

Monitoring weapons & restraints

A Pocket Guide for detention monitors and torture prevention bodies.



Omega Research Foundation

Look out for inappropriate items

- Weighted restraints.
- Leg restraints with a fixed bar.
- Thumb-cuffs & thumb screws.
- Finger cuffs & finger screws.
- Restraints fixed to wall or floor.
- Cage beds & net beds.
- Restraint chairs, shackle boards or shackle beds, if not fitted with straps or belts.
- Body worn electric-shock devices.
- Spiked batons and shields.
- Whips.
- Carrying weapons in places where juveniles are detained.

At the armoury

i) Examine procedural issues:

- Is the ammunition (ammo) in date?
- Are weapons & ammo kept securely?
- Is there an up-to-date register detailing issuing of weapons?
- Are weapons routinely issued?

ii) Examine weapons & ammo. for:

- Writing, markings, logos.
- Dates.
- Colours.
- Size, shapes & notable features.
- Look at all sides, top & bottom.

Touring the Premises

- Look out for prohibited or inappropriate items.
- Observe which weapons staff are carrying, if any. Observe who and which shifts are carrying them and if there are exceptional circumstances that might justify this.
- Note and photograph (where possible) key features of any weapons, restraints and ammunition you see.
- Is this equipment visibly carried, or concealed?

At the office

- Are there regulations for each type of weapon & restraint? Do they set out when they may be carried, used & by whom, and prohibit equipment not listed therein?
- Are regulations in keeping with international standards?
- Are use of force records submitted internally, and incidents and records referred to external bodies as necessary?

At the training centre

- Are weapons issued only to officers trained and tested in their use?
- Does training cover ethics, human rights, negotiating skills, and alternatives to using force?
- Is the content of training in line with international standards?
- Do officers have regular refresher training?
- How often is training reviewed?

Speaking to detainees

- Have detainees experienced or witnessed use of force by officials on detainees?
- What were the circumstances, as they can recall them? Can they recall any features of the weapons or restraints used?
- Was medical aid given promptly (where necessary)?
- In their experience, how often do officers carry weapons and use force?

Speaking to staff

- What weapons and restraints are staff issued with? Under which circumstances and how regularly?
- Does staff understanding of when they may use weapons and restraints accord with international standards?
- Do they have an adequate understanding of human rights? Do they feel they are trained and given skills to help them avoid using force?
- Are they aware they need to document their use of force? Are there indications they do this?