



We welcome new members into our SOS-Torture Network

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor (HCA Vanadzor) - Armenia

The Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA)- Vanadzor is recognised as being one of the leading non-governmental organisations in Armenia, working for the eradication of torture in Armenia and the whole South Caucasus region. HCA Vanadzor provides free legal assistance to victims of human rights violations, including of torture, and has extensive experience in strategic litigation, including before the European Court of Human Rights. Every year, HCA Vanadzor provides legal consulting and assistance to approximately 1,000 people.

Since November 2018, it closely cooperates with the Armenian Rehabilitation Center of Torture, including by preparing medical-report assessments in compliance with the Istanbul Protocol. HCA Vanadzor conducts human rights monitoring in penitentiary settings, State institutions providing treatment and care for persons with mental health problems, institutions providing care for children and elderly persons, in order to prevent torture and ill-treatment, as well as restore the violated rights. Other areas of work include police monitoring and reform, enforced disappearance and transitional justice.

More information <https://hcav.am>

Changement Social Bénin - Benin

Changement Social Bénin (CSB) focuses on the protection and promotion of human rights, including freedom from torture. It is currently collaborating with the OMCT Litigators Group - Africa on the submission of a torture case before the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) court. Other areas of work include rights of the child, women's rights and access to justice.

More information <https://www.facebook.com/OngCsb/>

Antigone - Italy

A long-term partner of the OMCT, Associazione Antigone is one of the leading human rights groups working on torture and detention in Italy, focusing on human rights protection in the penal and penitentiary system. It works towards the education of the general public through campaigns, trainings, media, publications and its self-titled academic review. In 1998 it established the Observatory on Italian prisons, after being granted by the Ministry of Justice a special authorization to visit prisons, including with video cameras. This Observatory publishes an annual report on the situation of the Italian penitentiary system. In 2009 it was further granted access to all Italian juvenile prison facilities. Its network of lawyers and physicians operates in several Italian prisons, providing counseling to detainees and monitoring detention conditions.

Antigone also carries on investigations on torture and ill-treatment elsewhere and leads a European Observatory on prisons involving nine EU countries and funded by the European Union. In December 2017, the OMCT and Associazione Antigone collaborated on the review of Italy by the United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT), submitting a joint report and advocating for the adoption of a law against torture in Italy.

A member of the OMCT SOS-Torture Network Working Group on Migration, Antigone also collaborated, with other Network members, to the 2020 OMCT Guidance brief on Covid-19 and detention.

More information <https://www.antigone.it>

Iridia - Spain (Catalunya)

One of the leading organisations working on institutional violence in Spain, Iridia combines direct intervention on human rights violations with advocacy work to promote changes in public policy. It provides legal and psychosocial assistance to victims of human rights violations and engages in strategic litigation and on gender justice. It also carries out political and social advocacy work through communication campaigns and direct interaction with State authorities, while being part of a range of broader civil society coalitions across Spain.

More information <https://iridia.cat>

Observatory of the Penal System and Human Rights (OSPDH) - Spain

The Observatory of the Penal System and Human Rights (OSPDH) of the University of Barcelona seeks to uphold and defend the human rights of prisoners and victims of institutional violence through research, education and observation of the culture of the criminal justice system. Areas of work include torture and ill-treatment, penal system reforms, the internment and expulsion of foreigners, gender violence, the creation of secret and illegal prisons, and institutional violence.

Through the Institutional Violence Communication and Registration System (Sistema de Registro y Comunicacion de la Violencia Institutiocional SIRECOVI), a system of documentation and communication aimed at the protection of victims of institutional violence, the OSPDH enables victims of ill-treatment and torture to register and make public the abuse to which they have been subjected in places of deprivation of liberty (prisons, police stations, juvenile detention centres, or migration detention facilities) or in the framework of demonstrations or detention in public spaces perpetrated by law enforcement officers.

The OMCT has collaborated with OSPDH on several occasions, including on cases pertaining to the rights of persons deprived of liberty and by issuing a joint press release denouncing police abuse following the 2019 protests in Catalonia. Over the past few years, the OMCT has been in close contact with the OSPDH through its Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, which repeatedly denounced the judicial harassment of OSPDH Director Iñaki Rivera Beiras, a recognised human rights defender who is facing reprisals as a consequence of his longstanding work on denouncing ill-treatment and torture in prison. OSPDH is supported, among others, by UNVFVT and OSF.

The OSPDH is recognised as a leading European organisation in the area of persons deprived of liberty. Its representatives have been invited to participate in high-level meetings and events, including at the European Parliament. The OSPDH is part of various European networks working on this topic such as Antigone's European Prison Observatory and the European Prison Litigation Network.

More information <http://www.ub.edu/ospdh/en/>
