

NOTHING CAN JUSTIFY TORTURE



PATRONS AND ADVISORY SUPPORT

Patronage: The working group on torture and terrorism is be under the patronage of **Ms. Hina Jilani**, OMCT President, **Prof. Nils Melzer**, Special Rapporteur on Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and **Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin**, Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

Coordination & secretariat: The working group will be convened through the OMCT International Secretariat, at least once per year physically as well as through webinars. Coordination will be maintained by a project coordinator, in close collaboration with the programme director, the OMCT Secretary General as well as the OMCT Communications and Network teams.

Advisory committee: An advisory committee for the group may be established, composed of a small inter-disciplinary group of persons with pertinent and diverse backgrounds linked to the working group thematic and who can act as resource persons when needed to enrich or deepen exchanges.

For more information, please contact us at security-wg@omct.org
Follow us on Facebook: [OMCT](#) and through our website: <http://www.omct.org/en>



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WORKING GROUP TORTURE & TERRORISM PRESENTATION



WHY A WORKING GROUP ON TORTURE AND TERRORISM?

Terrorism and terrorist acts target the life and integrity of civilians and attack the very values protected by human rights law. In many

instances, human rights advocates and members of the anti-torture movement themselves have become a targets of terrorist and extremist violence, or of state responses to such violence. Properly understood, the question is thus not whether terrorist acts are addressed but how they are addressed.

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The response to terrorism brings to the fore globally corrosive and toxic discourses of the ‘exceptional’, the ‘extraordinary’, and that ‘the gloves are off’.

The result are legal frameworks prone to torture and impunity, the closing of civil society spaces, and increasing calls resonating with a broader public that torture works, can be acceptable, or has to be accepted for a broader good, security.

This poses an unaddressed foundational challenge to the anti-torture movement. Members of the SOS-Torture Network have worked and lived through past cycles of terrorism and counter-terrorism, and far from being naïve, many of them live today in acute situations of threat and terrorist violence. Yet, their experiences and knowledge are ignored, their voices are not heard/understood, or are misrepresented. Often times, their messaging sounds abstract, legalistic, dispassionate and predictable.

It is time for human rights advocates and the SOS-Torture movement to come together and find more compelling responses to those challenges. This working group seeks to provide the space to equip organizations to counter the present narrative and to ensure the protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment – in the interest of human rights and security.

WHAT IS THE WORKING GROUP'S MANDATE?

This working group aims to provide strategic guidance, advice, and support for the SOS-Torture Network with the support of the OMCT International Secretariat and the guidance of its Executive Council. Its mandate is to advise on:

- **Resilience:** To map civil society challenges in combating torture in counter-terrorism and providing support to anti-torture actors, and identifying research needs;
- **Advocacy:** To provide advocacy support and legal policy advise on laws, practices, and policies in situations of terrorism and counter-terrorism;
- **Narratives:** To develop counter-narratives, effective communications and campaign strategies that de-construct arguments that suggests that torture can be acceptable.



WHAT IS THE WORKING GROUP'S METHODOLOGY?

The methodology is collective and builds on the experience and expertise of members of the SOS-Torture Network who work in environments with terrorist violence and corrosive counter-terrorism agendas. The working group participatory and geared toward sharing experiences and expertise group learning, and acting collectively and in coordination across boundaries in an interdisciplinary format.

The group will meet at least once a year in person with a set of webinars. The working languages will be French and English. 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.



WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED RESULTS?

The expected result is to empower the anti-torture movement to be more effective and compelling in upholding the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- More sharing of experiences, a better understanding and a better collective thinking on torture, terrorism and security;
- More successful anti-torture advocacy in environments of terrorism and counter-terrorism, and greater guidance through legal and policy reflection and policy and advocacy papers;
- More innovative campaign strategies that counter the argument that torture can be acceptable and its acceptance among security officials and the broader public.

WHY THE OMCT?

Since 1985, the OMCT has been working to strengthen the anti-torture movement through its civil society network, now aims to accompany, connect, reinforce, and better protect anti-torture organizations around the world, especially those operating in the midst of these corrosive discourses. Thanks to the members of the General Assembly and Executive Council, the OMCT International Secretariat (with offices in Geneva, Tunis and Brussels) now stands to benefit from a wide range of expertise and field experiences from all continents on this key issue. This group, by creating a unique platform for cooperation among OMCT Network Members and strategic partners, seeks to build the true potential of a global network.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE SELECTION PROCESS?

The working group is composed of a core group of SOS Torture Network members and strategic partners with particular interest and experience in the issue, representing all regions of the world. They have been selected through an open process based on a list of objective criteria (relevance of their situation, expertise and motivation, and their capacity to work in a group, their language, gender, age and geographical balance). The OMCT Secretariat will involve other interested organizations in the course of the work and feed the results of the group back to all the members of its SOS-Torture Network.