



26 JUNE JOINT STATEMENT – UDHR70

**The United Nations Committee against Torture,
The United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture,
The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture,
The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture**

jointly with

**The Committee on the Prevention of Torture in Africa
The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading
Treatment or Punishment**

call for action on

'The United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture'

'70 years on, torture is still widespread: more action needed to achieve a torture-free world for all'

Seven decades ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first international text prohibiting torture in absolute terms. Its fifth article, approved by unanimous support, unequivocally stipulates, “*No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*”.

.../...

Since then, with the mobilization of the human rights movement, the international community has made remarkable progress towards the eradication of torture. The ban on torture and other ill treatment has been incorporated into an extensive network of international and regional human rights treaties. The prohibition of torture has since been elevated to *jus cogens*, thus recognizing that it is so fundamental that it supersedes all treaties and customary laws.

The United Nations Convention against Torture, adopted by the General Assembly in 1984 and ratified to date by 163 States, is the most comprehensive instrument in international law to prohibit torture under any circumstances. The principles it contains remain highly relevant today: torture is a crime. It is never allowed nor justified, not even during an emergency, political instability, threat of war or even a state of war. States have an obligation to take effective measures to prevent acts of torture in any territories under their jurisdiction. Those who commit acts of torture should be prosecuted anywhere. In addition, victims of torture have a right to rehabilitation and redress.

Over the past 70 years, the use of torture has been criminalised in a myriad of national legislations and accountability for the acts of torture has been incorporated in many penal codes. We have come a long way to accept the universality of jurisdiction over acts of torture irrespective of where or by whom they were committed. We have seen an expansion of the definition of torture through jurisprudence, increasing the threshold of protection under national and international law. In order to prevent torture and other ill-treatment, a system of regular visits by independent international and national mechanisms to places where people are deprived of their liberty has been established. Preventive mechanisms have also been established at the regional level.

However, the promise has not been kept for all. Torture continues and the existence of so many surviving victims of torture, many of whom are unacknowledged and unsupported, is a dramatic testimony to the persistence of torture worldwide. Impunity remains high; so-called evidence obtained under torture is in many countries still admitted in court; increasingly, torture practices are being acquiesced to under ‘certain circumstances’, especially in the context of the fight against terrorism; and far too many human rights defenders face daily life threats and reprisals for fighting impunity and for their noble work in support of victims.

Today, on the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, all anti-torture mechanisms of the United Nations and regional mechanisms from Africa, Europe and the Americas stand together to reiterate that torture can never be justified, not even as a measure of last resort. They call with one voice for all acts of torture to be effectively prosecuted and for more action to be taken to prevent such acts from occurring again.

Today, the undersigned stand in solidarity with the thousands of victims of torture and their families, recalling that victims have under international law an enforceable right to effective remedy, including redress and rehabilitation.

While we commemorate the unequivocal promise for collective prosperity enshrined 70 years ago in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the undersigned call on all States to renew efforts to make that promise a reality: a torture-free world for all.