

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS: ASIA SOS-TORTURE LITIGATORS' GROUP

The World Organization against Torture (OMCT) and the Philippines Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) are launching a call to join the Asia SOS-Torture Litigators' Group composed of fifteen (15) litigators.

The Litigators' Group is part of the project "Civil Society United Against Torture", a three-year global initiative covering Asia, Latin America and Africa. The project aims at contributing to a greater prevention, accountability and redress for cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CIDTP) through an increased implementation of the UN Convention against Torture and other international instruments protecting the prohibition of torture and CIDTP. The SOS-Torture Litigators' Group will focus on cases, particularly of, vulnerable and marginalized persons and groups, and on cases from difficult contexts. The litigators will be expected to actively pursue their cases and engage with the group from January 2019, during a period of at least two years.

Goals

Litigation - which includes the use of judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms - is fundamental to generate greater accountability and to obtain reparation for the victims or survivors of torture and CIDTP, including comprehensive rehabilitation. When litigation is integrated into a broader advocacy strategy, it can trigger structural reforms necessary to prevent torture and CIDTP. However, strategic litigation remains an underused tool, and civil society organisations active in the fight against torture and impunity often have difficulties in documenting and litigating cases of torture.

The litigators' group aims to:

- increase the number of cases of torture and ill-treatment investigated and sanctioned by domestic judicial and administrative bodies and international judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms, as well as achievement of concrete results in the fight against impunity;
- strengthen the participants' knowledge on universal anti-torture standards and on the documentation and litigation of cases of torture and ill-treatment at a domestic and universal level where applicable (in particular the Committee against Torture (CAT), the Human Rights Committee (CCPR), the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)), integrate international anti-torture standards into domestic litigation, and develop best practices on torture litigation based on relevant international standards;
- offer a platform for exchange of knowledge, experiences and strategies undertaken to defend victims of torture and CIDTP, setting up a process that accompanies litigators to transfer the acquired knowledge into successful domestic or international legal strategies;
- identify victim-centred and human rights-based practices and approaches in handling cases of torture and CIDTP.



Participants will share knowledge, progressive interpretations of legal principles, strategies and techniques to carry out effective legal interventions to improve victims of torture and other ill-treatment access to justice and reparation, including the release of those deprived of liberty. Complementary advocacy and communication strategies will be designed and implemented in connection to the cases.

Selection criteria

The successful candidate is one who:

- works for, is connected to or endorsed by a civil society organisation that is already documenting or litigating torture cases or is interested in expanding or strengthening its work on torture eradication and / or provides support or assistance to victims of torture and other ill-treatment. The litigator will be chosen based on personal merits and will be expected to participate in all the activities throughout the duration of the project (see more details in the application form).
- has experience in litigation or legal advocacy of cases of torture (including detention conditions, excessive use of force in extra-custodial settings such as protests, forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, gender-based violence, psychological torture methods, death penalty, violence or persecution of indigenous communities or in the context of migration, among others). At the time of application, the candidate must be working on or has identified cases that require the pursuit of legal remedies.
- is acquainted with national and international standards on the prevention, investigation, prosecution, punishment and reparation of torture and ill-treatment. Experience in the submission of individual communications to the United Nations Treaty Body System, or strong motivation to use the system is important.
- is aware of security and safety issues that can arise in connection to working on cases of torture and ill-treatment the victim, the litigator as well as the involved civil society organisation/s. Also, cognizant of possible protection strategies that can be adopted to mitigate or counter security and safety issues.
- has excellent command of written and oral English.

=> Candidates linked to organisations belonging to the SOS-Torture Network, or organisations interested in becoming a member, will have priority.

=> Candidates working in or on a country in Asia that has accepted one or various of the following individual communications' procedures: the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (article 22); the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Optional Protocol of the CEDAW and the Optional Protocol to the CRC, will be prioritized.

=> Priority will also be given to candidates who have worked with or are interested in working with the individual communications' procedures of the UN treaty bodies in their strategies for the defense and promotion of human rights.

=> OMCT and PAHRA will seek to maintain a geographical, cultural, gender balance and diversity among the participants in order to contribute to a greater exchange of experiences and good practices in Asia.



The SOS-Torture Litigators' Group is made possible with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of OMCT and can under no circumstance be regarded as reflecting the positions of the European Union.

Methodology

- The first in-person seminar will take place in Metro Manila, Philippines, in May 2019; further meetings will be scheduled over the next two years.
- Six webinars will be carried out throughout the project;
- Analysis, presentation and follow-up of cases;
- Accompaniment and advice in the design and implementation of legal strategies and complementary advocacy and communication plans;
- Possibility of applying to the Urgent Assistance OMCT Fund for Victims of Torture to subsidize legal, medical, psychological or social assistance of clients and / or their families;
- Active participation of the litigators in knowledge and experience sharing, as well as in the design of litigation strategies around the cases that each participant will work on;
- Litigators will need to be supported or endorsed by an NGO, which will be required to commit to accompany and provide technical and institutional support to the litigator anytime it is needed in the course of the meetings and legal submissions conducted in the framework of the litigators' group.

Financing and administrative procedures

The OMCT and PAHRA will cover the visa, travel, lodging and food expenses of the participants. When needed, the organisers will also provide assistance with visa applications, for instance, through issuing letters of invitation. No remuneration will be provided to the litigators.

How to Apply

All documentation can be downloaded from our website. Questions and completed applications should be sent to Cristina Sevilla at atty.cristina.sevilla@philippinehumanrights.org and Nicole Buerli at nb@omct.org with the subject line "Litigators' Group Application"

When to apply

The deadline for submitting applications is 28 January 2019.

Selection process

- Consideration of the applications and establishment of a list of eligible members;
- Evaluation and pre-selection according to the criteria established and the call for participation. The selection process will ensure geographical and gender balance;
- Shortlist presented to a Selection Committee for final approval;
- Final decision sent to the successful candidates.

Documents to be supplied in order to apply

An application will be considered eligible only if all the following documents are duly filled in and sent:

- Application form;
- CV of the candidate;
- Letter from the civil society organisation supporting the candidate and committing to provide support, anytime it is needed, to the proposed litigator, in particular with regards to the case strategy and identification of victims' needs and that confirms that the organization is willing to do advocacy around the candidate's cases.

