

By Jeff Kaye

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The North Carolina [News Observer](#) reports in a March 15 article that the co-founder of [ShannonWatch](#), Edward Horgan, a well-known Irish activist and former Irish Defense Force officer, has had his 10-year, multiple-entry U.S. visa revoked without explanation. Horgan and others believe it is because of his principled stand against the U.S. use of renditions, and in particular, the use of Shannon Airport in western Ireland as a stopover for U.S. rendition flights. ShannonWatch has documented the use of the airport as a stopover for CIA rendition flights (see [their page documenting such flights](#)).

As the NO article by Christina Cowger and Robin Kirk notes, Horgan is no long-haired radical, or bomb-making terrorist. He has been a UN peace keeper, and monitored “elections in places like Ghana, Armenia, Zimbabwe, East Timor and Ukraine.” According to his online resume, he has worked with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union. He is getting his Ph.D. in international relations at the University of Limerick. He is also now *persona non grata* in Barack Obama’s supposedly more open and transparent United States.

According to Cowger and Kirk:

Last year, Horgan visited the United States to see family and attend the presidential inauguration. But this year, while observing elections in frigid Kiev, he learned that his 10-year, multiple-entry U.S. visa had been revoked.

The reason? No official will say, though Horgan is scheduled to attend an April conference at Duke University to speak about his opposition to extraordinary rendition.

In fact, Horgan is still [listed on the speakers panel](#) for the Duke conference — “Weaving a Net of Accountability: Taking on extraordinary rendition at the state and regional level” — along with Scott Horton; rendition victim and CIA black site torture survivor and Guantanamo prisoner, Bisher al-Rawi; psychologist-activist, and president of Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Stephen Soldz; ACLU Senior Staff Attorney Steven Watt; Co-director of the International Human Rights Clinic, Margaret Satterthwaite; and others. Christina Cowger, who, I should note, wrote the NO article referenced here, is also listed as a speaker, affiliated with [North Carolina Stop Torture Now](#)

It seems reasonable to assume, lacking any other evidence, that Horgan is being politically targeted by the Obama administration. This is the kind of behavior we came to expect in the days of Bush and Cheney. But it goes with the territory. Barack Obama decided in the first weeks of his administration to maintain the previous administration’s rendition program, complete with fig-leaf assurances that U.S. authorities would receive no-harm promises from Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and other rendition destination sites known for wide-spread use of torture. No human rights organization believes that promise, and U.S. State Department Human Rights Country Reports have strongly criticized many of these countries for their use of torture, arbitrary detention and prison conditions.

In Working Document No. 8 ( [PDF](#) ), the European Union (EU) last year summarized its investigation into CIA use of European countries for the Bush rendition program. The report notes, by the way, “It is worth to remind that, in many occasions, it is not only the CIA the single organiser of the flights included in this working document... but also other entities of US administration, among [them] the Department of Defence...”

### **Documenting U.S. Rendition Flights in Europe**

The Working Document reports over 1000 rendition flights between the end of 2001 and the end of 2005, including the “extraordinary renditions” of Abu Omar, Maher Arar, Khaled el-Masri, Ahmed al-Giza, Mohamed El-Zari, Binyam Mohammed, Bisher al Rawi, Jamil El-Banna, Abou Elkassim Britel, among others. With destinations in Jordan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Egypt, Morocco, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Libya, Guantanamo and elsewhere, these flights had stopovers in all 25 EU countries, as well as Romania, Iceland, Switzerland, Albania, Turkey, and elsewhere.

Truly, the scope of the U.S. rendition program was world-wide, and no one really knows the full extent of the massive kidnapping and torture operation. One of the airlines associated with CIA renditions, Aero Contractors, is based in Smithfield, North Carolina.

The Obama administration has done its best, as well, to keep the lid on accountability for these crimes, using legal maneuvers to keep suits by rendition victims out of the courts, citing expanded views of “state secrets” privilege to shut down such cases. The [ACLU suit](#) against Boeing subsidiary Jeppesen DataPlan is one of the key legal cases the U.S. has tried to squelch by the use of such tactics.

As one example, the EU report documents that the plane used for the “extraordinary renditions” of German citizen Khaled el-Masri from Skopje to Afghanistan on 24 January 2004, and Ethiopian citizen and British resident Binyam Mohammed from Rabat to Kabul on 22 January 2004 — a Boeing 737-7ET aircraft registered as N313P (and later N4476S) — stopped numerous times at “civilian-military airports including Frankfurt (72 times), Shannon (24), United Kingdom (23), Palma de Mallorca (7), Poland, Romania, Check [sic] Republic, Malta, Cyprus and Geneva.”

The mention of Shannon brings us back to the case of Edward Horgan. An outspoken opponent of torture, Horgan made political waves in Ireland when he publicly resigned last year from the Green Party. In 2007, the Green Party entered the Irish government of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. Since that time, they have been criticized for failing to keep to their ideals. Horgan’s [open letter](#) spoke to his disenchantment on the renditions issue (emphasis in original):

The Green Party, led by John Gormley claimed to be staunch opponents of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and opponents of the abandonment of Irish neutrality at Shannon airport. They have even abandoned the pretence that the programme for Government would impose searches on CIA associated aircraft at Shannon airport.

Not only have no such planes been searched and no investigations carried out on the use of Shannon airport in the US torture rendition programme, but whistle blowers such as Edward Horgan and Conor Cregan have been unjustifiable arrested, charged and spuriously brought

before the courts several times for daring to ask the Gardai to investigate the presence of CIA aircraft at Shannon. Both have been repeatedly vindicated by the Irish courts for their whistle blowing actions at Shannon airport.

**Who will vindicate those lives lost and those prisoners tortured with the active complicity of the present Irish Government at Shannon airport?**

Rather than being kept out of the United States, Horgan should be given a medal for his outstanding courage and forthrightness in not abandoning the battle for accountability for one of the most incredible human rights crimes perpetrated by so-called democratic state in our lifetime. The Obama administration should be ashamed for its behavior in keeping Mr. Horgan from entering this country. And Americans should be ashamed for letting this happen, as the struggle for accountability for torture is shunted aside for political expediency, or staggers under the blows of right-wing propaganda and media indifference.

For further information, see the Amnesty International report, [Breaking the Chain: Ending Ireland's Role in Renditions](#) (PDF), or if you are in Durham, NC, April 8-10, you might want to attend the public conference noted in the article, [Weaving a Net of Accountability](#)

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