

Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

Please reply in writing by 18 August 2025

1. Name:

MAEDA Naoko

2. Nationality:

Japan

3. Current position:

Member (2022–) and Vice-Chairperson (2024–), the Committee against Torture
Professor of International Law, Graduate School of Law, Nagoya University (April 2025–)

Refugee Examination Counselor, Japan (2018–)

Member, Executive Board, International Human Rights Law Association, Japan (2019–)

4. The CAT and GA resolution 68/268 require experts to possess “recognized competence in the field of human rights” and “in particular in the field covered by the relevant treaty”, including to give consideration to the usefulness of “some persons having legal experience” (article 17). Please explain how you qualify as an expert.

I believe that my professional background and experience qualify me as an expert in the field of human rights within the scope of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (“the Convention” below). The Committee against Torture (CAT) covers a wide range of issues, such as: criminal justice; refugee law, including the principle of non-refoulement; universal jurisdiction; and extradition. For more than 25 years as an academic and legal practitioner, I have acquired broad expertise in these areas. I have actively engaged in the fields of international human rights law, international organizations, and refugee law, and have authored and co-authored publications in national and international journals, while also delivering presentations at academic conferences, thereby contributing to the development of scholarship and practice both domestically and internationally.

In addition, since 2018, I have served as an Advisor to local governments, addressing real challenges to the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground while also promoting awareness of human rights among civil society and strengthening cooperation with relevant actors. I have also served as a Refugee Examination Counselor since 2018,

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providing independent and impartial opinions to the Minister of Justice to promote and protect the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

Through these combined academic, professional, and advisory roles, I have developed recognized competence in the field of human rights, including in areas directly relevant to the implementation of the Convention, and I am committed to applying this expertise in the service of the Committee.

5. According to the Addis Ababa Guidelines, “Treaty body members shall not only be independent and impartial, but shall also be seen by a reasonable observer to be so”. Do you have any experience or affiliation that could be considered a real or perceived conflict of interest (e.g. holding a position within or on behalf of your country’s government)? If so, how do you intend to address it, to ensure full independence and impartiality in the exercise of the functions?

I fully recognize the importance of the Addis Ababa Guidelines and fully endorse their purpose of ensuring that treaty body members not only act with independence and impartiality but are also perceived by a reasonable observer to embody these qualities.

I do not hold any position in which I represent or act on behalf of the government. My role as a Refugee Examination Counselor is not an administrative or governmental function, but rather one that involves providing independent and impartial expert opinions in the review of refugee status determinations. This position is specifically designed to safeguard independence and objectivity in the review process, and I carry out my responsibilities with these principles foremost in mind.

As a young professional, I gained several years’ experience as a public official in Japan, which provided me with valuable opportunities that enhanced my expertise in human rights and international relations. Since 2007, I have worked exclusively as an independent expert and practitioner, without any affiliation to the government.

Accordingly, I do not have any experience or affiliation that could be considered a real or perceived conflict of interest. I am fully committed to ensuring the highest standards of independence and impartiality in the exercise of the functions of a member of the CAT.

6. If elected, how will your professional commitments enable you to dedicate the necessary time and attention to perform your duties effectively, both during and between sessions?

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Since 2022, I have been serving as a member of the CAT, during which time I have not only attended all sessions of the Committee but have also actively engaged in capacity-building activities with States parties between sessions. I have consistently prioritized my responsibilities as a member of the Committee, and if elected for a second term, I will spare no effort in continuing to dedicate the necessary time and attention to fulfill the required duties effectively.

7. In your view, what is the role of civil society, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs), in engaging with the Committee in relation to its mandated functions? In your opinion, how can the voices and experiences of survivors of torture and other ill-treatment be meaningfully considered in the Committee's functions and working methods?

In my view, close engagement with civil society organizations, NHRIs, and NPMs is indispensable to the effective implementation of the Committee's mandate. It is well recognized that these stakeholders significantly enhance the Committee's work by providing it with diverse information and insights. They play a vital role in complementing areas that Committee members alone cannot fully reach, whether in terms of access to information, perspectives from the ground, or specialized knowledge.

I would also like to highlight the value of the panel held during the 40th anniversary event of the Committee in 2024, which focused on incorporating the voices of survivors of torture into the work of the Committee. This initiative was particularly meaningful, as it provided Committee members with important perspectives and reminded us of the human realities that underpin our work. I remain deeply grateful for that exchange.

In my opinion, the experiences and perspectives of victims and survivors are essential for shaping and further developing the Committee's interpretation of article 14 of the Convention, which addresses the right to redress. Their voices not only enrich the Committee's working methods but also ensure that its activities remain responsive, relevant, and firmly grounded in the lived realities of those most affected by torture and other ill-treatment.