



OMCT convenes meeting with NGOs from around the world how to fight torture amid greater threats to human rights

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21 November 2016 (Geneva) - The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and its global network of anti-torture activists and human rights defenders will meet in Geneva this week to discuss how best to fight torture amid heightened terrorist threats, intensifying migration fluxes and rising populist leaders who condone the use of this inhumane practice.

The two-day forum will take place at Geneva's CICG on 24-25 November. High-ranking officials such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Director of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency, and the Head of Switzerland's Human Security Division, as well as some 100 human rights experts, advocacy specialists, and members of OMCT's SOS-Torture network of NGOs from all over the world will exchange views on issues ranging from the refugee crisis to innovative methods of reporting torture.

Torture is not a remote, specialists' issue; nor is it bound to times of war or civil conflict or to the prisons of dictatorships. On the contrary, what OMCT, the catalyst of a network of more than 200 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) spanning 90 countries, has been able to observe on a daily basis in its 30 years of existence to date is that torture is pervasive and even becoming socially acceptable as more States accept compromises with human rights in the name of 'national security'.

"The recourse to torture serves as the litmus test; it's symptomatic of a weakening of the values that are the foundations of democracy. It is urgent we bring them to the forefront of the global agenda," said Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General. "We can only manage that together, in a single voice pressuring States to stick to these principles uncompromisingly and at all times."

OMCT has invited its members and supporters to celebrate its 30th anniversary during an invitation-only cocktail party on 24 November from 6 to 9 p.m. hosted by the City of Geneva at the Palais Eynard. The ceremony will include live performances by French singer Louisy Joseph and actresses Anne Richard and Noémie Kocher, who is also OMCT's goodwill ambassador.

For the full **programme** of the Forum, please visit [here](#). [Forum list of speakers](#) [List of Forum participants](#)

The event offers participants and the media the opportunity to hear from **leading experts on torture and human rights**:

- **Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- **Mr. Dick Marty**, OMCT Vice-President and Former President of the Human Rights Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Switzerland;

- **Mr. Michael O'Flaherty**, Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union;
- **Ambassador Heidi Grau**, Head of Human Security Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
- **Mr. Francois Longchamp**, President of the Conseil d'Etat, Canton and Republic of Geneva;
- **Mr. Nils Melzer**, newly appointed United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of punishment (Swiss national);
- **Mr. Jens Modvig**, Chairperson, United Nations Committee Against Torture.

Meet OMCT leadership:

- **Mr. Yves Berthelot**, OMCT's President since 2008, former Director of the UN Economic Commission of Europe;
- **Mr. Gerald Staberock**, OMCT Secretary General;
- **Ms. Hina Jilani**, Founder of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and incoming President of OMCT

At the event, **human rights defenders** from across the world will share stories that illustrate the nature of torture and its consequences. Representatives from the following countries will appear:

- **Azerbaijan:** Ms. Leyla Yunus, Institute of Peace and Democracy, Azerbaijan, recently released
- **Bangladesh:** Mr. Adilur Rahman Khan, Secretary of Odhikar Bangladesh;
- **Burundi:** Mr. Armel Niyongere, representative of SOS-Torture Burundi;
- **Belgium:** Mr. Peter Zangl, OMCT Representative at the European Union;
- **China:** a human rights defenders from a Chinese NGO;
- **Colombia:** **Ms.** Jahel Quiroga Carrillo, Director of the human rights organization REINICIAR and Mr. Gustavo Gallón, Director of the Comisión Colombiana de Juristas;
- **Guatemala:** Ms. Anabella Sibrian, Plataforma Internacional contra la Impunidad, Guatemala;
- **Greece:** Mr. Panayote Dimitras, Greek Helsinki Monitor;
- **India:** Mr. Henri Tiphagne, Representative of People's Watch India;
- **Macedonia:** Mr Gordan Kalajdziev, Director of the Helsinki Committee of the Republic of Macedonia;
- **Mexico:** Ms. Stephanie Brewer, Director of International Affairs at Centro Prodh;
- **Russia:** Ms. Olga Sadovskaya, Interregional Public Organisation "Committee Against Torture" (CAT);

- **Togo:** Mr. André Kangni Afanou, Director of the Collectif des Associations Contre l'Impunité au Togo;
- **Tunisia:** Mr. Mokthar Trifi, Former president of the Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme and Ms Gabriele Reiter, Director of OMCT Tunisia;
- **Turkey:** Mr. Yavuz Bimbay, Sohran Casra founder and torture victim himself;
- **Tadjikistan:** Ms. Favziya Nazarocka, Director of the Public Foundation "Nota Bene" and the Tadjikistan Coalition Against Torture;
- **Philippines:** Ms. Rosemarie Trajano, Director of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates;
- **Uruguay:** Mr. Luis Pedernera, recently elected member of the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child and representative of Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay;
- **Senegal:** Ms. Aminata Dieye, National Coordinator of Amnesty International's Human Rights Education Programme in Senegal.

Specialists on communicating on torture:

- How global digital campaigns can help combat torture: **Mr. Matthias Lüfkens**, social media architect at Burson-Marsteller;
- How video can help report cases of torture: **Ms. Kelly Matheson**, WITNESS Senior Attorney and Program Manager.

About OMCT

Created at the end of 1985, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) is the catalyst of the SOS-Torture network, a coalition of more than 200 international and national non-governmental organizations fighting torture, summary execution, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.

With offices in Geneva, Brussels and Tunis, OMCT runs programmes to favour State compliance with anti-torture legislation, support victims of torture, with particular attention to children in detention and women, and protect human rights defenders worldwide.

For more information, please visit: www.omct.org

For our latest #HumanAgainstTorture campaign: www.joinhat.org

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For all media inquiries : Lori Brumat, OMCT Head of Communications +41 78 823 0669 or lb@omct.org.

Attachments

-  Forum list of speakers
16 pages / 10.50 MB
-  List of Forum participants
15 pages / 16.80 MB