

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: IOR 40/019/2010

27 October 2010

## **United Nations: Call to elect independent and highly qualified members for the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture**

Amnesty International today calls on all states parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) to support only those candidates with relevant skills and expertise and who are independent and impartial when electing new members of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT). The elections to fill 20 vacancies will take place on 28 October 2010 in Geneva.

Too often, political trade-offs trump principles in the selection of individuals to the bodies overseeing implementation of the treaties, with the result that the best candidates for the job are not necessarily those who are voted to serve on these committees of independent experts.

The treaty body chairpersons recently reaffirmed a joint statement they issued in 1997 in which they called on states parties to refrain from nominating or electing individuals performing political functions or occupying positions which are not readily reconcilable with the obligations of independent experts under the given treaty. That statement also calls on states parties to pay attention to the gender composition of treaty bodies, which in the case of the SPT is particularly pertinent. Currently, only one of the 10 serving members is a woman.

Article 5 of the OPCAT establishes that the candidates should be of "high moral character, having proven professional experience in the field of the administration of justice, in particular criminal law, prison or police administration, or in the various fields relevant to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty". In addition the nomination of candidates should strive towards a membership that is diverse in terms of skills, experience, geographical region and gender.

Amnesty International takes no position in favour or against individual candidates, but believes that states parties should vote for the most competent nominees with proven expertise in the field of prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### **Background:**

After the 50<sup>th</sup> ratification of the OPCAT, the SPT will expand its membership to 25, of which 20 vacancies need to be filled on 28 October 2010.

The elections will take place at the Third Meeting of States Parties to the OPCAT on 28 October 2010. Upon receiving its 50<sup>th</sup> state ratification in September 2009, the State Parties will after having filled the 5 vacancies that expire in 2010 elect a further 15 members to serve on the Subcommittee.

The full text of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cat-one.htm>

The list of candidates that have so far been nominated for the election in October 2010 is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/opcat/elections2010.htm>

Public Document

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