

Press Release

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Council of Europe Anti-Torture Committee publishes report on the Czech Republic

Strasbourg, 05.02.2009 - The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) has published today the [report](#) on its ad hoc visit to the Czech Republic in March/April 2008, together with the [response of the Czech government](#). Both documents have been made public at the request of the Czech authorities.

One of the main objectives of the visit was to examine the application of testicular pulpectomy ("surgical castration") on sentenced sex-offenders. The CPT's delegation interviewed nine sexual offenders who had already undergone surgical castration, and five who were in the preparatory stages of the process to be castrated. In addition, the files of 41 sex offenders who had been surgically castrated between 1998 and 2008 were studied, and interviews on the treatment of sex offenders were carried out with medical practitioners, scientists and government officials. The CPT found that surgical castration was carried out not only on violent sex offenders but also on persons who had committed non-violent crimes, such as exhibitionism.

In its report, the CPT expresses several fundamental objections to the use of surgical castration as a means of treatment of sex-offenders. Firstly, it is an intervention that has irreversible physical effects, and direct or indirect mental health consequences. Further, there is no guarantee that the result sought (i.e. lowering of the testosterone level) will be lasting. Moreover, given the context in which the intervention is offered, it is questionable whether consent to the option of surgical castration will always be truly free and informed. The CPT also points out that effective alternative therapies for the treatment of sex offenders are currently available.

In the CPT's view, surgical castration of detained sex offenders amounts to degrading treatment and the Committee calls upon the Czech authorities to end immediately this practice

In their response, the Czech authorities state that surgical castration is carried out with the free, informed, consent of the patient and that they do not consider the reasons given by the CPT in favour of abandoning its use as "sufficient and established".

During the 2008 visit, the CPT also paid a follow-up visit to Section E of Valdice Prison, which accommodates persons sentenced to life imprisonment as well as "troublesome" or "dangerous" high security prisoners. It found that the treatment and conditions of detention of these prisoners continued to raise serious concerns and recommended that the Czech authorities undertake a thorough review of Section E.

In their response, the Czech authorities provide information on various measures taken to implement the Committee's recommendations.

The CPT's visit report and the response of the Czech authorities are available on the Committee's website at <http://www.cpt.coe.int>.

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