

# UNITED NATIONS



## OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



# FACT SHEET

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## ABOUT COMBATING TORTURE

The United Nations is at the heart of international efforts against torture. In 1948, the international community condemned torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 1975, responding to vigorous activity by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the UN's General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. During the 1980s and 1990s, progress was made both in the development of legal standards and instruments and in enforcement of the prohibition of torture. In 1981 the Assembly established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture to fund organizations providing assistance to victims of torture and their families.

In 1984 the Assembly adopted the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which came into force in 1987. The Committee against Torture monitors how States parties implement the Convention. An Optional Protocol to the Convention will, when it enters into force, create a sub-committee and allow in-country inspections of places of detention to be undertaken in collaboration with national institutions. Twenty States must ratify the Optional Protocol before it enters into force; only the following 13 have done so (see list below).

Meanwhile, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed in 1985 the first Special Rapporteur on torture, an independent expert mandated to report on the situation of torture in the world. The present Special Rapporteur is Manfred Nowak

26 June is the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. The twin objectives of the day are to help torture victims and end torture worldwide.

*For further information on the Special Rapporteur on torture, please visit <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/torture/rapporteur/>*

*For further information on the Committee Against Torture, please visit <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/>*

The Convention against Torture has been ratified or acceded to by the following 140 States: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Timor Leste, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen and Zambia.

The following 52 States have recognized the competence of the Committee to consider complaints under articles 21 and 22: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela. In addition, Japan, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States of America have recognized the competence of the Committee under article 21 only (to consider inter-State party complaints). Azerbaijan, Burundi, Guatemala, Mexico and Seychelles have recognized the competence of the Committee under article 22 only (to consider individual complaints).

The following 13 States have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: Albania, Argentina, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, Liberia, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom.

#### ABOUT OHCHR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) helps protect and promote all human rights around the world. Headquartered in Geneva, the Office is also present in over 40 countries. OHCHR works to ensure the enforcement of universally recognized human rights norms, including through promoting both the universal ratification and implementation of human rights treaties and respect for the rule of law. It also aims to remove obstacles to the full realization of all human rights and to prevent or stop human rights abuses. For more information please visit [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

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