



PRESS RELEASE

Global anti-torture coalition: Torture victims need to be given their rights with real remedies

Geneva, 26th of June 2014. On the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the leading global civil society coalition against torture, calls on States to put their legal obligation under the UN Convention Against Torture into practice.

The UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is reminding us year after year of the same sad story. Despite the universal consensus under international law persons from all strands of society and in all regions of the world continue to suffer from torture and other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment. Torture occurs in different contexts, national security or counter-terrorism, the quelling of political and social dissent or towards ordinary criminal suspects often to extract information. Whatever its context and whoever it may affect the bottom-line is that any victim has a right to justice and reparations. There is no room for distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ or ‘guilty’ or ‘innocent’ victims.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment setting out this very fundamental consensus.

“After thirty years, it is time to make this absolute prohibition a reality. At its heart should be a sea change that victims have rights. Those who are acting criminal in the name of the state must no more count on leniency,” said Gerald Staberock, Secretary General of the OMCT. *“We have to come to realise that a crime committed in the name of the state makes it not more tolerable but far worse”.*

The OMCT recalls that implementing the UN Convention is not an abstract duty. It starts with making sure that victims are protected and have real remedies to obtain justice and reparation.

“A right without effective remedy in practice is deprived of its meaning,” he added on the occasion of the June 26 commemoration in which he called for additional efforts to establish independent investigation mechanisms against torture.

“A central element of an effective system of remedies is for states to recognize the competence of the UN Committee Against Torture to receive complaints from individuals who have been subject to torture”. OMCT calls on all States parties to recognise the competence of the UN Committee against torture to allow individual cases to be submitted under the article 22 of the Convention. The Day for Victims of Torture is an opportunity for states to accept the competence of the Committee to examine individual cases, and to show willingness to tackle impunity. It creates the needed venue for justice and redress that is critical when remedies at the domestic level are inexistent or ineffective, or when there is a general climate of impunity.

In order to raise awareness and mobilise public opinion all over the world against such practices, members of the SOS-Torture Network organise specific activities on the 26th that will be published on OMCT's website. Several events are carried out in Bangladesh, Colombia, Ivory Cost, Mexico, Pakistan and Togo targeting public support for reforms implementing the UN Convention Against Torture.

Finally, OMCT and members of the SOS-Torture Network strongly reaffirm, on this day dedicated to the victims of torture and ill-treatment, that respect for the fundamental human dignity entailed in any human being means, that nothing less than 'nothing can justify torture under any circumstances'.

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The activities carried out on the occasion of the 26th of June – International Day in Support of Victims of Torture – have been conducted thanks to the financial support of the European Commission to the OMCT's project "*Towards implementation and accountability*". The aim of this project is the implementation of the UN Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by the States parties.

