

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: IOR 40/037/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 200
6 November 2002

UN: Putting a price on preventing torture?

(New York) On the eve of a crucial vote, Amnesty International is gravely concerned that certain states at the UN General Assembly are opposing the adoption of a new treaty aimed at preventing torture on the basis of cost. The new Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture will establish visits by experts to places of detention, who will then make recommendations to prevent torture.

"It is extraordinary that an effective method to prevent torture should be opposed on the grounds of money," said Renzo Pomi, Amnesty International's representative at the UN.

The United States and Japan have criticised the new treaty because of the costs it involves. The United States has asked for the treaty to be funded by states parties only -- rather than by the regular UN budget, which is the normal method of funding international human rights treaties. Amnesty International is completely opposed to this proposal.

"The US proposal could deter many poorer countries from participating in this treaty. Prevention of torture should not be a privilege of wealthy countries," stated Mr Pomi.

According to the organization's Annual Report 2002, people were reportedly tortured or ill-treated by security forces, police or other state authorities in 111 countries.

"The continuing widespread prevalence of torture is shocking -- and the need to prevent torture imperative," concluded Mr Pomi.

Amnesty International calls on all states at the UN General Assembly to support the new Optional Protocol and secure its final adoption.

Background

The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture aims to assist states to uphold existing obligations to prevent torture, by establishing visits by national and international experts to places of detention. These experts will make practical recommendations for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment, based on their visits. This treaty has been negotiated for the past 10 years, and has already been approved by the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly will need to give it final approval before it can be adopted.

Amnesty International has worked on behalf of the victims of torture for many of the last 40 years of its existence. For more information please visit <http://www.stoptorture.org>

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>