

Amnesty's pay offs spark outrage

Final payments made to Amnesty International's former bosses — of up to four times their salaries — anger the human rights charity's supporters

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Amnesty International has given payoffs totalling more than £860,000 to its two most senior former officials, angering its supporters.

The human rights charity says it had no alternative but to pay Irene Khan, its former secretary general, £533,104 after she completed her second four-year term in 2009.

Khan's deputy, Kate Gilmore, received up to £330,000 at the same time, according to Amnesty's latest financial records.

The combined payments are equivalent to approximately 4% of Amnesty's £21.9m annual budget. This is the second controversy to hit the charity recently after criticism last year over its support for Moazzam Begg, the former Guantanamo detainee, and its links to Islamist groups.

Bernard Jenkin, the Conservative MP who chairs the public administration select committee that oversees the Charity Commission, said the payments raised questions about charity sector pay-offs.

"I would like to know whether the Charity Commission considers it to be part of its remit to regulate golden handshakes of this sort," Jenkin said.

Amnesty insiders are outraged Khan was paid more than four times her annual salary of £132,490. "They basically gave her the equivalent of working for another term," one informed source said. "It is a ridiculous waste of money that will anger a lot of donors."

Amnesty said Khan left because she had reached the end of her contracted term and the payout was made up of elements including "salary, salary increases and relocation expenses", which were in the contract she had signed when she took up her post.

Yesterday a source close to Khan said a significant part of the payments was made as a "settlement for a dispute with the board".

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