

**STATEMENT**  
**Olga SADOVSKAYA – World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)**  
**Candidate for Member of the Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs**

OMCT Secretary General  
Secrétaire Général de l'OMCT  
Secretario General de la OMCT  
**Gerald Staberock**

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The Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres has recently stated that the world faces a pandemic of human rights abuses in the wake of Covid-19.

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatovic recently stated that 2020 has been a disastrous year for human rights in Europe and has stated that “we are at a crossroads”.

The pandemic has exacerbated preexisting human rights concerns worldwide, including in the area of action of the Council of Europe. Groups in a situation of vulnerability such as women, children or migrants have seen their situation significantly worsen. The pandemic intensifies the effects of overcrowding in detention to a breaking point, with a very real risk of spillover beyond prison walls. The absolute prohibition of torture and ill treatment continues to be put into question across Europe and in the rest of the world. Emergency legislation has been adopted that risks having long-term consequences, beyond the health crisis.

The Covid-19 emergency has also intensified the growingly restrictive environment for human rights defenders and human rights organisations across Europe, thus further shrinking civic space.

It is in this context that I have decided to run as a candidate for Member of the Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs on behalf of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

I have 15 years of experience in cooperation with international and regional human rights bodies and a track record of collective work as part of the human rights movement. The OMCT is a global voice with more than 200 member organisations working to end torture and ill-treatment, assist victims, and protect human rights defenders at risk wherever they are.

“We are at a crossroads” for Europe and now more than ever it is essential to preserve the role of civil society organisations for the promotion of human rights, rule of law and democracy. We must secure our right to defend human rights across Europe, our right to have our voice heard, our right to participate in public affairs, our right to live up to our commitment of protecting those in a situation of vulnerability across our continent.

The OMCT and its network, and I as an individual have the expertise and the commitment to work with other civil society organisations to advance the human rights cause and this is why we want to be one of the voices representing civil society in the Conference of INGOs and doing our best to push Europe into the right path from the current crossroads.

**Olga SADOVSKAYA**  
Member of the Executive Committee, INGO World Organisation Against Torture  
Vice-chairperson, National NGO “Committee Against Torture”