

**Press Release**  
**4 October 2005**



Réseau universitaire international de Genève  
Geneva International Academic Network

Villa Rigot, avenue de la Paix 9  
1202 Genève, Suisse  
tél: (41 22) 733 26 92 - fax: (41 22) 734 87 66  
<http://www.ruig-gian.org> - [info@ruig-gian.org](mailto:info@ruig-gian.org)



## **Torturing the Poor**

A recent research project coordinated by the **World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)** with the support of the **Geneva International Academic Network (RUIG-GIAN)** concludes that *individuals are often victims of torture, ill-treatment, forced disappearances and summary executions because they are poor.*

The study examines the causal relationship between inequalities (poverty, violations of economic, social and cultural rights) and violence, both State-sponsored (torture, summary executions, disappearances, etc.) and domestic. The GIAN-supported project, "Poverty, Inequality and Violence" was presented today at an international conference in the company of Ms. **Louise Arbour**, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. **Jean-Marie Dufour**, President of the GIAN, Mr. **Manuel Tornare**, Mayor of Geneva and Mr. **Eric Sottas**, Director of the OMCT. The project's ultimate objective is to identify specific actions that can be taken to reduce violence, bearing in mind that its root-causes are frequently economic, social and cultural. Several UN Human Rights Special Rapporteurs are involved in the research.

In her opening address, Louise Arbour, condemned "discriminatory exclusion and inequitable distribution of wealth" and emphasised the interdependence of all human rights: "rights cannot be treated separately or in categories of civil and political or economic, social and cultural; the enjoyment of one right depends on fulfilment of other rights". She stated: "The forced and arbitrary eviction of people from housing, the unfair dismissal of a worker, or the exclusion or a pregnant girl from school require the same type of immediate action and redress as does the prohibition of torture or the protection of free speech."

According to Eric Sottas, Director of the OMCT, the violence perpetrated against women and children does not so much occur as part of political repression, but rather as a consequence of their socio-economic marginalisation within certain societies. Indeed, violence against children mostly affects socially and economically marginalised minors (often street children or working children). Similarly, violence affecting women is often related to their socio-economic role in societies where they are often considered as second-class individuals. This violence is often not recognised by States as being part of their responsibility.

The study, which analyses the national context in five countries -- Argentina, South Africa, Egypt, Uzbekistan and Nepal -- was conducted in cooperation with local researchers and local human rights organisations.

The international conference "Poverty, Inequality, Violence" continues until **6 October** (closing session from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm) at the International Conference Centre of Varembe (CICV), rue de Varembe 15, Geneva.

For further information, please contact Julia Double of OMCT (079 743 68 63 or [jd@omct.org](mailto:jd@omct.org)) and the websites of the OMCT ([www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org)) and the GIAN ([www.ruig-gian.org](http://www.ruig-gian.org) – projects 2002).