

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **UN Day of Victims of Torture: Making the Convention against Torture a reality**

Fifteen years on from the entry into force of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, torture and ill-treatment continue to be recorded in at least 111 countries throughout the world, and the Convention remains the least ratified of the six existing international human rights treaties, Amnesty International said today.

"Only 129 of the 189 UN member states have become parties to the convention, and many of those that have are still failing to ensure its full implementation and allowing the practice of torture to continue unchecked," the organization added.

Implementation of the Convention is monitored by a ten-strong committee of independent experts, the Committee against Torture, which reviews state party periodic reports, decides on individual communications and is empowered to carry out confidential inquiries. Over the years, Amnesty International has been providing the Committee with information on torture and ill-treatment in the countries under review.

"From Brazil to Saudi Arabia, from Russia to Indonesia, from the USA to Cameroon, state parties to the Convention are falling short of their obligation to take the necessary steps to prevent and sanction torture," Amnesty International said. "Torture should be confined to the history books. Instead, it is still widely used to extract confessions, to intimidate opponents or to punish, discipline or humiliate prisoners," the organization added.

Torture methods range from severe beatings -- such as the one suffered in April this year by Chinese labour activist Gu Baoshu after his arrest in connection with workers' demonstrations -- to electric shocks, sexual abuse, and deprivation of food and sleep.

"To put an end to all this, states should ratify the Convention against Torture without reservations and as a matter of urgency, and adopt concrete measures to turn the commitment to eradicate torture into real, measurable change," Amnesty International said.

The organization also called for all state parties to make the declaration provided for in article 22 of the Convention to allow individual complaints to the Committee against Torture.

"To date, only 50 states have made the declaration to Article 22 to provide for individual complaints," Amnesty International said. "As a consequence, the vast majority of people are denied recourse to this mechanism of protection of their fundamental right not to be tortured or ill-treated."

"Another important step to make the aims of the Convention against Torture a reality is the adoption and speedy entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention which creates an international mechanism to prevent torture and ill treatment," Amnesty International added.

The aim of the Protocol is to establish an expert body, a Sub-Committee to the Committee against Torture, to carry out inspection visits to places of detention and subsequently submit confidential reports to the relevant authorities with concrete recommendations for how to prevent torture and ill-treatment. The Protocol will also require states to establish national visiting bodies to make visits to places of detention, working alongside the international Sub-Committee.

"By focussing on the prevention of torture and ill-treatment, rather than on a response to ongoing violations, this global mechanism would be unique within the UN system," Amnesty International stressed.

### **Background**

The UN Commission on Human Rights adopted the draft text of an Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture at its last session in April 2002. The text of the proposed new treaty will now be considered by the UN Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly later this year. Once approved by these bodies, the Protocol will become a fully formalized treaty and open to states for ratification. It will enter into force after 20 states have ratified it.

\*\* Amnesty International is today releasing a new report on torture in Peru, available on the web at:  
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/AMR46005002>

\*\* For further information please see:

Israel/Occupied Territories: Torture and ill-treatment under scrutiny at UN in Geneva --  
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/MDE150802002>

Saudi Arabia Remains a Fertile Ground for Torture with Impunity --  
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/MDE230042002>

Belarus: Briefing for the Committee against Torture --  
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/EUR490022001>

Brazil: Commentary on Brazil's first report to the Committee against Torture --  
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/AMR190162001>

### **Public Document**

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