



26 JUNE: STATES MUST STRENGTHEN COMMITMENT TO ENDING TORTURE

26 June 2024 — On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the United Against Torture Consortium calls on States to defend the progress made in the last decades in upholding human dignity by showing a greater commitment to ending torture worldwide.

Since its adoption almost 40 years ago, the [UN Convention against Torture](#) has provided a blueprint for States to make the global ban on torture and other ill-treatment a reality by establishing a set of measures, enshrined in law, designed to prevent this abhorrent practice, punish perpetrators, and provide justice and reparation, including rehabilitation, to victims.

Eradicating torture requires a collective effort involving survivors, civil society organisations, human rights defenders and others globally. It also calls for greater synergies between international and regional human rights protection mechanisms. The stakes are too high, and those who defend human rights face significant obstacles, including abuses themselves.

A broad legal consensus exists today on the absolute ban on torture, and systems of protection have become more robust, but torture and other forms of ill-treatment are far from being eradicated. These inhumane practices remain prevalent in a wide range of contexts, including in armed conflict; prisons and other places of detention, such as police stations; hospital and social care settings, as well as during protests. They disproportionately impact marginalised communities and persons.

Widespread impunity and States' failure to implement the existing international law and standards on the absolute prohibition of torture remain major obstacles to eradicating these practices. There are currently more armed conflicts than at any other time since 1945, and torture is a feature of many of them, including sexual torture. Worrying recent examples concern the use of torture by State and non-State actors in the ongoing conflicts in Sudan, Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories and Ukraine.

In recent years we have also witnessed excessive force used against political dissenters and others who have taken to the streets to protest on issues ranging from rising living costs, human rights abuses or climate change in numerous countries who have ratified the Convention, including Georgia, Belarus, Bangladesh, Myanmar, France, the US, Egypt, Sudan, Colombia and Venezuela.

Despite these challenges, we have also seen positive developments, including torture survivors achieving justice and holding their perpetrators accountable. Among them are the case brought by [36 Maya Achi women](#) in Guatemala for the sexual violence they suffered during the internal conflict, which resulted in the conviction of five perpetrators of these abuses; a historic case concerning [state-sponsored torture](#) in Syria, where a high-ranking Syrian official was tried and convicted for crimes against humanity in Germany under the principle of universal jurisdiction, or [the first-ever decision](#) on gender-based violence against a human rights defender by a UN women's rights body concerning a victim of torture from Libya.

Positive trends also include a significant number of [States](#) ratifying the [Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture](#), enabling the independent monitoring of places where people are deprived of liberty; the significant [steps](#) taken to promote and implement the [Méndez Principles](#) on Effective Interviewing, which offer guidance on obtaining reliable information, while protecting human rights during criminal investigations and other information gathering processes, the [Model Protocol](#) for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of

Peaceful Protests, and the updated [Istanbul Protocol](#) which fortifies the implementation of international norms and preventive tools to assist survivors worldwide. As members of the Torture-Free Trade Network, we are encouraged by the level of support for a Torture-Free Trade Treaty from civil society organisations and others, including the [UN Special Rapporteur on Torture](#); we call on States to engage with the UN process to develop a binding treaty to address the torture trade.

As we mark the 40th anniversary of the UN Convention against Torture, we pay tribute to all victims and survivors. Their strength and courage have been instrumental in giving teeth to the Convention, and in allowing justice, reparation, and measures to prevent recurrence to flourish.

Our organisations would also like to recognize and commend all individuals and civil society organisations, including grassroots movements, human rights defenders and community leaders, who have bravely stood up against torture and other ill-treatment over the last four decades. Amidst threats and intimidation, the anti-torture movement remains a steadfast force for upholding the spirit, principles and obligations enshrined in the Convention.

Any deviation from the absolute prohibition of torture undermines the fundamental values of justice and human dignity, damaging the very fabric of society and eroding trust in the institutions and the rule of law. Let us all stand together with survivors and act against this practice. States should demonstrate that they have zero-tolerance for torture by implementing the Convention against Torture also in practice. Achieving this requires a holistic approach, from prevention to prosecution, reparation and rehabilitation, with the active involvement of survivors and civil society.

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The UATC, funded by the European Union, brings together the global memberships of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) and the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT) with the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), Omega Research Foundation and REDRESS. Together we implement a collective programme to strengthen and expand the global anti-torture movement through survivor engagement, mobilisation of local civil society organisations, development of normative standards, justice-seeking, awareness and narrative building, crisis intervention, and addressing policing in the context of dissent.

The United Against Torture Consortium remains committed to working in partnership with survivors, civil society organisations, States, the international community, the European Union and other stakeholders to build a world where torture has no place. As part of this work, we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Convention Against Torture with a campaign, "Voices for Human Dignity", which highlights the stories and perspectives of torture experts, survivors, and human rights defenders, showcasing the progress made and the challenges that remain. Follow this campaign using the hashtag #UnitedAgainstTorture.

