



## About Violence against women activity

As the main network of organisations fighting against torture, OMCT could not ignore the specific violence carried out against women, nor fail to support the development of measures aimed at putting an end to these abuses. This is why OMCT decided, in 1996, to react specifically to gender-based violence by launching a programme intended to fight violence against women.

In all regions of the world, women and girls are subjected to violence because of their gender. Despite the fact that different social, cultural and political contexts give rise to different forms of violence, its predominance and its models are remarkably constant, and cross national and socio-economic borders as well as cultural identities. Gender has a considerable impact on the form violence takes, the circumstances in which it occurs, the consequences, and the availability of legal, medical and social remedies. Because of violence, women are deprived - either totally or partially - of the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

*"My friend told me of your great efforts to help my daughter Grenada, who was submitted to torture during four years in prison. Grenada has now been released. The traces of torture are still visible on her body. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done."* - **a victim's mother in Syria**

The most visible aspect of torture against women is sexualised torture. Of course, men can also be victims of sexual torture. However, rape, threat of rape and other forms of sexual violence are used more consistently against women. Victims of torture are already confronted with major obstacles when they file a complaint or request reparation. But when rape or other forms of sexual violence are the torture method, it is most likely that victims will not complain because of the shame and fear they feel. With the burden of proof, women can even be accused of adultery or fornication in some countries. Consequently, torture against women has often led - and continues to lead - to the negation of violence against them and the impunity of the torturers.

Moreover, the majority of violence against women occurs in the private sphere of the family or in the community. Women are the object, in their own homes, of beatings, rape, incest, and traditional practices such as honour killings, dowry related violence, genital mutilations, son preference and early marriages. Furthermore, women are also targets of violence in society (e.g., rape, sexual abuse, trafficking, forced prostitution, pornography, violence against migrant women). Finally, certain groups of women are particularly vulnerable to violence, such as those belonging to a minority, indigenous women, refugees and women living in situations of armed conflict.

### **The main objectives of the "Violence against Women" programme are:**

- To offer protection to women who are victims of torture or threatened with torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, taking into account the specific nature of the violence used against them.

- To ensure that the respect and the promotion of women's human rights become an irreversible reality at the same level as men's human rights.
- To ensure that problems that are specific to women and the violation of their rights are taken into consideration by relevant UN bodies (treaty monitoring bodies) and are granted greater attention.