Support Victims, End Impunity: States Must End Torture Now

On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the United Against Torture Consortium urges States to take real action to end torture and ill-treatment

Torture and other forms of ill-treatment are absolutely prohibited, in all circumstances, and at all times. Yet, State actors continue to torture people around the world, often targeting those who are already marginalised.

Torture persists in a variety of settings: from armed conflict to police custody, in prisons, psychiatric institutions and social care homes.

The universal human rights and anti-torture framework has been gravely undermined by State practices around the world. Over the last year, the United Against Torture Consortium (UATC) has also raised the alarm on violent crackdown on protests in Bangladesh, Georgia, Kenya, and Turkey, showcasing how excessive force and inappropriate law enforcement tools, designed for abuse and available in the global market, are used to supress dissent.

And yet, there is progress. Across countries and regions, people are resisting violence, demanding justice, and building stronger systems of protection. The anti-torture movement remains resilient – led by survivors, human rights defenders, civil society organisations, grassroots movements, local communities, lawyers, and oversight bodies who continue to speak out, monitor abuses, and push for reform.

We also see progress in efforts to strengthen non-coercive interviewing and legal safeguards, to ensure accountability, and to expand access to rehabilitation services.

Importantly, momentum is building to end the trade in law enforcement equipment used for torture and other ill-treatment. Backed by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and a global coalition of States and civil society, progress is underway toward a legally binding Torture-Free Trade Treaty, an important torture prevention initiative.

Over the past years, UATC and partners have achieved legal victories for survivors of torture in eighteen countries; assisted thousands survivors of torture; supported survivors from Asia, Latin America, and Africa to share their experiences directly with the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture; financed anti-torture civil society organisations around the world;

supported CSOs' engagement with the UN Committee against Torture, presented survivor testimony to over three million YouTube users; and supported the implementation of the largest ever reparation order made by the International Criminal Court. More recently, we developed a policy paper outlining a framework to end torture and other ill-treatment during assemblies.

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, we reaffirm our solidarity with all those affected and our support for those working to end these abuses. Together with our partners around the world, the United Against Torture Consortium remains committed to working to prevent torture and other ill-treatment, end impunity for perpetrators, and seek justice and reparations – including rehabilitation – for victims and survivors. We now call on all States to match these efforts with decisive action.

States must: ratify and uphold their obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture and its Optional Protocol; implement standards such as the Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, the Istanbul Protocol on investigating and documenting torture and other ill-treatment, and the Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests; and actively support the adoption of a Torture-Free Trade Treaty.

UATC is an EU-funded project that pools the strengths and expertise of six international anti-torture organisations, in partnership with over 200 civil society organisations and other partners in 100+ countries, to strengthen and expand torture prevention, protection, rehabilitation and strategic litigation

For more information, please contact: Marie Salphati, UATC Coordinator, on

msa@omct.org

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fiacat

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