

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Spain: Amnesty International welcomes the announcement of installation of cameras

London – Amnesty International welcomes the announcement by the Civil Guard and National Police that they are to install video surveillance cameras in detention areas where incommunicado detainees are held, in line with the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). Such measures are an important means of protecting detainees from torture and other ill-treatment, as well as protecting law enforcement officials from false accusations.

Amnesty International is, however, concerned that the present initiative does not include recording in interrogation rooms, and that recording measures are only used when requested by the investigating judge responsible for the case. The organisation therefore calls on the authorities to ensure that the surveillance cameras are located in all custody areas of police stations and any other places where detainees may be present, except where this would violate their right to consult with a lawyer or doctor in private. Amnesty International also calls on the authorities to make these surveillance measures compulsory in all cases, and extend them promptly to also include detainees who are not being held incommunicado.

Surveillance camera recordings, which should be both audio and visual, must be kept in a secure facility for a reasonable period of time in order to ensure they are available for viewing by investigators if so required.

Background information

Amnesty International has long expressed concerns about ongoing and widespread reports of torture and ill-treatment in police custody. Its November 2007 report *Spain: Adding insult to injury. The effective impunity of police officers in cases of torture and other ill-treatment* (AI Doc EUR 41/006/007) documented numerous such cases. Many complainants reported being physically beaten by police officers, while some individuals claimed that they were threatened with a gun or knife, whipped on the soles of their feet, and received death threats from police officers. In one case a detainee was told that if he did not cooperate, the police officers would rape his girlfriend. In another, a man lost hearing in one ear for several weeks as a result of blows to his head from police officers.

In line with the recommendations of the CPT and the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Amnesty International's research concluded that the introduction of audio-visual surveillance measures in police stations would be an important protection measure against ill-treatment. The organisation has previously welcomed the introduction of similar initiatives by the autonomous authorities in the Basque Country, and the plans for their introduction in Catalonia.

Amnesty International is also calling on the Spanish authorities to introduce a range of legislative, judicial, and administrative measures to prevent torture and other ill-treatment. The organization

further urges that the authorities ensure the prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigation of any case where there is reason to believe torture or ill-treatment may have occurred.

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