

Press Release

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Council of Europe's Anti-Torture Committee pledges to work closely with new UN torture prevention body

Strasbourg, 16.10.2006 - In its 16th General Report published today, the CPT¹ welcomes the prospect of working together with the universal machinery for the prevention of torture, to be set up in the coming months following the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture (OPCAT). The report stresses that co-operation, complementarity and synergy must be the hallmarks of the relationship between the CPT and the new Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture – "the arduous task of upholding in today's world (as in yesterday's) the absolute prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment requires nothing less". To facilitate that co-operation, the CPT proposes that those States - already 14 - bound by both the ECPT² and the OPCAT agree that CPT visit reports and government responses be immediately and systematically forwarded to the UN Subcommittee on a confidential basis.

The General Report provides details on the 18 visits carried out by the CPT during the last twelve months, and on the level of co-operation shown towards the Committee. The CPT gives notice that "if faced with solid evidence of intimidatory or retaliatory action against a person before or after contact with a CPT delegation, or with a persistent failure to implement recommendations on key issues, the Committee will have little choice but to consider having recourse to its power to issue a public statement".

The continuing trend of States lifting the veil of confidentiality and agreeing to the publication of CPT visit reports is also highlighted: 165 of the 206 visit reports drawn up to date have been placed in the public domain.

The CPT addresses the contentious issue of the use of means of restraint in psychiatric establishments, and encourages practitioners to engage with the Committee on this subject. Emphasis is placed on the total unsuitability of certain mechanical restraints still to be found in some psychiatric hospitals visited by the CPT - "Handcuffs, metal chains and cage-beds clearly fall within this category; they have no rightful place in psychiatric practice and should be withdrawn from use immediately".

The General Report is available on the Committee's website : www.cpt.coe.int

- 1 European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- 2 The Convention establishing the CPT.

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