

## **Europe: Torture feeds off discrimination**

*Amnesty International's new global Campaign Against Torture was launched today, beginning with events in Tokyo and moving on to Beirut, Nairobi, London and Buenos Aires. The organization is calling for worldwide action towards the abolition of torture.*

*Torture and ill-treatment persists across the European region -- from the United Kingdom to Azerbaijan. Torture and ill treatment has been documented by Amnesty International in at least 25 countries, 20 of them member states of the Council of Europe including Belgium, Russia and Spain.*

*"Torture is prevalent throughout Europe. Governments have it in their power to change this and to rid the region of this gross act of inhumanity," Amnesty International said today.*

*Individuals have suffered beatings, sexual abuse, mock hangings, electric shock treatment, racist abuse and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment at the hands of police.*

*Torture feeds off discrimination. It is easier for the torturer to inflict pain on someone who is seen as less human -- someone from despised social, ethnic or political group.*

*There is a clear link between racism and torture. For example, many victims of police brutality in Europe are members of other ethnic minorities or marginalized groups. Across Europe, Roma people are commonly viewed as criminals and subjected to beatings.*

Amnesty International's latest 'Concerns in Europe' bulletin (September), details recent reports of torture and ill-treatment including the death in custody of a Roma man in Portugal, the ill-treatment of Afghan asylum-seekers by guards at a detention centre in Hungary and the ill-treatment and racist abuse of a 17-year-old Angolan secondary student living in Switzerland.

Immigrants, migrant workers and asylum-seekers who have left their homes in search of security often encounter ill-treatment by officials. In Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and the UK, foreign nationals have died during deportation, allegedly as a result of excessive use of force by police or dangerous methods of restraint.

"European countries should work harder to uphold standards and end the blight of impunity which exists for police and security forces. Respect for human rights includes bringing to justice those who violate them," Amnesty International urged.

During its year-long campaign, Amnesty International will be mobilising its membership in Europe and throughout the world, and working together with other organizations to change public and official attitudes towards torture. It will be calling on the Europe's governments to take real steps to prevent torture, and to address impunity and discrimination.

For more information on the Torture Campaign visit Amnesty International's websight: [www.stoptorture.org](http://www.stoptorture.org)

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For more information on Amnesty International's global Campaign Against Torture, please phone the press office in London, UK, on + 44 20 7413 5566

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