

PRESS RELEASE

Speaking out against torture in times of terrorism

The OMCT launches a global call for participation in its new Torture and Terrorism Working Group

Geneva, Tunis, Brussels, October 2nd, 2018

Geneva, Tunis, Brussels: The OMCT is opening today a call for participation to members of its global SOS-Torture Network and interested partners to join the new OMCT Network Working Group on Torture and Terrorism. The initiative will gather and build on the experiences of members and partners affected by terrorist acts and counter-terrorism policies to develop effective strategies to protect against torture in volatile security contexts.

“The banalisation of torture through counter-terrorism is taking a dangerous dimension globally, said Hina Jilani”, the OMCT President. Explaining the reasons for this new initiative, she continued “Torture is never good for security; it makes us less secure. So many of us have seen this first-hand in our societies. But the truth of the matter is: we are not being heard.”

Terrorism and terrorist acts are today a reality in many parts of the world; so are counter-terrorism laws and policies that undermine human rights and the absolute prohibition of torture. A logic of ‘us and them’ or a ‘war against terrorism’ rhetoric poses severe advocacy and communication challenges to anti-torture activists. It undermines the impact of our work and ability to be heard. This corrosive discourse not only expose them to various threats and attacks, but it legitimizes regressive legal and policy initiatives that create an environment for torture to re-emerge and persist.

‘It is time the SOS-Torture Network comes, to share our collective experiences, to develop new, compelling, and more innovative narratives countering such discourses, and to prevent legitimate security concerns from destroying the foundation of human rights,’ explained Hina Jilani.

Over the next three years the OMCT will convene a core group of 10-12 anti-torture advocates from its global SOS-Torture Network and prospective members. The Working Group will seek to build impactful, collective network initiatives through a diverse but integrated set of actions and tools including research, advocacy techniques and joint campaigning strategies.

Initiative under patronage of UN Rapporteurs on Torture & Terrorism and Human Rights

The OMCT is pleased and honoured that this initiative will stand under the patronage of its President, Ms Hina Jilani; the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Mr Nils Melzer; and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, Ms Fionnuala Ní Aoláin. Further details for SOS-Torture Members and other interested partners on the application process and the terms of reference for participation in the Group can be found below.

For more information, please contact:
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Created in 1985, the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) is today the main coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGO) fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. With more than 200 affiliated organisations in its SOS-Torture Network, OMCT aims at accompanying, reinforcing and protecting anti-torture organizations around the world and more especially in erosive environment.

The OMCT 'Torture and Terrorism' Working Group in 3 questions

What is its mandate?

This working group, by creating a space to exchange experiences, will aim to provide strategic guidance, advice, and support for our SOS-Torture Network Members around the world dealing with issues related to the absolute prohibition of torture while countering terrorism. The mandate of the group will be to embark on:

1. **Mapping civil society organisations' challenges** in combatting torture and terrorism and identifying research areas and needs;
2. Providing **advocacy support and legal policy advice** to Members of the SOS-Torture Network affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism laws, practices, and policies;
3. And developing **counter-narratives, effective communications and campaign** strategies against torture and terrorism.

What is its methodology?

The methodology will be participatory and geared toward experience- and expertise-sharing, group learning, and acting collectively and in coordination across boundaries. It will initially be made up of 12 members of the SOS-Torture Network, prospective members, or partner organisations with particular interest and experience in this issue, selected through an open process. In the course of the work, the group may identify additional research and may conduct further consultations with the broader membership of the OMCT to draw on specific, real-life stories and experiences of working against torture in volatile security contexts.

The group will meet at least three times in person with an in an additional set of webinar meetings during the three initial years of operation. The working languages will be French and English.

How is the selection process going to work?

The working group will be composed of 12 NGOs members, including SOS Torture Network Members, prospective members or other partner organisations with particular interest and experience in the issue, representing all regions of the world, and selected through an open process based on a list of objective criteria: field experience, expertise, motivation, capacity to work in a group, language, gender, age and geographical balance.

The decision will be taken by a collection committee of the OMCT Executive Council formed by three members with particular exposure to the issue including the two Vice Presidents of the OMCT, convened by the OMCT Secretary General.

The working group composition will be publicized on the [OMCT website](#).

To read more:

- Working Group [terms of references](#)
- [Call for participation](#)