

## **GQUAL, IRCT, REDRESS, OMCT, ISHR, APT and Amnesty International Concerned by the Lack of Nominations of Women Candidates to the Committee against Torture**

The GQUAL Campaign, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), REDRESS, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT) and Amnesty International call on States parties to the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT) to nominate and elect qualified candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT) with a view to achieving gender parity in the composition of the Committee.

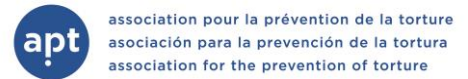
States parties to UNCAT can nominate candidates to be elected to the CAT until 16 June 2023, although States might choose to nominate candidates after that deadline. Five members to the Committee will subsequently be elected during the forthcoming 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of States parties to the Convention that will take place on 19 October 2023 in Geneva.

The Committee is currently comprised of seven male and three female members, with the terms of three male and two female members set to expire at the end of this year.

**The undersigned organizations are very concerned that as of 23 May 2023, only (six) male candidates have been nominated for election. Unless States parties take strong action to remedy this situation, there is a real risk that the CAT will be left with only one female member, which would significantly undermine gender representation within the CAT as well as its legitimacy and effectiveness.**

As stated by the [Human Rights Council Advisory Committee](#), the underrepresentation of women in international bodies has a significant impact on the human rights to equality and non-discrimination, and the right of women to equal participation in international decision-making. Gender parity is particularly important to the quality and legitimacy of human rights bodies' policies and decisions, which stem from the principle of equality. In the absence of gender parity, UN bodies risk overlooking matters and perspectives that should be part of their political and legal agenda. As such, a balanced representation of women is required for their lives and experiences to be accounted for in all aspects of the work of the UN.

Women have been historically underrepresented in the CAT. As the upcoming election will determine half of the CAT's membership, it stands to have a crucial impact on the legitimacy and effectiveness of the main human rights body addressing torture and ill-treatment globally. Former CAT members [Nora Sveaass and Felice Gaer have noted](#) that at several times in the Committee's history, members questioned whether gender-based violence should continue to be addressed by the CAT at all. While this view appears to have shifted in recent years, it is crucial that women's experiences with torture and other ill-treatment continue to be integrated in the CAT's work, and that its composition is representative enough to ensure that women's experiences of torture are adequately considered and addressed.



The Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls and the Commission on the Status of Women use parity as a measure of equality, meaning no less than 50 percent of a given body consisting of one gender.

**We therefore strongly call on States parties to take pro-active steps to not only avoid having an all-male list of nominees, but to ensure that the Committee achieves gender parity and reiterate the recommendations issued by the Advisory Committee, and call on States parties to:**

- **Proactively seek qualified female candidates for nomination to the CAT.**
- **Consider the actual and historical representation of women in the CAT and commit to nominating qualified candidates of this underrepresented group.**

**And to:**

- **Consider the importance to achieve gender parity when voting for the composition of the CAT.**
- **Agree target measures, by encouraging States to elect members of the gender that is currently underrepresented.**
- **Encourage States parties to vote for qualified women candidates in consecutive voting rounds if the minimum targets for parity are not achieved in the first round of votes.**