



# ANNUAL REPORT 2019

**WORLD  
ORGANISATION  
AGAINST  
TORTURE**

**OMCT**  
SOS-Torture Network

*The OMCT works with around 200 member organisations, which constitute its SOS-Torture Network, to end torture and ill-treatment, fight impunity and protect human rights defenders worldwide.*

*Together, we make up the largest global group actively standing up to torture in more than 90 countries. Helping local voices be heard, we support our vital partners in the field and provide direct assistance to victims.*

*The OMCT is an international, independent, apolitical and non-confessional non-governmental organisation, founded in Geneva in 1985. Its international secretariat is based in Geneva, with offices in Brussels and Tunis. The OMCT is a member of the European Human Rights Defenders Protection mechanism and has consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).*

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**WE ARE  
DEFINITELY ONLY  
AS HEALTHY  
AS THE MOST  
DISREGARDED.**



# LIGHTING AN UNCERTAIN PATH

→ Peaceful protest in Uplá (Chile), November 2019. © Arthur Dressler

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We've never lived in such uncertain times. Writing from lockdown in my Lahore home is nothing new: I've known house arrest and my country, Pakistan, is familiar with states of emergency. But lockdowns are now global and may become a regularly occurring new normal. The pandemic obliterates livelihoods and exacerbates each and every inequality and injustice. Autocrats and populists flaunt it to silence dissent, arrest human rights defenders, and advance illiberal agendas. Their security forces use indiscriminate violence and torture under the pretext of enforcing lockdowns. All this is tearing the social fabric in ways that we are only starting to comprehend.

At the same time, the virus shines a light on the invisible: marginalized groups such as prison inmates, refugees living in squalid, crammed camps, migrant workers, the forgotten poor in slums and favelas. We discover all of a sudden that we are only as healthy as the weakest members of our societies. That we ignore the invisible at our own peril.

And what is more invisible than torture? Torture festers in places of detention, among others. Now the world takes notice, as frequent overcrowding and lack of basic hygiene—which in themselves are ill-treatment and can amount to torture -

make such facilities a perfect incubator for the coronavirus. Countries realize that this doesn't only threaten inmates, but also prison staff and the wider society, as viruses have no regard for prison walls. We are definitely only as healthy as the most disregarded.

You will read in this report how the OMCT and its 200 strong SOS-Torture Network joined hands last year—as they have since 1985 - to improve life in prisons, jails and places of detention for children, to decrease torture and other forms of abuse, and press governments to improve both legislation and its implementation. This long and rich experience is now crucial: as detention authorities struggle with a threat on an unprecedented scale, they may be unusually open to the concrete solutions we propose. Progress made today may last even when the immediate peril has subsided.

Let me stress it: times such as these provide further proof that our work is not a "nice to have". It's essential. I see it in the protection provided by the shelter for women that my team runs, at a time when domestic violence explodes under confinement. I see it in the networks of solidarity that human rights defenders are building from Colombia to India to the Philippines, stepping in to support those hardest hit by the pandemic's ripples.

We speak a lot about relevance these days. Which of our ways of working, thinking, living together, will still be relevant in this uneasy future? I am convinced that our collective work is, and will continue being, more relevant than ever as our communities need to heal—physically and socially. Together, we'll keep lighting the uncertain path ahead. ■

**Hina Jilani**  
OMCT President





→ Members from Latin America litigators' group on a break during their first meeting in Chiapas (Mexico), April. ©Helena Sola/OMCT

**WE HAVE NO  
CHOICE BUT  
TO STEP UP  
OUR EFFORTS.**

# LEVERAGING THE FULL STRENGTH OF OUR NETWORK

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The first adjective that comes to mind when I look back at 2019 is “turbulent”.

Public protests erupted across continents, sending millions to the streets – from Algiers to La Paz to Quito, from Baghdad to Beirut to Barcelona, and from Hong Kong to Santiago. The list goes on. The root causes were diverse, but they might well have had in common a feeling of being “left behind” – economically and politically, as well as culturally.

These planetary upheavals had another commonality: they were quelled with disproportionate violence and even torture. Scores of demonstrators deliberately blinded in Chile, community leaders assassinated in Colombia, hundreds if not thousands arbitrarily arrested, abused, disappeared or sentenced to death in Iran, Iraq or India. Members or partners of our SOS-Torture Network have experienced such brutality firsthand.

Faced with State sponsored violence that corrupts the institutions and impedes development, we have no choice but to step up our efforts. Last year, we did just that, working with our tested and trusted partners to build a powerful safety net for victims, document abuses, offer innovative solutions, and collectively seek justice for emblematic cases of torture.

This is why the second adjective that defines our work in 2019 is “promising”.

We have spearheaded a series of fresh initiatives bringing together SOS-Torture Network members to the new – and some of the old – frontlines of torture. Starting in February, we launched five working groups. One addresses torture in the context of counterterrorism; three tackle impunity for perpetrators respectively in Africa, Asia and Latin America; the final one explores the hidden but intimate links between torture and migration. This ongoing work taps into the collective experience of the participants, who come from the regions affected and have a direct, in depth understanding of the burning issues at stake.

We have kept shoring up defenses for victims of torture and for the rule of law, collectively investigating abuse against detained children – like in Benin, Brazil or the Philippines – or police brutality against demonstrators – like during a high-profile international mission to Chile. With local partners, we have contributed to significant improvements in conditions of detention in Togo or the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have helped highlight the epidemic of torture in Mexico or Bangladesh and document harrowing conditions in Greece’s migrant and refugee camps. We

have supported survivors of torture start a new life and raised the alarm on hundreds of human rights defenders at risk.

Our structure is a lean one. The real strength for the OMCT comes from the work with our trusted partners and donors to make a difference. We invite you, the reader of this report, to join us in our mission and help on the road to a society that is free from fear, more equal and just. ■

**Gerald Staberock**  
Secretary General



**In Mexico, arrest by the Army carries an 86% risk of torture.**

**In Russia, one in ten citizens reported torture at the hands of police.**

# VICTIMS OF TORTURE: A UNIQUE URGENT RESPONSE

*How many victims of torture were there worldwide last year? Nobody really knows. Torture is a crime of darkness, one that is locked away in secret chambers, hidden from the public eye. Authoritarian countries use it to instill fear and thwart opposition. It is the routine dirty secret of police stations and prisons, a tool used to extract confessions, money, or both, to humiliate and punish those of a different ethnicity, religion, political or sexual orientation. More often than not, victims are poor, marginalized, and voiceless. During conflict, torture proliferates like cancer. The weapon of choice of the autocrat, it is also present in democratic regimes, though much less frequently.*

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Despite the lack of precise statistics, we know from direct testimonies that the number of victims is very large, and that the majority of them don't get the help they would need: urgent social, medical – including psychological – attention, the possibility to leave the country for a safe haven, let alone legal recourse for the crime committed against them. Most don't know about centres providing specialized care, or don't have the financial resources to access them.

OMCT's Fund for Urgent Assistance for Victims of Torture, created in 1986, is the only one at the global level that provides assistance directly to the women, children and men who have survived torture and to their families, in a speedy way. Victims can contact the OMCT directly or be referred by local organisations – often members and partners of our SOS-Torture Network – who don't have themselves the resources to respond. Each case is assessed, verified and monitored in collaboration with local partners.

The programme favours a holistic approach that includes

- **Medical assistance** – aid to victims for their physical and/or psychological recovery;
- **Social assistance** – support for the basic needs of victims and their families for their survival and social reintegration;

- **Legal assistance** – support to seek justice and compensation for damages suffered and/or ensure fair defence at a trial, official recognition of the torture, or prosecution of the perpetrators.

Where local legal remedies have been exhausted the OMCT can provide its expertise and support to lawyers or local partners to submit cases to regional and international human rights courts or other international bodies, such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, the UN Committee Against Torture or the UN Human Rights Committee, in order to obtain justice.

## OUR WORK IN 2019

In 2019, the OMCT provided medical, legal and social assistance to 307 victims of torture in 15 countries via its Fund.

**In Tunisia,** the OMCT office provided direct support to 83 victims – 52 direct victims and 31 members of their families – via its SANAD centres in Kef and in Sfax. The majority of direct victims were men under 35 who frequently came from impoverished backgrounds. This demographic is particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment during arrest and detention. Over half of the victims

had been abused in police stations or in those of the National Guard, with over one in five abused in their homes, thus traumatizing other family members, including children. Since their creation in 2013, the SANAD centres have provided legal, psychological, social and medical assistance to 327 victims and 148 members of their families. The staff tailor a specific programme for the needs of each victim, and work with dedicated lawyers, psychologists, medical doctors, and social workers from the public administration and specialized civil society organisations.

The search for justice is an important component of a holistic healing process. In 2019, SANAD accompanied 51 victims during all the stages of the judicial process, from filing a criminal complaint to the actual trials of the perpetrators. Some strategic cases are also pursued as part of an advocacy strategy that aims to change both the practices and the legal framework on torture.

*More information on OMCT Tunisia at <https://omct-tunisie.org/>.*

**In Bangladesh**, insistence on confessions makes torture ubiquitous before trials, and judges ignore obvious signs of torture on the accused.

**The Syrian government** tortured to death over 14,000 people since 2011, according to an NGO report.

**IN 2019, THE OMCT PROVIDED MEDICAL, LEGAL AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE TO 307 VICTIMS OF TORTURE IN 15 COUNTRIES VIA ITS FUND.**



→ Xumek staff member Gonzalo Evangelista handing over the pizza truck to Verónica Rodríguez, Willy's partner, seen with their son and daughter. ©Xumek

## **A NEW CAREER FOR WILLY, TORTURED AT AGE 18**

→ See above

Willy had just turned 18 when a tribunal in Mendoza, Argentina, sentenced him to 16 months in jail for drug possession. Towards the end of his sentence, in 2011, an anonymous source sent a mobile phone to Xumek, a local human rights organisation and an OMCT member. On that phone, several videos were showing Willy, lying on the floor in handcuffs, while five guards were violently beating, kicking, insulting and humiliating him.

Xumek promptly took the case to court, but it was only in September 2019 that six prison guards were sentenced to 10 years for acts of torture. The court also asked the local authorities to make sure that an independent mechanism trained security forces to ensure they respected human rights law, and to allocate more financial and human resources to that end.

The judgment had a cathartic effect on Willy, who came from a very poor background and had in the meantime spent more time in prison. At 28, with a wife and a three-year-old son, he wanted a fresh start. Thanks to the support of the OMCT through its Victims Fund, Willy was able to buy a pizza truck and realize an old dream: sell pizza on the streets of Mendoza.

## **AISHA\*: OVERCOMING TRAUMA**

On 29 July 2019, Sami\* died in a prison in southern Tunisia, 12 days after his arrest. The week before, he had told his wife, Aisha, that he was suffering from ill-treatment and inhuman detention conditions. At 37, Aisha was left destitute, with four children to feed. Her 11-year old son dropped out of school, in search for work. Her older daughters showed depression symptoms, with the 15-year old even attempting suicide. For lack of resources, there was no way to hire a lawyer and sue authorities for Sami's suspicious death.

A call for help on Facebook led SANAD, the OMCT's direct assistance programme in Tunisia, to intervene. Thanks to the partnership between the OMCT and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the family was able to get monthly financial support, while the older daughters started professional training, with all their education-related expenses paid. Further interventions with the relevant regional administrations allowed Aisha's son to return to school and benefit from pedopsychiatric support, while the youngest daughter, aged five, was able to join a public kindergarten.

Additionally, a lawyer from the OMCT network started providing legal counsel to find the truth on Sami's death and obtain justice. Aisha and her four children also benefitted from much needed psychological support to overcome the trauma that followed the father's death and start rebuilding their lives. ■

\* Not their real names.

→ Young prisoner looks at fellow inmates, Philippines. © Raffy Lerma



# MAKING THE UNIVERSAL PROHIBITION OF TORTURE A REALITY

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*Torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment stubbornly remain a common phenomenon in all regions of the world, and this despite continued ratifications of the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment during 2018 and 2019: to date 169 countries are States Parties.*

Although the scale, the characteristics, and the incidence of torture and ill-treatment differ from country to country, the core problem that the OMCT and its SOS-Torture Network address remains deeply entrenched in several main aspects:

- Low levels of **compliance** with the Convention and low levels of **accountability** for torture;
- Increased incidence of torture in the contexts of migration, anti-drug or counterterrorism policies, which constitute relatively **new challenges**;
- Prior and **longer-term challenges** to the eradication of torture—impunity for the security forces, corruption, poverty, inequality, marginalization, and discrimination, including on the basis of gender—have not decreased.

What has changed over the last years is the questioning of human rights—and this has not spared the absolute prohibition against torture—while civil society and human rights defenders must now operate in increasingly difficult environments, with States multiplying obstacles to a healthy defense of our common rights. In these closing environments, an independent international anti-torture body like the UN Committee against Torture (UNCAT) is more important than ever to validate the concerns of civil society and of victims of torture.

To determine their findings and adopt relevant recommendations, the UNCAT experts need civil society to provide reports on the reality of torture in their respective contexts. Last year, the OMCT continued coordinating the activities of civil society organisations during the country reviews by the UNCAT, a prominent mission it has undertaken since 2014. It also kept supporting partners afterwards, as they strive to raise awareness at home and have their authorities implement the Committee's recommendations.

## THE NETWORK ON TODAY'S TORTURE FRONTLINES

In answer to both new and older challenges, the OMCT and members of its SOS-Torture Network joined forces in 2019 and launched three regional groups to tackle impunity for torture, a working group on torture in the context of counterterrorism policies, as well as another one dealing with torture on migration routes.

## CONFRONTING IMPUNITY, ONE CASE AT A TIME

In Mexico, out of 8,335 torture investigations opened by a specialized Prosecutor's office, only 17 led to court action. In the Philippines, there was a sentencing in just one case of extrajudicial killing by security forces—out of at least 8,663, and probably much more. Among the many reasons why torture is so prevalent, impunity comes first: when hardly anyone gets punished for a crime, it is a green light for that crime to continue unabated. This is made worse by the fact that victims are often the most vulnerable members of society—women, religious minorities, indigenous people, children, the poor, the marginalized—, those whose voices are not heard.

This is why the OMCT launched three

Direct support to **80 NGOs** participating in the three CAT sessions.

Close to **200 recommendations** from OMCT and partners adopted by the CAT.

**9 country reports** submitted to the CAT by OMCT together with local partners.

**8 advocacy & fact-finding missions and training sessions** in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe/ Commonwealth of Independent States, and the Middle East and North Africa region.



→ Nepal awareness raising of Nirmala case.



→ Installation commemorating the Hogar Seguro victims, Guatemala City. © Teresa Fernández Parades/OMCT

Litigators' Groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America, connecting over 45 of its network members and partners with the aim to develop innovative strategies and bring emblematic cases to national and/or regional courts, over a period of three years. In spring, participants met in each region to share experiences and receive training in effective documentation and investigation of torture, best practices to protect against reprisals, preventing the retraumatization of victims, as well as communication strategies, among others. Members continued their exchanges and mutual support, and will continue to do so, while actively searching justice in various cases, including in Argentina, El Salvador, Mexico, and Togo. The Africa Litigators helped Togolese member CACIT bring a case to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of justice: a Togolese woman who had been tortured by police during the violent repression of the 2017 demonstrations, without the authorities ever investigating the case.

In the same vein, **OMCT's Tunisia** office pursued its prominent action in seven emblematic cases of torture that have been in front of specialised criminal courts since May 2018 and which are part of the transitional justice process on serious human rights violations perpetrated between 1956 and 2013. These cases are of paramount

importance, as their conclusion will be a clear marker of the State's democratic transition and of the consolidation of the rule of law. Beyond acting as a civil party in support of the victims and their families in these cases, the OMCT is also working with other civil society organisations on long-term advocacy to lift the obstacles that the transitional justice process has been facing since 2014.

### **NEPAL: NIRMALA'S UNPUNISHED RAPE AND MURDER**

→ See above

The 2018 rape and murder of 13-year old Nirmala Panta shocked Nepal, but the botched police investigation that followed caused an even wider uproar. Tampered evidence led to suspicions of a cover up, while the arrest and subsequent release of over 400 people – two of whom allegedly tortured to extract a confession – provoked nation-wide protests, during which one teenager was killed, while others were injured or arrested. Considering the case to be emblematic of both the violence against women and the lack of accountability of the authorities, Nepali members of the Litigators' Group have taken up the case, seeking justice for Nirmala and her parents.

### **GUATEMALA: SEEKING JUSTICE IN THE MASS DEATH OF TEENAGE GIRLS**

→ See above

The March 2017 death of 41 girls at a government run home for at-risk youth outside Guatemala City made world headlines. After an attempted escape from systematic abuse – including sexual exploitation -, they had been beaten and locked up overnight in a tiny room, without food, water or bathroom access. When some of the girls set fire to a mattress in the hope of someone opening the door, police stood by as the fire raged in a locked room and the girls screamed for help.

The Hogar Seguro ("safe home") Virgen de la Asunción case is famous in Guatemala and beyond, for all the wrong reasons. The judicial process is stuck, while victims and their families have received no effective public support or compensation. Worse still, in October, Guatemalan courts opened an investigation against the 15 survivors – many of whom have been badly disfigured - for having set the fire. None of them have ever been heard by a tribunal as witnesses in the case.

The Latin America litigators group set up by the OMCT is working with its Guatemalan members to bring justice to the victims and their families, who belong to the poorest

sectors of society. The task is even more pressing as another 5,000 children are at risk in Guatemala's ill-named "Safe homes".

## COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES AND TORTURE

For years now, States have subverted the perfectly legitimate fight against terrorism to bring back torture, target dissent and even peaceful human rights defenders, sometimes riding a wave of popular support driven by the fear of indiscriminate bombings and other attacks that have killed and maimed civilians around the world. In too many places, public security has become a battering ram used to knock down our common fundamental rights, and in particular the absolute prohibition of torture.

In answer to such policies, that ultimately endanger all of us, the OMCT launched a platform bringing together 17 SOS-Torture Network members with prime experience fighting torture in environments of terrorist violence and growing violent radicalization. They actively exchange data directly collected from the field, draft policy papers, issue joint statements, define strategies for a response to terrorism that is free of torture, and engage UN and other experts on this issue. Two in-person meetings also took place in 2019, in Tunis and Geneva respectively.

## TUNISIA: TRAPPED IN AN ADMINISTRATIVE NIGHTMARE

In December, the OMCT's Tunisia office launched a groundbreaking report on those Tunisians – probably in their tens of thousands – who are listed and subjected to repressive measures by the government, as part of its policy to prevent terrorism. "Being S" combines legal analysis and storytelling to paint the kafkaesque picture of a surveillance system where wearing a full body veil or an altercation with police can be enough to get the dreaded "S" label. The problem is that no one knows for sure what the reasons are, as this administrative measure isn't officially communicated to their targets – who find out when they are prevented from travelling, subjected to home searches, and harassed by police. Additionally, these arbitrary measures are open-ended. As one of those interviewed by the report says: "It is like being subjected to a sentence pronounced by no one but applied by everyone".

The consequences are loss of jobs and homes, social ostracizing, including for the children of those listed, depression and even attempted suicide. The OMCT has launched a dialogue with the authorities in search of ways to reconcile justified counter-terrorism measures with respect for the rule of law.

The day after the report was launched, our Tunisia office, together with its partners in the Civic alliance for Security and Liberties (ASL) and the National Commission for Fighting Terrorism (CNLT) organised the first ever *National Congress on Strategies to Prevent Violent Extremism in Tunisia*. The meeting issued a number of recommendations for an inclusive plan of action, echoing a similar document published by the United Nations in March 2016.

## FOCUS ON TORTURE AND MIGRATION IN AFRICA

While the tragic deaths of migrants in the Mediterranean are a well-known phenomenon, there is not enough attention on the drivers of the exodus and related human rights violations, and in particular on the nexus between migration and torture. The latter can be both a driver of forced irregular migration and one of the worst crimes that migrants have to endure as they travel from various African countries in the hope of reaching Europe. This is why the OMCT launched a new initiative to strengthen protection from torture all along migration routes. Twelve organisations from various regions of Africa and from Southern Europe, who work with migrants who have been subjected to torture, had a first meeting in December. The group embarked on an ambitious collective research to document torture along Africa's migration routes, give a voice to its victims and set out protection strategies.

## STRIVING TO END TORTURE IN DETENTION

→ See next page

Torture can happen anywhere, but it is considered to be most frequent in places of detention, such as police stations and prisons. Some of the drivers include artificially solving cases and boosting careers by forcing confessions and fabricating evidence, the extortion of bribes, or the crude spreading of fear to entrench political power. Prisons witness a combination of active torture by security staff and conditions of detention that can amount

# TORTURE IS MOST FREQUENT IN POLICE STATIONS AND PRISONS.

in themselves to torture and ill-treatment: overcrowding that can surpass 500%, filth, lack of food, no access to proper healthcare including for seriously ill prisoners, etc.

Together with its Network members, the OMCT works to end torture in places of deprivation of liberty and, more generally, to improve detention conditions. This is often done through cooperating with the National Prevention Mechanisms (NPMs), independent local bodies tasked precisely with preventing torture in detention, including by carrying out unannounced visits. Last year, the OMCT carried out country missions to Benin, Togo, Brazil and Honduras, visiting prisons – including for minors –, organising trainings for NPMs and advocating with the authorities.

In Tunisia, the OMCT has supported the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture (INPT) since its inauguration in 2016, including by reinforcing the capacity of staff with help from national and international experts, which in turn led to the drafting of manuals for prison visits and investigation procedures into cases of torture. The organisation assisted in coordination meetings between the INPT and the Tunisian public administration, and facilitated a series of workshops to foster cooperation with civil society throughout the country and to set standards when dealing with vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, migrants or people with disabilities. Together with the Tunisian Citizenship League (LTC) and the INPT, our Tunisia office trained young activists to become "anti-torture ambassadors" who use novel campaign strategies to sensitize their communities.

More information on Tunisia at <https://omct-tunisie.org/>.

Joint reports and advocacy at the Committee against Torture (CAT) during country reviews contributed to the Democratic Republic of Congo ordering the closure of secret detention centres – where torture was rife –, to Togo launching its own NPM, and to Niger passing a draft law criminalizing torture in December, just two weeks after the CAT had recommended this essential step. In October, Pakistan submitted a bill to Parliament that would make torture a criminal offense – here too following a recommendation by the CAT two years earlier and sustained joint advocacy from the OMCT and its

# STATES HAVE SUBVERTED THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM TO BRING BACK TORTURE.



→ Severe overcrowding in detention is frequent in certain countries, like here in the Philippines.

© Eloisa Lopez



→ Mission to Niger ahead of the launch of the migration working group. © Erwan Rogard

partner the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. And in Mexico, various State authorities, civil society organisations and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for human rights drew up the first National programme to prevent and punish torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This Programme seeks to follow up on the implementation of CAT recommendations and to ensure that Mexico provides due consideration to the serious incidence of torture in the country.

**OMCT Europe** is another robust advocacy hub for both the OMCT and its SOS-Torture Network. 2019 highlights included a European Parliament (EP) resolution on Guatemala – adopted by an overwhelming majority in March – expressing in strong terms alarm at the violation of human rights by the government. The OMCT played a key role on the adoption and wording of this text. Our Brussels office also strived to draw attention to the prevalence of grave human rights violations and impunity in Mexico, in particular during a September visit by Mexican allies. Highlights from the mission were an event at the EP and a public commemoration on the fifth anniversary of the forced disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa – a crime that has neither been fully clarified nor led to the punishment of the perpetrators.

## IN BANGLADESH, A CYCLE OF FEAR

*Cycle of Fear*, a joint OMCT-Odhikar report, published in July, documented the deeply ingrained nature of torture and other ill-treatment in judicial remand in Bangladesh. It also highlighted that large parts of law enforcement and the judiciary, as well as the general public, appeared to accept such practices as an unavoidable reality – as if resolute action to counter them was not an option. Of the 123 acts of torture documented in the report that led to the death of the victim, hardly any were investigated. *Cycle of Fear* received wide media coverage and led the BBC to interview the Prime Minister on the topic.

## BRINGING THE MEDIA ON BOARD

Public opinion support is essential in putting an end to torture – and the media plays a critical role in explaining what is at stake to large sectors of society. After successfully training journalists from Russia and Mexico during previous years, which led to very strong media coverage of CAT reviews in both countries, the OMCT facilitated the participation of 10 Togolese journalists – including some working in

social media and web influencers – to Togo’s review by the CAT in July. The resulting media coverage of CAT recommendations was impressive and contributed to the Prime Minister raising the dramatic prison conditions during the weekly cabinet meeting.

## SAFEGUARDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

An increasing number of States question, weaken or undermine the multilateral system of protecting human rights that was built over the past decades. As a member of a coalition of organisations using the UN human rights treaties (TBNNet) to support national reform and change policy agendas, we are stepping up our collective response to prevent the destruction of the human rights machinery and build best practices to allow civil society voices to be heard. In July, we were among those organizing a meeting convening 25 local and regional organisations to form a joint position on the steps needed to strengthen universal protection ahead of a global discussion by States in 2020. ■

**AT LEAST 1.3  
TO 1.5 MILLION  
CHILDREN  
ARE DEPRIVED  
OF LIBERTY  
EVERY YEAR.**

# CHILDREN AND TORTURE: PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

→ Child playing  
with a pink toy in the  
Philippines © Raffy Lerma

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*Locking up a child is never in their best interest: detention affects children's development, makes them more vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment, jeopardizes their right to education, and risks compromising their chances to integrate into society. Nonetheless, at least 1.3 to 1.5 million of them are deprived of liberty every year worldwide, according to a 2019 UN study which the OMCT supported and which included prisons, immigration detention, and various institutions. Another estimated one million children find themselves in police custody. Those among them who are in conflict with the law come mostly from poor and marginalized communities. Abuse, including torture, which is frequent in settings of deprivation of liberty, takes a particularly heavy toll on children.*

Since 1993, the OMCT has worked on protecting such children from torture and other forms of violence, in collaboration with local organisations who are usually members of its SOS-Torture Network. This is done through regular visits to child detention centres in priority countries, advocacy with the authorities, legal assistance, and support to national monitoring bodies, among others.

## **HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR CHILD PROTECTION ACTIVITIES IN 2019**

Following a high-level mission to **Benin**, we submitted a joint alternative report to the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT). The UNCAT's large number of recommendations on children deprived of liberty reflected the concerns expressed

in our report, and have already led to some progress for children, with renovations to the minors' quarters in the Cotonou prison.

**In Togo**, we provided legal assistance that led to the release of 28 children from detention, as well as social and psychological assistance, and submitted an alternative report to the UNCAT, shedding light on the violations of detained children's rights.

Continuous monitoring visits to prisons **in Brazil** highlighted widespread violations of children's rights and led to internal investigations and staff removals. The OMCT trained NGOs on monitoring places of detention, which should allow an increase in visits and better prevention of violations. It also conducted a training with the national and local bodies charged with preventing torture in detention, the National Prevention

Mechanisms (NPMs). As the government embarked on a campaign against the national body tasked with preventing torture, endangering its very existence, we testified in front of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and launched a video – both in Brazil and globally – highlighting the scale of the torture of detained children in the country.

**In Uruguay**, a new OMCT partner with extensive expertise started monitoring visits to places where children are deprived of liberty, identifying individual cases to be addressed, as well as organizing advocacy meetings with authorities to improve the situation of this young population.

**In the Philippines**, joint activities with local partners on behalf of children included

- the documentation of extrajudicial killings of children during the government's "war on drugs", as well as of 51 torture cases concerning children
- legal assistance that led to the release of several children, or to them being redirected to rehabilitation centres; provision of social and psychological assistance
- the creation of support groups for children who had been victims of torture and ill-treatment in detention



- advocacy against proposals in Congress to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 or even 9 years old.
- international advocacy that contributed to the UN Human Rights Council adopting a resolution, in July, asking the UN human rights office to present a report on the impact of the war on drugs and related extrajudicial killings.

**In India**, we trained 30 lawyers on children's rights and torture, and supported the publication of a country baseline study on children deprived of liberty that will serve for advocacy purposes.

### **MAKING DETAINED CHILDREN VISIBLE**

The OMCT and several of its SOS-Torture Network members contributed to a two-year worldwide research that led to the publication, in September, of the groundbreaking UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty. Prof. Manfred Nowak led this unprecedented operation, which included regional consultations that involved civil society, academia, authorities, intergovernmental agencies and formerly detained children. The Study provided the first estimates ever of the number of children deprived of liberty, thus bringing a serious human rights issue out of the shadows on the global scale.

### **IN THE PHILIPPINES, A VERY SPECIAL CHRISTMAS**

Every year in the Philippines, thousands of children in conflict with the law are placed in so-called Houses of Hope (Bahay Pag-asa in tagalog), which are short-term holding centres for juveniles awaiting a court decision or their transfer elsewhere. "Hope" is generally absent, as detention conditions are often inhumane and the children—who come from extremely impoverished backgrounds—have no chance to see their

families, who can't afford transportation costs. "Every year, some of these children run away the week before Christmas to be home with their families. If caught, they risk torture, and some are found dead", says Rowena Legaspi from the Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC), an SOS-Torture Network member.

At the request of the CLRDC, we funded a visit by the families of 45 children detained near Manila, on 24 December. Sharing a festive meal with their loved ones was both a rare joy and a way to protect the children from more ill-treatment. For Joel\*, 14, his mother's visit proved providential. He had been arrested three months earlier for sleeping on the street and beaten until he "confessed" using drugs. He had not spoken a single word since being brought to the "House of Hope". He opened up when he saw his mother, telling her about the ill-treatment he had endured since his arrest. The CLRDC was able to have Joel freed the following day. ■

*\* Not his real name*



→ No less than 250 people came to our fundraising evening in Gland on 12 March. © Kelly de Geer



→ (April) Africa Litigators working group launches.  
© Abalo Badjaliwa



→ (July) Publication of *Cycle of Fear*, report on the systemic use of torture in Bangladesh (p. 11).

# 2019 AT A GLANCE

## FEBRUARY

First meeting of the Torture & Counterterrorism Working Group in Tunis (p. 10).

## MARCH

The European Parliament adopts a resolution on Guatemala (p. 11).

Observation mission at Oyub Titiev's trial, Chechnya, Russia (p. 17).

Fundraising evening in Gland (p. 26).

OMCT prize at Geneva Film Festival on human rights (FIFDH) goes to *Congo Lucha*, directed by Marlène Rabaud.

Strategic meeting on building common ground to legitimize the anti-torture movement and to combat shrinking space and restrictive laws and practices on foreign funding of NGOs, held under the Chatham House Rule.

## APRIL

Launch of a joint report on Mexico's torture epidemic during the review by the Committee Against Torture.

Litigators groups kick off in Lomé, Togo (for Africa) and Chiapas, Mexico (for Latin America) (p. 9).

## MAY

First meeting of the Asia Litigators group in Manila, Philippines (p. 9).

Advocacy and training mission to Brazil on the conditions of detention of children. (p. 12).

## JUNE

Opening of a new SANAD centre in Tunisia.

Launch of the photo exhibition *Menna Fina* in Tunisia (p. 21).

→ (August) Network Communications representatives chant "End torture, right here, right now" at the OMCT Communicators Workshop in Geneva.  
© Hannah Snaith/OMCT



→ (July) A group photo of the visiting Togolese journalists during the session of the Committee Against Torture, Plainpalais, Geneva.  
© Hannah Snaith/OMCT



→ (December) Migration and Torture working group kicks off in Lomé, Togo. © CACIT



## JULY

Human Rights Council adopts a resolution on the Philippines (p. 13).

Publication of *Their last stand?* report on human rights defenders in Tajikistan.

Publication of *Cycle of Fear*, report on the systemic use of torture in Bangladesh (p. 11).

Fact-finding mission on the situation of human rights defenders in Venezuela, including a training for defenders.

Training of Togolese journalists during the session of the Committee Against Torture (p.11).

## AUGUST

Two-day workshop for Network communication experts in Geneva (see above).

## SEPTEMBER

Litigators group member Xumek wins a torture case in Mendoza, Argentina (p. 7).

Publication of a UN Global Study on Children deprived of liberty, to which OMCT contributed (p. 13).

Joint advocacy mission on Mexico to Brussels (p. 11).

OMCT auditioned by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on torture in Brazil and on human rights violations in Venezuela.

## OCTOBER

Support to Colombia's transitional justice bodies during a mission to Geneva (p. 18).

## NOVEMBER

The OMCT is part of an international observation mission into excessive use of force in Chile.

Second meeting of Torture & Counterterrorism working group in Geneva.

## DECEMBER

Launch of *Being S* report in Tunis (p. 10).

"What we achieved" online campaign by SOS-Torture Network.

Publication of *Chronicle of a Prosecution foretold*, report on human rights defenders in Colombia.

Migration and Torture working group kicks off in Lomé, Togo (p. 10).

**58** human rights defenders released following action by the OMCT and partner organisations.

**282** urgent interventions in favour of **628** defenders and **52** NGOs in **62** countries.

Financial support to **39** defenders and **8** NGOs in **19** countries.

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: PROTECTING THOSE WHO PUT THEMSELVES IN HARM'S WAY

16

*Human rights work stems from the inability of States to protect our common basic rights – whether the right to speech, to be free from torture, to health or to clean water. In many contexts around the world, governments either don't defend the rights of their citizens or actively attack them. The women and men who make it their mission to speak up against violations and on behalf of victims become thus the enemy of the powerful – States, armed and criminal groups, private corporations – and are vilified, harassed, arbitrarily arrested, or even killed.*

In 2019, the OMCT continued to witness a serious deterioration of the situation of human rights defenders worldwide.

- We again witnessed an **increase in documented killings** of human rights defenders, especially in rural areas and in connection with powerful State and non-state actors. We also saw a **rising number of arbitrary arrests, detention and the criminalization** of human rights defenders in all regions.
- One of the most marked challenges remains an **armada of laws** that were put in place by an increasingly large number of States **to control and limit the space** for human rights defenders and their organisations. Far from the supposed “enabling environment” for their essential work, the trend is indeed a dramatic shift to a control system.
- A further threat is the **corrosive and toxic discourse** that includes strong anti-human

rights, anti-NGO, anti-defender discourses. Examples are Central Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where human rights defenders are systematically discredited and portrayed as an elite acting on foreign support and following hidden agendas. Even in countries traditionally open to human rights, toxic or corrosive discourses on national security, counterterrorism, or on migration also create an environment that discredits human rights defenders.

## COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT

The OMCT is one of the main international NGOs ensuring that defenders receive protection and support wherever they are and regardless of their specific area of work. This comprehensive strategy includes early warning, prevention, advocacy, local capacity building, physical safety and direct support, and has been carried out

since 1997 through the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, in collaboration with the FIDH.

In 2015, following a rise in attacks and repression, the OMCT, in partnership with 11 other international and regional NGOs, created ProtectDefenders.eu, which is today the largest global mechanism for the protection and support of defenders.

## PROTECTDEFENDERS.EU

This European Union (EU) mechanism for at-risk human rights defenders is comprised of local and international NGOs. Of the four organisations in the consortium's board of directors, the OMCT is the only one based in Switzerland.

### Support from PD.EU during year 4 of the project in figures

- 332 emergency grants given to 1,379 human rights defenders at risk in 69 countries
- Syria, Nicaragua, and Sudan were the top 3 countries for the emergency grants
- 171 relocation programmes for 292 people
- 49 grants given to local NGOs and groups of defenders to help them develop their operational capacity

**8** country reports published on the situation of defenders.

**5** strategic workshops in favour of **73** defenders from **15** countries.

A grim world record: **One** human rights defender killed **every four** days in Colombia.

**304** human rights defenders killed worldwide in 2019.

**40%** of attacks against defenders were related to their work on land, indigenous peoples and environment rights.

→ Oyub Titiev.  
© Odnoklassniki



- 71 training and capacity-building initiatives for more than 1,221 defenders
- 57% of beneficiaries were women human rights defenders

### **Oyub Titiev, last defender standing in Chechnya**

→ [See above](#)

On 21 June, Oyub Titiev walked out of a prison in Chechnya, Russia, after being granted parole and spending 17 months behind bars. In March, Titiev had been sentenced to four years on fabricated criminal charges. The OMCT attended the proceedings and published an observation note denouncing a travesty of justice during which the judge refused to hear evidence exonerating Titiev.

The truth was that the Chechen branch of *Memorial*, the prominent human rights organisation led by Titiev since 2009, had exposed extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, torture, and punitive house burnings in Chechnya. A relentless campaign of harassment by the local authorities – culminating in the killing of Titiev's predecessor Natalya Estemirova in 2009 – had led most of Memorial's staff into exile, but Titiev, a quiet and determined former teacher of physical education, was

the last man standing. Police arrested him in January 2018, after planting a small quantity of marijuana in his car.

The OMCT was among several prominent human rights organisations that campaigned to free Titiev, amid similar protests from the European Parliament, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Dunja Mijatovic, and two UN Special Rapporteurs, all of whom considered the leader of *Memorial's* office in Chechnya to be a prisoner of conscience. Oyub Titiev continues his work from Moscow.

### **Ethiopia: supporting the slow re-opening of civil society space**

One of the positive effects of the 2018 political changes in Ethiopia was the adoption, in February 2019, of a new law on civil society organisations (CSOs) and the opening of the borders to human rights defenders who had been living in exile for more than a decade. Even though important constraints remain, this legislation means huge progress on a time when foreign funding was limited to 10%, and an array of severe restrictions had forced many human rights defenders and organisations into exile.

The OMCT, which had engaged in systematic advocacy for and support to Ethiopian

defenders for years, sent a mission to the country in January to explore how to best assist partners who had been considerably weakened by years of repression and exile. One result was the drafting, in close collaboration with the Association for Human Rights in Ethiopia (AHRE), of a joint briefing note on the CSO Law to improve the working environment for human rights NGOs, which included recommendations to the authorities and the international community. Followed an OMCT grant to AHRE, which allowed the NGO to develop its capacity, sustain its human rights work and improve the documenting of the human rights situation in Ethiopia. ■



→ The Colombian Truth Commission and Special Jurisdiction for Peace came to Geneva in October to audition victims in the violent repression against a political party, Unión Patriótica. At the request of the Commission and a Network member, the OMCT organized a well-covered news conference. © OMCT

# STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: OUR GROWING SOS-TORTURE NETWORK

*We were proud to welcome ten new members in 2019. They come from very diverse parts of the world and have in common extensive experience in the global effort to end torture - whether by documenting cases, seeking justice, or helping victims restart a new life - and to protect human rights defenders and civic space. Most of them are also part of our new working groups (p. 8-10).*

## ARGENTINA

Xumek is the most active anti-torture organisation in the Mendoza region, carrying out strategic litigation at national, regional and international level. Some of the cases its lawyers won have gained international fame, such as the one on deaf children abused by priests at the Provolo Institute in Mendoza. Xumek is also behind the recent conviction of six guards to long prison terms for the torture of an 18-year old detainee in 2010 - the OMCT also helped through its Victims Assistance Fund.

## CHINA

Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) is a coalition of Chinese and international human rights NGOs supporting local Chinese civil society to prevent torture, assist victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. Despite facing persecution in China, it has become a key monitor and source of information on torture and ill-treatment in the country.

## HUNGARY

Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) is the leading non-governmental human rights organisation in Hungary, working on the protection of human dignity and the rule of law through legal and public advocacy actions. It provides help to refugees, detainees and victims of law enforcement violence and has a longstanding working relationship with the OMCT, including with OMCT Europe on cases of attacks on human rights defenders in Hungary and related efforts to take action at the EU level.

## KYRGYZSTAN

Voice of Freedom Public Foundation (Golos Svobody) works towards criminal legislation reforms, monitors trials and places of deprivation of liberty, delivers full-scale legal aid to victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and provides psychological and rehabilitation services. It has recently won compensation to victims of torture for the failure of an effective investigation, the first time that Kyrgyz courts provided such compensation on the basis of a decision of the UN Human Rights Committee. The organisation is also part of the Kyrgyz Coalition Against Torture.

## MEXICO

Paso del Norte Human Rights Centre (CDH Paso del Norte) is the most important actor defending victims of human rights violations in the region of Chihuahua, a State faced with particularly high levels of violence, including torture. Paso del Norte works with victims of human rights violations with a strong focus on torture, including specialized support to victims, expertise in the Istanbul Protocol, and litigation.

**MOST OF OUR  
NEW MEMBERS  
HAVE JOINED THE  
OMCT WORKING  
GROUPS.**

## MIDDLE EAST

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) provides support and protection to human rights defenders through the publication of urgent appeals and reports, campaigning and advocacy work, trainings and documentation of human rights violations in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

## MOLDOVA

Born in 2002, Promo-Lex provides pro bono legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses, conducts research on and monitoring of violations, and leads human rights and democracy trainings, including in the Transnistrian region.

## PERU

Comisión de Derechos Humanos (COMISEDH) focuses on torture, sexual violence against women and girls, transitional justice, and indigenous people's rights. It's been one of the driving forces leading to the criminalization of torture in Peru in 1998 and provides assistance to survivors and their families.

## RUSSIA

Public Verdict Foundation is the only human rights organisation in the country that offers a combination of legal, psychological, and information support to victims of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement agencies. It also carries out comprehensive research on the topic, with a view to obtain protection and redress for survivors.

## TURKEY

Human Rights Association (IHD) is the oldest and largest human rights organization in the country. It aims to protect and promote human rights and freedoms and works closely with the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership between the OMCT and FIDH. ■



The New York Times

THE LANCET



CHANNEL NEWSASIA



G LOBO



→ Television interview on Deutsche Welle News Asia where OMCT's Stella Anastasia discusses *Cycle of Fear* report and torture in Bangladesh. ©OMCT



→ Interview with a victim about the violent repression against the Unión Patriótica political party. ©OMCT

# IN THE MEDIA

*In 2019, the work of the OMCT was mentioned by at least 94 media in over 30 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and North Africa, in a variety of languages. Here is a glimpse of some stories on the work of the OMCT and its Network members, who are at the heart of the international efforts to end torture.*

## GLOBAL

***"Torture requires a whole State apparatus that invests in research, reflexion, and the sharing of information."***

Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General, *Motherboard France*, February 2019.

## MEXICO

***"What is expected of the Mexican State, and in particular of the new administration, it's that it shows its firm commitment to the absolute eradication of torture and reparations to thousands of victims in the country."***

Helena Sola Martin, Human Rights Adviser, *Pie de Pagina*, Mexico, February 2019.

## AFRICA

***"We are also here in a capacity as watchdogs, to make sure that promises by States to respect human rights become a reality."***

Isidore Ngueuleu, OMCT Human Rights Adviser, *BBC World News Africa*, April 2019.

## RUSSIA

***"The sentencing and detention of Oyub (Titiev) were really a strong signal to discourage all human rights defenders in Chechnya from continuing their work."***

Delphine Reculeau, Director, Human Rights Defenders Programme, *Radio France Internationale*, June 2019.

## BANGLADESH

***"Extreme forms of physical violence' had been used on detainees, the organisation said, citing instances such as shooting in the legs or knees, the breaking of bones, drilling holes in arms and legs, and rape, as well as mental abuse, including mock executions and death threats."*** *New York Times*, July 2019 on the *Cycle of Fear* Bangladesh report.

## GLOBAL

***"Nicole Buerli, human rights adviser at the World Organisation Against Torture, told The Lancet that, although States often enact laws and pay lip service to the problem, they do little to implement effective anti-slavery policies: 'More often than not, victims don't have access to any kind of remedy and redress.'" The Lancet*, September 2019.**



→ OMCT Tunisia staff pedalled during the anti-torture cycling event "VELOrution" throughout the capital Tunis to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, on June 26th.  
© Gabriele Reiter/OMCT



→ To mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, on June 26th, we launched a campaign on social media that included a poll and an animated video with five facts about torture.

# THE GLOBAL VOICE FOR ENDING TORTURE

*From film festivals to street events to designing new strategies on communication with the Network to online campaigns, 2019 was a year when we were seen and our voice heard by a multiplicity of audiences. We invite you to take a look at these illustrated highlights.*



→ The OMCT took to the streets for the Geneva Women's March, in June. ©OMCT



→ Like every year, following an initiative to collect books from citizens launched by Lina and Sadok Ben Mhenni, OMCT Tunisia distributed thousands of books to eight prisons and one centre for the reeducation of minors in various parts of the country. Related initiatives have included the training of librarians and the creation of a new library in the Gabes prison. © Gabriele Reiter/OMCT

→ For the fifth time, OMCT Tunisia and the General Committee for Prisons and Reeducation (GCPR) brought the Carthage Film Festival to over 8,000 inmates in six prisons and one centre for the reeducation of minors. The festival is the occasion to bring the outside world in touch with the world behind bars, as filmmakers and actors interact directly with inmates and prison staff during debates. © Augustin Le Gall



→ The photo exhibition *Menna Fina* ("Among ourselves"), shown in Tunis and Kasserine, was created by young activists and amateur photographers who engaged with survivors of torture from their communities to share the many stories behind State violence. With the support of OMCT Tunisia, it contributed to an important exchange between generations and allowed a wider audience to become aware of the impact of torture on the Tunisian society. © Gabriele Reiter/OMCT



→ Public event in Brussels (Belgium) to mark the 5th anniversary of the forced disappearance of 43 students in Mexico, in September. © Miguel Martín Zumalacárregui/OMCT Europe



→ The OMCT prize at the Geneva Film Festival on Human Rights (FIFDH), in March, went to *Congo Lucha*, a moving documentary about young pro-democracy activists in the Democratic Republic of Congo, directed by Marlène Rabaud © Iolanda Jaquet/OMCT

# OUR DONORS 2019

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## INSTITUTIONAL DONORS

### FOUNDATIONS AND OTHER PARTNERS

Bread for the World  
National Endowment for Democracy  
Oak Foundation  
Open Society Foundations  
Pictet Charitable Foundation  
The Sigrid Rausing Trust

### GOVERNMENTS AND EMBASSIES

Denmark  
Finland  
Ireland  
Liechtenstein  
Switzerland  
The Netherlands  
The United States of America

### INTERNATIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

European Commission  
UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture  
Special Fund of the OPCAT (United Nations)

### LOCAL GRANTS (CANTONS, CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES IN SWITZERLAND)

Municipality of Plan-les-Ouates  
Republic and Canton of Geneva  
City of Geneva

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

The work of the OMCT is primarily made possible by contributions from institutional donors, for specific projects. However, the OMCT is fortunate to have also always been supported by individual donors who share our vision of a world without torture. This support is crucial as it increases the capacity of the OMCT and of its Network members to respond to crisis situations around the world.

### INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS TO THE OMCT ARE USED MAINLY:

- to support victims of torture to recover from their injuries, seek justice, retrieve their dignity and rebuild their lives;
- to monitor places of detention where children are deprived of their liberty and protect them from inhuman treatment;
- to respond quickly to crises and urgent requests from anti-torture organisations;
- to investigate violations and conduct new research on people most vulnerable to torture (women, children, minorities, refugees, etc.);
- to protect human rights defenders and their organisations around the world, enabling their anti-torture and other human rights work to continue.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Financially, the positive trend observed in the last years has been confirmed in 2019 with a slight but continuous growth of grants and donations received. This trend may however evolve in the years to come, as several major donors have announced a reallocation of their contributions, away from the human rights field.

In addition, the majority of the organisation's funding remains tied to specific projects and is short-term (usually one to three years). Therefore, the OMCT is continuing its efforts to diversify its funding and raise unrestricted funds, in order to gain flexibility to better cope with emergencies, as well as to ensure the long-term stability of activities carried out in the field.

The complete audited OMCT accounts can be consulted on our website ([www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org)). ■

## DISTRIBUTION OF SPENDING BY CATEGORY



Fundraising  
2%

Administration  
5%

Communications  
6%

Programmes  
87%

## DISTRIBUTION OF SPENDING BY PROGRAMME



OMCT Europe  
1%

Child Protection  
6%

Human Rights Defenders  
19%

OMCT Tunisia  
21%

SOS-Torture Network Mobilisation  
23%

Convention Against Torture  
30%

## INCOME STATEMENT FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2019 - CHF

### YEAR 2019

<b>INCOMES</b>		<b>4,458,895.13</b>
Child Protection	212,652.27	
Human Rights Defenders	686,054.61	
Convention Against Torture	796,170.75	
SOS-Torture Network Mobilisation	858,386.29	
OMCT Tunisia	795,897.35	
<b>PROGRAMMES TOTAL</b>	<b>3,349,161.27</b>	
Communications	247,095.79	
Federal, Cantonal, Communal Grants	18,600.00	
Other Grants from Governments	369,037.58	
Foundation Grants	352,980.70	
Private Donations	106,662.29	
Other Incomes	15,357.50	
<b>INSTITUTIONNAL TOTAL</b>	<b>1'109'733.86</b>	

<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>4,430,709.24</b>
Child Protection	233,675.36	
Human Rights Defenders	724,284.79	
Convention Against Torture	1,160,451.79	
SOS-Torture Network Mobilisation	882,284.53	
OMCT Tunisia	810,380.68	
OMCT Europe	41 030.53	
<b>PROGRAMMES TOTAL</b>	<b>3'852'107.68</b>	
Fundraising	103,857.13	
Communications	276,817.57	
Administration	197,926.86	
<b>INSTITUTIONNAL TOTAL</b>	<b>578,601.56</b>	

<b>GROSS RESULT</b>		<b>28,185.89</b>
<b>FINANCIAL CHARGES</b>		<b>26,452.25</b>
Financial charges	5,166.25	
Exchange rate difference	21,286.00	
<b>FINANCIAL PRODUCTS</b>		<b>759.40</b>
Financial products	759.40	

<b>ANNUAL RESULT</b> (before variation of fund capital)		<b>2,493.04</b>
<b>VARIATION OF FUND CAPITAL</b>		<b>14,017.90</b>
<b>ANNUAL RESULT</b> (before allocation to organisation's capital)		<b>-11,524.86</b>
<b>ALLOCATION (USE) OF THE FREE CAPITAL</b>		<b>-11,524.86</b>



→ OMCT staff participate in a team building activity during a staff retreat, August, 2019. © Gabriele Reiter/OMCT Tunisia

# GOVERNANCE

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

### President

Hina Jilani/Pakistan

### Vice-Presidents

Dick Marty/Switzerland  
Mokhtar Trifi/Tunisia

### Treasurer

Anthony Travis/United Kingdom  
Olivier Peter (as of February) / Switzerland

### Members

Yves Berthelot/France  
Aminata Dieye / Senegal  
Samwel Mohochi / Kenya  
Jahel Quiroga Carrillo/Colombia  
Olga Sadovskaya / Russian Federation  
Claudia Samayoa / Guatemala  
Henri Tiphagne / India  
Peter Zangl / Germany

## OMCT EUROPE - EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

### President

Pierre Galand / Belgium

### Members

Yves Berthelot/France  
Menotti Bottazzi/France  
Christophe Pettiti / France  
Lisa Frauke Seidensticker / Germany  
Gerald Staberock/Switzerland  
Peter Zangl / Germany

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### Africa

André Afanou / Togo  
Innocent Chukwuma / Nigeria  
Oumar Diallo/Senegal  
Aminata Dieye / Senegal  
Justine Masika Bihamba / Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Boubacar Messaoud / Mauritania  
Samwel Mohochi / Kenya  
Armel Niyongere / Burundi

### Americas

Ernesto Alayza / Peru  
Luis Arriaga / Mexico  
Stephanie Brewer / Mexico  
Alberto L. Gomez Zuluaga/Colombia  
Theresa Harris/United States of America

Celia Medrano Amador/El Salvador  
Luis Pedernera / Uruguay  
Jahel Quiroga Carrillo / Colombia  
Claudia Samayoa / Guatemala

### Asia

Nigina Bakhrieva / Tajikistan  
Vrinda Grover / India  
Hina Jilani / Pakistan  
Adilur Rahman Khan / Bangladesh  
Osamu Shiraishi / Japan  
Henri Tiphagne / India  
Rose Trajano / Philippines  
Renee Xia/China  
Leyla Yunus / Azerbaijan

### Europe

Yves Berthelot / France  
Panayote Dimitras / Greece  
Dick Marty/Switzerland  
Olivier Peter/Switzerland  
Olga Sadovskaya / Russian Federation  
Anthony Travis/United Kingdom  
Peter Zangl/Germany

### Middle East and North Africa

George Abu Al-Zulof/Palestine  
Georges Assaf / Lebanon  
Abdel-ilah Benabdeslam / Morocco  
Nassera Dutour / Algeria  
Hadi Ghaemi / Iran  
Karim Saber/Egypt  
Mokhtar Trifi/Tunisia

# TEAM

## GENEVA

### HEAD OF OFFICE

Gerald Staberock, Secretary General

### PROGRAMMES

#### Convention against Torture

Carin Benninger-Budel, Programme Director

Nicole Bürli, Human Rights Adviser (Europe & Asia)

Teresa Fernandez Paredes, Human Rights Adviser (Latin America)

Isidore Ngueuleu, Human Rights Adviser (Africa)

Helena Solà Martín, Human Rights Adviser (Latin America)

#### Human Rights Defenders

Delphine Reculeau, Programme Director

#### Child Protection Against Torture

Carolina Casotti Duque de Barbara, Programme Coordinator

Laure Elmaleh, Human Rights Adviser

#### Victim Assistance & Network Programme

Stella Anastasia, Human Rights Officer & Network Coordinator

### COMMUNICATIONS

Iolanda Jaquemet, Director of Communications

Laura Parisotto, Project Officer

Hannah Snaith, Digital Communications and Campaign Officer

### INSTITUTIONAL

#### Donors relations

Radoš Piletić, Director of Institutional Development

#### Finance & Administration

Yannis Gerassimidis, Director of Compliance

Marc Aebersold, Accountant

Halima Dekhissi, Administration Officer

Amélie Höllmüller, Project Officer

## INTERNS & VOLUNTEERS

The OMCT would like to thank all its interns and volunteers for generously contributing their time, energy, creativity and good spirits in 2019.

Emanuela Abe, Marie-Joseph Adai, Yasmine Ayari, Fakhri El Feituri, Lauriane Fivaz, Rita Franceschet, Amélie Höllmüller, Maria Lesire-Schweitzer, Maud Marchand, Quentin Markarian, Jana Martinkova, Lise Reymond, Katherine Tomaszewski, Dania Vastolo.

## BRUSSELS

### HEAD OF OFFICE

Miguel Martín Zumalacárregui, Head of Office

### PROGRAMMES

#### Human Rights Defenders

Marta Gionco, Human Rights Officer

Camille Henry, Human Rights Officer

Roemer Lemaître, Senior Human Rights Adviser (Europe CIS)

Mushegh Yekmalyan, Senior Human Rights Adviser (Europe and Central Asia)

## TUNIS

### MANAGEMENT

Gabriele Reiter, Head of Office

Samia Fraouis, Head of Operations

Hélène Legeay, Legal Director

Mohamed Taraoui, Head of Finance and Administration

Jihene Hosni, Head of Finance and Administration (as of December)

### PROGRAMMES

#### Institutional Reform

Youad Ben Rejeb, INPT

Programme Coordinator

Sana Bouazaouache, INPT

Programme Coordinator

Amen Allah Lassoued, INPT

Programme Officer

Mohamed Mzem, Legal Adviser

#### Advocacy and awareness raising

Achref Afi, Legal Officer

Oussama Bouagila, Advocacy Officer

Camille Henry, Advocacy Coordinator

#### Direct Assistance SANAD

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Zied Abidi, Deputy Head of Programme

Inès Lamloun, Coordinator

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Naima Jelassi, Coordinator

of the SANAD social platform

Sara Attafi, Legal Coordinator

SANAD Kef

Sabrine Gatri, Social Coordinator

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Loubeba Chelbi, Legal Coordinator

SANAD Sfax

Afef Chokri, Social Coordinator

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Achref Bouazizi, Logistics and

Administration Officer, SANAD Sidi Bouzid

→ The OMCT Team in Tunisia at the inauguration of the new office in Tunis, December 2019. ©OMCT Tunisia





→ Hervé Devolder (left) was the shrink in *Le cas Martin Piche*, which he also directed, while Jacques Mougenot played the very strange Mr. Piche in the play he authored. David Poeuf (not in the picture) was the stage manager.

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→ OMCT Vice-President Dick Marty spoke about the imperative to fight torture, a crime that might seem far away in Switzerland, but which affects large numbers of people, in each and every part of the world.

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# A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: AMAZING SUPPORT FROM OUR BENEFACTORS

*No less than 250 people came to our fundraising evening on 12 March 2019, which took place at the Théâtre du Grand-Champ in Gland, some 30 km from Geneva. The enthusiastic crowd watched “Le cas Martin Piche”, a hilarious comedy, and exchanged with OMCT staff members on our current and future projects.*

It was a very successful event, which allowed us to raise CHF 50,000 for our work and in particular the assistance to survivors of torture.

The generosity of the participants and donors was echoed by that of the artists, Hervé Devolder, Jacques Mougenot and David Poeuf, who accepted to play pro bono a creation that had previously been a success in Avignon and in Paris. And of course by the generosity of our Support Committee, without whom the event would simply not have taken place. Under the presidency of Isabelle de Montpellier, the Committee members devoted much time, energy and enthusiasm to make this theatrical event a night to remember. We are profoundly grateful for a support that is crucial to our work to end torture. ■



→ The OMCT’s Support Committee, from left to right: Catherine Fauchier Magnan, Mariolina Marriotti, Isabelle de Montpellier (president), Anne de Rham, Françoise Gounod, Sophie Dubois, Regina Hugi-Jendt, Yannis Gerassimidis (OMCT), Sylvie van Berchem, Gerald Staberock (OMCT). Not in the picture: Dominique Brustlein-Bobst, Catherine Haccius, Sophie de Laguiche, Julien Lüchinger and Ariane Mandosse.

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Fanny Lanz & Julie Bayard  
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### **FRONT COVER**

→ Agadez (Niger), October 2019: Boubacar is a 39-year old Gambian man who was working in a tourism hostel that closed. After two years on the West African roads, in search of a better life between Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, he had been in Agadez for three months waiting for an opportunity to reach Europe via Libya. © Erwan Rogard

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# EVERY DONATION COUNTS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TRUST.

*Thanks to your generous support in 2019, the OMCT and its partners have been able to help and protect the most vulnerable people exposed to torture. We would like to thank you for your commitment and trust, which has enabled us to act in dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa.  
If you would like to support the OMCT, you could consider making an occasional donation or a monthly donation.*

## **OVER A YEAR, MONTHLY DONATIONS ENABLE US TO...**

### **CHF 10.-**

Make regular visits for a month to prisons where children are detained (Philippines 2018).

### **CHF 25.-**

Provide social support for one year to a victim of torture and their family (Congo 2015).

### **CHF 50.-**

Train two lawyers to defend child victims of torture and ill-treatment (India 2019)

### **CHF 100.-**

Provide security for a human rights defender and their family who have received death threats and help them to continue their work in exile (Honduras 2017).

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