

[Children's booklet]

STOP TORTURE

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Stop Torture

TORTURE is wrong, unjust and illegal. It should never happen to anyone.

Everyone has the right not to be tortured. Everyone also has the right to be free of the threat of torture.

But in the world we live in, many people are tortured. In fact, in more than 150 countries torture is used to hurt, frighten and punish people.

This booklet is about torture and what you can do to stop torture. It has been written by an organization called Amnesty International.

Please help us to make the world free of torture.

Amnesty International and human rights

Amnesty International is an international organization that works to protect the rights of all people. These rights are called "human rights".

Human rights belong to every person. You do not have to do anything to deserve them, and it doesn't matter who you are or where you live.

Everyone in the world is born with the same human rights. For example, we all have the right to practise our religion, speak our own language, get an education, and have shelter and food. At work, we have the right to join a trade union and be protected from injury. We also have the right not to be tortured or abused by the police or other officials even when we are accused of breaking the law.

You can't give away these rights — and nobody can take them from you. But they are often abused even though they should be respected by everyone.

Over a million people in more than 150 countries are members of Amnesty International. They take action to protect human rights and to make sure that everybody knows what their human rights are.

Every day Amnesty International researchers work to find out when people's human rights are not being respected wherever they are and wherever they live. They then tell Amnesty International members, governments and the media.

Amnesty International members also stage protests and campaign for people whose human rights are being abused — including people who are being tortured.

What is torture?

Torture is deliberately causing someone pain or suffering in order to get something from them or to punish them.

People are tortured in many different ways. For example, they may be severely beaten, or forced to stand for a long time in a painful position, or held alone in a cell without any human contact for weeks or months.

People may also be tortured by being told that they or people they love will be hurt, whether or not the threat is carried out.

Why are people tortured?

There are many reasons why people are tortured. Often torture is used to force the victim to confess to a crime. Sometimes it is used to frighten or punish people. At other times, people in government use torture as a way of holding on to power.

These three stories show other reasons why people are tortured:

Torture can happen because of what people think you know:

Police arrest a young woman. They think some of her friends took part in a protest against the government. They blindfold her, keep her alone in a cold cell and tell her that they will hurt her if she doesn't tell them the names of those friends.

Torture can happen because of who you are:

A family of refugees is living in a hostel. They have a different religion, speak a different language and have different coloured skin to most people in that country. They are arrested, called racist names and punched by police, even though they have done nothing wrong.

Torture can happen when people want to punish you:

A teenage boy is sent by a court to a special centre for difficult children. He behaves badly, breaking furniture and hitting a member of staff. He is punished by being beaten and locked in a dark room by himself.

Even if someone has done something wrong or has broken the law they should never be tortured.

Who are the torturers?

People who have power over others sometimes use torture.

Some police officers are torturers. This may be because they want information, or want to force someone to confess to a crime, or simply don't like a person.

Some soldiers are torturers. They may torture civilians — people who are not involved in the fighting — or they may torture enemy soldiers they have captured. Sometimes they torture people to get information, sometimes to punish them for supporting the other side.

Some prison officials are torturers. They may torture prisoners to punish them, to make them give information about other prisoners, or to frighten them so they obey the rules.

When someone is battered, threatened or abused by a family member, an employer, a carer or someone else in the community, this can also be torture; the authorities must take steps to prevent and punish such acts, no matter who carries them out.

People who work for the government and the police have a special responsibility to protect people.

Most of them treat others kindly and with respect. Unfortunately, some of them abuse their power, do not respect people and their human rights, and may even use torture.

Who suffers torture?

Torture may be suffered by every type of person — women and men, children and adults.

In a few countries, torture is so common that almost everyone who is picked up by the police or is in prison is likely to be tortured or ill-treated.

In other countries, certain people are more likely than others to be tortured — because of their racial origin or their political or religious beliefs; because they live in an area where opposition to the government is strong; or because they are poor or belong to a trade union.

Torture is WRONG

No matter who the torturer is,
No matter who the victim is,
No matter where it happens.

Everyone should feel SAFE

Whoever they are,
Wherever they come from,
Whatever they think,
Whatever they have done.

Torture is ILLEGAL

International law and the laws of almost every country say clearly that torture is a crime. But in some places the people who are in charge of standing up for the law, such as government officials, police and soldiers, are the very people who break the law by using torture.

Around the world, torturers are often not punished for their actions. This sends a message that torture is acceptable and that torturers can carry on with their crimes.

To stop torture, another message is needed — that anyone suspected of torture will be taken to court, tried as a criminal and sent to prison if found guilty.

Say NO to torture

Help us take a step to stamp out torture.

In October 2000 Amnesty International launched a Campaign Against Torture and is asking everyone — including you — to help.

Amnesty International launches a campaign when action is needed to stop a serious abuse of human rights, like torture. A campaign:

- tells people all over the world about the human rights problem and asks them to help in the campaign;
- asks people in power — such as a government — to take action to stop the abuses.

Amnesty International believes that we can — and must — stop torture.

Together we will:

- stop torture happening
- make sure that torturers are brought to justice
- say NO to people who think that torture is OK

You can make a difference

If you want to take part in this campaign, you could:

- hold a demonstration or a public event to tell people what is happening
- write letters and sign petitions to send to people in power all over the world to ask them to stop torture
- ask people in the newspapers, television and radio to talk about these issues
- make a sign saying “Torture Free Zone” and use it to declare your room, your house, your school or your street a Torture Free Zone
- write and share stories, poems and songs about everyone’s right not to be tortured
- draw a candle in memory of people who have been tortured and tell your friends and family what it means
- hold a school assembly about torture and the campaign to stop it
- visit the campaign website: www.stoptorture.org

Amnesty International

Amnesty International was founded 40 years ago by UK lawyer Peter Benenson.

He became angry after reading a newspaper report about two Portuguese students. They had been sentenced to seven years in prison. Their crime? Raising their glasses in a toast to freedom.

Peter Benenson thought of ways to persuade the Portuguese government — and all governments — to release such victims of injustice. His idea was to bombard the government with letters of protest.

To draw public attention to the fate of people held in prison for their political beliefs — like the Portuguese students — Peter Benenson and several activists organized a one-year campaign. They called it Appeal for Amnesty, 1961.

The campaign was launched in a newspaper article on 28 May 1961. The Forgotten Prisoners called on people everywhere to protest peacefully against the imprisonment of people around the world for their political and religious beliefs. These people were called prisoners of conscience. With that, a new phrase entered the vocabulary of world affairs.

The article received a tremendous response. Within a month, more than a thousand readers had sent letters of support and offers of practical help. They also sent details of the cases of many more prisoners of conscience.

This was to be the driving force behind Amnesty International — popular action by many people worldwide.

As a result of the support the newspaper article received, six months later Peter Benenson announced that what had started as a brief publicity effort was being converted into a permanent international movement. Amnesty International was born.

Today, Amnesty International is still campaigning for human rights — and now has more than one million members in more than 150 countries and territories. Since 1961, Amnesty International activists have worked on more than 45,000 cases and have responded to more than 16,600 urgent appeals on behalf of men, women and children in immediate danger. Many of these appeals were on behalf of people at risk of torture.

The outrage at injustice that led to the founding of Amnesty International 40 years ago continues to inspire and motivate millions of people determined to build a better world.

[Back cover]

This booklet is part of a package of education materials produced by Amnesty International to provide teachers and educators with a generic resource that can be used to prepare lessons that assist children understand that torture is a violation of human rights. It is written for 10 to 12-year-old children but can be adapted as required by the teacher/educator for other age groups.

[Captions]

‘Ali Mustafa Tubeh was held at Khiam Detention Centre in Lebanon for over two years from October 1997, where he was tortured. © Private

Women who were arrested in December 1998 while taking part in a peaceful demonstration calling for the release of Alpha Condé, President of a political opposition party in Guinea. During the demonstration, hundreds of men and women were arrested and tortured. © AI

Children pray before lunch in a home where children accused of breaking the law are detained, in São Paulo, Brazil. Many children in homes like this one have been tortured. © Reuters

Former child labourers from the brick factories protest against the exploitation of children, India
© Fernando Molerres/Panos Pictures

Adam Abubakarov, aged 17 from Chechnya, who is apparently being held in a Russian prison camp where he is at risk of torture. © Private

A demonstration led by a women's organization outside Sarwar Police Station in Rajasthan, India, on 14 September 1999 protesting about abuses of the rights of a dalit woman and her family by police. Dalits (previously known as "untouchables") regularly experience discrimination and abuses of their human rights, and violence against dalit women in Rajasthan is common and rarely punished.
© Mahila Jan Adihikar Samiti

Young people in the Philippines march to stamp out torture © Private

Drawing by a former child soldier from Uganda, where thousands of children were abducted and forced to fight for the Lord's Resistance Army. © AI

Children take part in a painting competition organized by Amnesty International Bangladesh to campaign against the torture of children. © Private

Demonstration in Freetown, Sierra Leone, by school children to launch a campaign by an organization called Caritas-Makeni against the use of child soldiers. © Caritas-Makeni

Nepalese school children using Torture Free Zone tape © AI

[Front cover]

Front cover photo: In March 1997 the community of San José de Apartadó in Colombia declared itself a peace community. Children stand in front of a sign which tells people about the peace community — they demand that both sides in the conflict should respect their right to life and their right not to take sides in the conflict. © Private

[inside front cover]

Imen Derouiche was among a group of students from the University of Tunis, Tunisia, who were detained and not allowed to speak to anyone, then beaten, threatened and denied essential medical treatment. She is pictured here speaking in the United Kingdom about being tortured and why she is backing Amnesty International's campaign. © AI

[inside back cover]

Amnesty International members and other human rights activists demanding that the now closed Khiam Detention Centre in Lebanon, where many people were tortured, be declared a "Torture Free Zone". © AI