

STOP TORTURE CAMPAIGN BRIEFING

Torture is abhorrent, barbaric and inhumane. It can never be justified. The world's governments recognized this when they adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This right was later enshrined in the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights through an explicit and absolute prohibition against torture and other ill-treatment.

30 years ago this year, this progress was further built upon by the UN Convention Against Torture. The Convention was ground breaking and established a set of measures, enshrined in law and specifically designed to prevent torture, punish perpetrators and ensure justice and redress to victims. These measures intend not only to end torture and other ill-treatment nationally, but also to ensure that no-one is deported across borders to be tortured, and that there is no safe haven for perpetrators. 155 countries are now state parties to the UN Convention and this is real and meaningful progress.

However, over the past five years, Amnesty International has reported on torture and other ill-treatment in 141 countries.

For more than 50 years, Amnesty International has been fighting to stamp out torture. 30 years ago, our movement led the campaign to secure the UN Convention against Torture. Now we are campaigning to get that promise fulfilled.

SAFEGUARDS

Amnesty International is seeking the establishment and implementation of effective safeguards against torture as the route to change. When effective safeguards are in place, people are protected. When safeguards are not in place or not put into practice, torture thrives.

By insisting that lawyers are present during interrogations; by insisting independent doctors are on-hand to examine detainees; by insisting that those guilty of torture are brought to justice, Amnesty International and our supporters will stand between the torturers and the tortured.

In many countries impunity for torturers is endemic and allows torturers to operate without fear of arrest, prosecution or punishment. Impunity undermines criminal justice systems and the rule of law. It means denial of justice for victims.

Impunity is often due to lack of political will, since the state itself – or a state arm such as the police or military – is frequently directly responsible or complicit in torture. In many countries, the thoroughness and impartiality of investigations into torture allegations are undermined by the fact that they are carried out by fellow law enforcement officials or prosecutors that work closely with those accused. Impunity can also result from a government's failure to prioritize human rights on its domestic political agenda, or from an agreement between two sides in an armed conflict not to investigate and punish perpetrators of abuses. A state's failure to bring torturers to justice often goes hand-in-hand with a refusal to investigate and unwillingness to provide reparations for victims. The result is often a threefold breach of international obligations by the state: under international law

victims have the right to know the truth about what happened, to see justice done and to have the harm they suffered repaired to the extent possible. Effective, independent mechanisms for investigating and prosecuting torturers are essential. These must be backed up by the political will to bring in necessary reforms.

STOP TORTURE - FOCUS COUNTRIES

MEXICO

Use of torture and ill-treatment by security and police forces remains widespread throughout Mexico, and impunity rife. Mexico has made numerous commitments to prevent and punish torture and ill-treatment, but these measures are inadequate and largely ignored. Legislation criminalizing torture is routinely sidestepped, as is legislation that should prevent evidence obtained under torture from being used in criminal trials. Yet the government is content to argue that torture and ill-treatment are no longer regular occurrences.

For more information on torture in Mexico, download the briefing at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/audia>

MOROCCO AND WESTERN SAHARA

Though the human rights situation has improved significantly since the accession to the throne of King Mohamed VI, Amnesty International continues to receive reports of torture and other ill-treatment by police or gendarmerie during interrogation in pre-arraignment detention, and, in fewer cases, in prisons and while detained incommunicado in secret detention centres.

Torture and other ill-treatment have been explicitly prohibited and identified as a crime in Moroccan law for several years, but they continue in practice. Judges and prosecutors rarely investigate reports of torture and other ill-treatment, meaning few perpetrators are held accountable. The resulting climate of impunity cancels out the dissuasive power of Morocco's anti-torture legislation.

Shortcomings of the justice system, such as the absence of lawyers during police interrogation, continue to create conditions conducive to torture and other ill-treatment. Torture-tainted "confessions" included in police interrogation reports are still central to securing convictions, at the expense of material evidence and witnesses testifying in court. Current plans to overhaul Morocco's justice system present an unprecedented opportunity for change.

For more information on torture in Morocco and Western Sahara, download the briefing at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/ali>

NIGERIA

There is evidence of increasing use of torture in Nigeria. Amnesty International's recent research indicates that police and military personnel routinely use torture to extract information and "confessions", and to punish and exhaust detainees. In contravention of national and international law, information extracted by torture and ill-treatment is routinely accepted as evidence in court.

For more information on torture in Nigeria, download the briefing at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/moses>

PHILIPPINES

The use of torture is widespread in the Philippines. State security forces including law enforcement officers torture suspects and prisoners. Justice is out of reach for the vast majority of people who are tortured. Perpetrators are almost never held to account. The country has an extensive legislative framework to stop torture, and the government has pledged to increase its efforts to ensure these laws are implemented. The Philippines is also party to key international anti-torture laws and mechanisms. Yet impunity persists.

For more information on torture in the Philippines, download the briefing at:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/alfreda>

UZBEKISTAN

Torture and ill-treatment is rife in Uzbekistan. Amnesty International receives persistent and credible allegations of routine and pervasive torture and ill-treatment by security forces and prison personnel. Reports suggest that people are tortured when arrested, transferred and awaiting trial, and in detention facilities. Very few people are brought to justice for inflicting torture, and the authorities routinely fail to conduct effective investigations into allegations of torture and ill-treatment. For more information on torture in Uzbekistan download the briefing at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/dilorom>

STOP TORTURE - FOCUS CASES

Victims and survivors of torture are at the heart of the campaign. There will be many cases that will feature in the campaign, but there is a particular focus on one key case for each country. Amnesty International: will seek progress on their case; stand in solidarity with these individuals and their families; show that they are not alone and that people across the world are concerned about what happens to them. Each case also highlights systematic failures in those countries that allow torture to occur, and safeguards that need to be put in place.

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ACTIVISM

The initial priority actions are to seek justice for those individuals affected by torture. Over the course of the campaign there will also be a focus on the systemic issues within each country, which will be highlighted through in-depth country reports, which will be released throughout the campaign. There will also be an activism push in the autumn on the EU torture regulation, which is due to be reviewed at the end of 2014.