

WEB FEATURE – TACTICAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST TORTURE

Date	20/06/2006
Section	stop torture: Features/ amnesty.org homepage
AI index number	ACT 40/005/2006

Title

States agree to spot checks of detention centres.

Summary for homepage

22 June 2006 marks the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture that aims to prevent torture and other ill-treatment through a system of regular visits to all detention places

Congratulations to the first 20 states parties.

Feature

22 June 2006 marks the entry into force of the **Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT)** that aims to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by establishing an innovative system of regular visits to all places of detention.

The Coalition of International NGOs Against Torture congratulates the following states who have enabled this momentous event by becoming **the first 20 to ratify the OPCAT**: Albania, Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, Honduras, Liberia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Spain, Sweden, Paraguay, Poland, the UK and Uruguay.

Unlike existing UN mechanisms, it **combines national and international efforts**. Visits will be carried out by “independent national mechanisms” which states parties undertake to establish or designate, and by a new international expert body, the Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture. States that ratify the OPCAT must accept **unannounced visits** to any place of detention and cooperate with those bodies to implement their recommendations.

Regular and unrestricted visits to places of detention not only have a deterrent effect. By allowing experts to examine at first hand the conditions of detention and treatment of all persons deprived of their liberty, it enables them to make recommendations for improvements and to monitor their implementation. Equally important, visits permit detainees to maintain contact with the outside world.

The Protocol enters into force at a particularly important time. Some states are not only engaging or being complicit in torture or other ill-treatment in practice, but also trying to circumvent or weaken the absolute prohibition against torture and other ill-treatment.

The Coalition of International NGOs Against Torture calls on all states that have ratified the UN Convention Against Torture to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol as a matter of urgency. States that have not ratified the UN Convention Against Torture should do so and give priority to signing and ratify the OPCAT.

Links to:

- Q&A: Torture and ill-treatment: the arguments
[<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/stoptorture-arguments-eng>]
- Campaign briefing: [Cruel. Inhuman. Degrades us all. Stop torture and ill-treatment in the 'war on terror'](#)
[http://web.amnesty.org/shop/index/ISBN_0-86210-385-1]

External links

- Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
[<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cat-one.htm>]
- Coalition Against Torture [<http://www.apr.ch/cinat.htm>] public statement: Making the prevention of torture and ill-treatment a priority
[http://www.apr.ch/cinat/CINAT_Statement_22.06.06.pdf]

Images:

Id: <https://intranet.amnesty.org/adam/en/5587/detail.html>

Iraqi female prisoner works prayer beads through cell bars at Abu Ghraib Prison, Iraq