provision of secondees trainees to assist our teams as part of a structured secondment programme, casework assistance for our clients, and project based support for strategic interventions. We work closely with an extensive array of media across the world. We work hard to develop these external relations, as they leverage our capacity significantly.

Other Resources

We have registered the name Reprieve as a trademark in the UK, Europe and Australia. We have registered the trademark in the US and have licenced it to our independent sibling organisation Reprieve US.

Reprieve US

Reprieve works closely with its sibling organisation, Reprieve US. Reprieve US is an independent s503(c)(1) entity with a separate Board of Trustees. As at July 2024, Reprieve US employs 4 members of staff, and has recently recruited a new Deputy Director. Reprieve US also engages a number of 12-month academic fellows. Reprieve works in close partnership with Reprieve US and benefits from its direct advocacy in the US, its relationship with the US media and funders, and its ability to litigate in the US.

5. Culture

Reprieve's primary resource is its people, their commitment, experience and ability. Staff feel a sense of ownership of the organisation and its direction, share a belief and commitment that motivates them, binds them to the organisation and informs the culture at Reprieve.

As well as being agile, Reprieve encourages staff to be creative in their projects, fearless in their ambition, and accountable to those whom we assist and the public at large.

We work hard and we aim to produce excellent work.

There is an understanding that our objectives are optimistic and we know that we are in it for the long haul. Achievements are celebrated and although we strive to achieve impact on a constant basis, stamina and endurance are necessary for us to realise significant progress and change. Staff are supported in their work and are able to access counselling and other support services to help them manage challenging work and secondary trauma that may arise when dealing with the kinds of human rights abuses our clients have experienced.

The culture at Reprieve is one of professional rigour, mutual respect, and accountability. Importance is placed on communication, knowledge sharing and cross-fertilisation of ideas/inspiration. Reprieve is consultative: we have weekly staff-wide meetings, weekly team meetings and an annual retreat, at which work and organisational direction are discussed, and views of staff are considered by management in the decision-making process. Contributions of ideas and knowledge are encouraged at all levels and from all involved, from secondees through to directors.

We aim to retain the right people in order to ensure that Reprieve is as effective as possible in its work, and the standard of applicants for new jobs advertised is very high. Reprieve is proud of its diversity and strives to hire staff from diverse backgrounds.

6. Place in market

At Reprieve, we pride ourselves on our agility. We react quickly and effectively to new challenges and, as a result, we are often debate-formers. We work closely with larger partner NGOs to ensure that they have access to the facts we gather, so that both those facts and our narrative are disseminated as widely as they can facilitate.

We also engage and cooperate with a wide range of civil society organisations in the UK in order to share our knowledge, strategy and, most importantly, lend our voice on issues of joint concern.

Reprieve co-operates closely with specialised non-profit human rights organisations around the world, and with law firms around the world. We have strong contacts and networks in all the countries in which we work, built-up over many years' work in those countries.

7. History and Achievements

Reprieve has spent the past 25 years fearlessly pursuing justice for people whose experiences have made them some of world's the most vulnerable: those facing the death penalty and those victimised by states' abusive counterterrorism policies. It is in these cases that human rights and the rule of law are most easily and frequently cast aside, and the most integral principles in our society come under attack. Our mission is to uphold the rule of law and protect the rights of those whom powerful governments seek to attack. Our work is global but strategic – we take on cases and issues that others shy away from, but where we believe we can deliver change, and shape a more just world.

Our work throughout 2023 moved us closer to our vision of a world without the death penalty or extreme human rights abuses. Across the world, we worked to limit the application of the death penalty by taking on individual cases while engaging in strategic campaigns that have the potential to create systemic

change. In the United States and countries across the Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and South East Asia we shone a spotlight on the use of the death penalty, reduced executions and saved lives. We also continued to challenge abuses committed in the name of “counterterrorism” or “national security” with a specific focus on secret prisons and extrajudicial executions. By shining a light on these abuses, holding perpetrators to account and working to ensure past abuses are never repeated, we have focused on long-running abuses while being at the frontline of new and emerging human rights issues.

Alongside both areas of our work we have shone a spotlight on abuses, supported those we are here to protect and their communities to tell their stories to shift perceptions and encourage public and political interest in our issues.

Examples of recent achievements can be found in our Annual Report.

8. Where we work

Reprieve is based in London and works closely with its network of Fellows, consultants and partners globally.

Reprieve engages with the death penalty; and extreme human rights abuses carried out by states in the name of “counterterrorism” or “national security” in:

- Europe
- the Middle East and North Africa
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- South Asia
- South East Asia
- the United Kingdom
- the United States.

Reprieve assists:

- Prisoners on death rows or facing death sentences around the world
- Individuals detained without trial
- Victims of drone strikes and their families
- People who have been subjected to torture, rendition, arbitrary and unlawful detention and extrajudicial executions around the world.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Measurement is not straightforward: Reprieve should be capturing the zeitgeist: changing the debate and changing people’s minds about the death penalty and abuses committed in the name of “counterterrorism” or “national security”. Thus, we need to measure whether we are achieving that.

As set out above, part of Reprieve’s strategy is to react rapidly to external events, which means that we have a constant eye on what is happening in the world. Further, we constantly evaluate the projects, cases and campaigns we are working on, asking ‘is this working? Is this changing the debate?’ If it is not, we pivot the project or drop it. There is therefore ongoing evaluation, in addition to the formal evaluation we carry out.

We monitor and evaluate our progress through annual evaluation sessions. At the evaluation sessions, project teams examine their goals, activities, external outputs and lessons learned.

The first questions we ask during formal and informal evaluation of projects / cases are:

1. Does this case / project take us closer to achieving Reprieve’s Vision?
2. Is there a better way than this to achieve Reprieve’s Vision?

3. Is this project the optimal use of our limited resources?
4. Should we pivot or persevere with this project?

The teams prepare operational plans, which include performance indicators and targets, as well as formal evaluation of the past year's activities and outputs.

Our operational plans feed into staff workplans, which are monitored and assessed by line managers at monthly to six-weekly management meetings. These are conducted with reference to time spent on tasks (as measured by time recording software). There is a real emphasis placed on external-facing results i.e. what a given task achieves in the outside world (effect on policymakers, lawyers, government representatives, prisoners and their families and communities and the public at large). This provides an opportunity for staff to get feedback on their progress towards achieving the goals set out in their plan and to take action to be as effective in achieving these goals as is possible.

The Board approves the organisation's strategy each year and the executive reports to the Board throughout the year as to the progress of projects undertaken in pursuit of that strategy. This is informed by the evaluation sessions.

We also hold an annual staff retreat which provides an opportunity to reflect on the work and direction of the organisation as a wider team.

10. The Future

Reprieve has an ambitious vision: a world without the death penalty, or extreme human rights abuses carried out in the name of "counterterrorism" or "national security".

We have every reason to believe we can achieve that vision. Our strategy – investigating on the front line, litigating on behalf of individuals in multiple jurisdictions, and supporting clients to tell their stories in order to advocate in furtherance of our mission in the court of public opinion – is tried and tested and takes us closer to that vision every day.

We must preserve Reprieve's agility and adaptability. Our agility means that we are well placed to manage unexpected events and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves. We have a good record of innovation in response to global developments. To maintain our effectiveness, we will continue to assess our impact regularly, so that we can learn from our experiences, responsibly wind down projects that are not working, whilst doubling down on cases and campaigns that are achieving change. We must also remain confident of trying new techniques in order to achieve results.

We need to remember and remain true to our values: we must be agile; creative; fearless; impactful; resilient; and resolute.