

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of the ad hoc visit to Armenia was to review the measures taken by the Armenian authorities vis-à-vis life-sentenced prisoners and, in particular, two such prisoners (prisoners A and B) who were being held in solitary confinement for already 14 years at Yerevan-Kentron Prison, in the light of specific recommendations made by the Committee after the 2010, 2011 and 2013 visits to the country.

The CPT's delegation received hardly any allegation of physical ill-treatment from prisoners at Kentron and Nubarashen Prisons. However, the two above-mentioned prisoners, as well as another life-sentenced prisoner at Nubarashen Prison, were (still) being held under conditions which, in the CPT's view, could be considered as amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment.

The visit brought to light that many of the specific recommendations previously made concerning the situation of life-sentenced prisoners had not been (fully) implemented in practice, in particular, as regards the regime, contact with the outside world, the use of handcuffs and discipline.

As regards, more specifically, the situation of prisoners A and B, certain improvements were observed in terms of psychiatric care. However, the situation had remained by and large unchanged since the 2013 visit with regard to their detention regime. Whilst acknowledging that both prisoners had apparently often refused to have contact with each other, it is a matter of serious concern that they continued to be locked up in their cells alone, without being offered any out-of-cell activity other than outdoor exercise for one hour per day. In addition, their contacts with the outside world as well as with members of staff were very limited.

On the other hand, the CPT appreciates all the measures taken by the Armenian authorities after the 2014 visit with a view to putting an end to the solitary confinement of prisoners A and B and providing them with adequate treatment and care. The Committee also welcomes the initiative of the Armenian authorities to amend the Penitentiary Code in order to abolish the legal obligation of segregating life-sentenced prisoners from other prisoners.

In the light of the preceding remarks, the Committee decided to keep open the procedure under Article 10, paragraph 2, of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which had been set in motion on 28 January 2014, and to review the situation at the November 2014 plenary meeting, on the basis of the response of the Armenian authorities to the present report.