

"Torture is illegal, under any circumstances, with no exceptions," says UN human rights chief

Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, and the 25th anniversary of the Convention Against Torture

GENEVA, 26 June 2012

"Twenty-five years ago today, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment came into effect. Since then, 150 States have become party to the Convention. In so doing, they have pledged to, among other things, criminalise the use of torture, train law enforcement officials on the absolute prohibition against torture and disallow the use of confessions extracted through torture in legal proceedings.

"In the past 25 years, we have made many gains in the fight against torture, and against impunity for torture. Torture is increasingly criminalised in the law books of states and police training curricula frequently incorporate the provisions of the Convention. Yet much remains to be done. The use of torture is far from over. Every day, the various UN bodies that deal with torture, including my Office, continue to receive harrowing reports of torture in detention, whether to force confessions or to intimidate those critical of the powers that be.

"The victims of torture are, more often than not, ordinary people who belong to already vulnerable sectors of society. Perhaps most shockingly of all, even children are not spared.

"On this UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, I call on all States to live up to the pledges they have made to prevent, prosecute and punish the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. As the Convention Against Torture states unequivocally, the use of torture is illegal, under any circumstances, with no exceptions. I call on all those States that have still not introduced laws that criminalise torture to do so urgently, and all those that already have such legislation to redouble their efforts to ensure it is fully implemented. There also needs to be a more concerted effort to provide victims and their families with the necessary support and reparations to alleviate, at least slightly, the profound and lasting damage that has been done to them."

ENDS

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