

PRESS RELEASE

Ireland: OMCT welcomes principled stand on re-opening landmark torture case

Geneva, 3 December 2014. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the principal global civil society coalition against torture, today welcomes the Irish Government over its decision to seek the re-opening of the 1971 case on UK torture techniques in Northern Ireland.

‘This is courageous, principled and significant’, said Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General in a comment by the leading global coalition against torture.

The OMCT considers that the case can bring justice and truth to those subjected to this treatment and that it comes at a crucial moment of time when the prohibition of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment remains challenged globally when fighting security threats.

In 1971 the European Court of Human Rights seized by the Irish Government had held that the ‘so-called five techniques’, including hooding and other stress and duress techniques used by the UK security forces in the midst of the ‘troubles’ in Northern Ireland amounted to prohibited cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Many in the anti-torture movement have for long felt that such techniques should have been considered as torture, or would at the very least qualify as such under international law today. Following media revelations¹ based on previously classified information it is now suggested that the UK authorities used treatment amounting to torture and about having misled the court at the time. The Irish Government is reported to seeking the formal reopening of the case.

Bringing the case to the European Court of Human Rights 40 years ago had a clearing effect on the debate on torture and cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment in Europe at the time. It fostered the global cause against torture, including the UKs own anti-torture policies drafted since.

‘Just like 40 years ago we need a ruling that clears all ambiguity over how much cruelty is torture. Re-opening such a case also reminds us of the force of the inter-state complaint procedure under the European Court of Human Rights that has unfortunately been long forgotten’, the OMCT noted.

**For further information, please contact:
OMCT, +41(0) 22 809 49 39, omct@omct.org**

¹ <http://www.rte.ie/news/player/prime-time/2014/0604/>