

China: Concerns about the situation of African migrants' victims of inhuman treatment in the context of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic

Urgent appeal, April 17th, 2020

Geneva (OMCT) - Members of the SOS-Torture network in Africa addressed an urgent appeal to the special Rapporteurs on the human rights of migrants, on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and members of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent with regard to the situation of African migrants' victims of inhuman treatment in China.

Madam and Mister, the special rapporteurs and experts

The signatories to this urgent appeal are members of the SOS-Torture network in Africa. Most of them are part of the working group on migration and torture and the litigators group of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) whose mandate is to prevent and combat torture in all circumstances.

Madam and Mister,

We bring to your consideration the actions of the Chinese authorities which in recent weeks have been illustrated by violations of the rights of African migrants in the context of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, our organizations have received testimonies and alerts on the stigmatizing, discriminatory, inhuman and degrading treatment reserved for African migrants living in China. It is alleged that the Chinese authorities are forcefully testing, quarantining and allowing degrading acts to flourish against African migrants in Guangdong province, particularly in Guangzhou. Several of them have been evicted from hotels and apartments, denied access to shopping malls, shops, restaurants and imposed tougher quarantine measures. Testimonies reveal many migrants who are homeless and deprived of food because of coercive and discriminatory policies targeting them particularly. Numerous videos show Chinese police harassing Africans on the streets of Guangzhou city where nearly 4,500 migrants from Africa live and several others on business trips.

This discrimination of African migrants ignores the international obligations of the Chinese State and the recent declaration of Mr. Felipe González Morales, Special Rapporteur on the rights of migrants of April 3, 2020 urging **States to put human rights at the heart of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic**. It is understandable that after many efforts to eradicate this pandemic, China is vigilant to avoid a resurgence on its territory. However, the recommendations of Ms. E. Tendayi Achiume (Zambia) Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance clearly indicates that "**the political**

responses to the COVID-19 pandemic who stigmatize, exclude, and make certain populations more vulnerable to violence are inexcusable, unacceptable and contrary to the obligations of States in matters of international human rights law " .

Distinguished Special Rapporteurs and experts

Our organizations invite you respectively to call on the Chinese government to take more inclusive measures to protect the rights and health of the entire population, including all migrants, regardless of their migration status. It is therefore imperative that the Chinese state provide all migrants with access to all vital services, including decent housing, adequate food and adequate health care, within a reasonable period of time.

Even if the Chinese authorities have committed themselves to African ambassadors to take a number of urgent measures to appease the situation, it is desirable under international law that they prescribe investigations to hold responsible and punish all the perpetrators of these treatments inhuman

Signatories:

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The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) is the main global coalition of NGOs fighting torture and ill-treatment, with over 200 members in more than 90 countries. Its international secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

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