

Press Release

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Council of Europe's anti-torture Committee denounces secret detention

Strasbourg, 14.09.2007 - In its 17th General Report published today, the CPT¹ denounces secret detention, an illegal practice that has been resorted to in particular in the context of the fight against terrorism. Secret detention amounts in itself to ill-treatment and – due to the removal of fundamental safeguards which it entails - inevitably heightens the risk of resort to other forms of ill-treatment. Responding to reports that certain secret detention facilities were located in European countries, the CPT invites anyone who is in possession of information concerning such facilities to bring it to the attention of the Committee.

The CPT also comments on the related issue of extra-judicial transfers from one country to another, so-called "renditions". The Committee is particularly concerned by the practice of rendition for the purposes of detention and interrogation outside the normal criminal justice system. "Operations of this kind inevitably involve a risk of ill-treatment for the person concerned that no 'assurances' can ever fully remove; it follows that the authorities of Parties (to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture) should never offer assistance in the context of such operations".

The General Report provides details on the 17 visits carried out by the CPT during the last twelve months. The Committee draws attention to the widespread problems of prison overcrowding, inter-prisoner violence and inadequate activities for prisoners. The level of cooperation shown to the CPT by national authorities is also highlighted. In this regard, the Report emphasises that the Committee's purpose is to bring about necessary change with a view to strengthening the protection of persons deprived of their liberty against ill-treatment; "Only if the CPT's dialogue with a State leads to the achievement of that purpose can one speak of effective cooperation".

Set up by the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in force in 47 countries in Europe, the mandate of the CPT is to examine the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty. The CPT visits various types of places (e.g. prisons and juvenile detention centres, police stations, holding centres for immigration detainees and psychiatric hospitals), to examine how persons deprived of their liberty are treated and, if necessary, to recommend improvements to States.

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

¹ European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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