

## Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

### 1. Name:

Patrycja Grzebyk

### 2. Nationality:

Polish

### 3. Current position:

Associate Professor of the University of Warsaw (Dr. Habil. Iur.); President of the Network on Humanitarian Action, Member of the Board of the European Society of International Law

### 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 have 20 years of research experience in the field of international law, in particular in international humanitarian law, international criminal law and international human rights law. I published over 160 scientific publications, including monographs devoted to armed conflicts (*Human and Non-Human Targets in Armed Conflicts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2022) or edited volumes focused on international crimes, including torture (*The Russian-Ukrainian Conflict and War Crimes. Challenges for Documentation and International Prosecution*, London: Routledge 2025; *The Communist Crimes. Individual and State Responsibility*, Warsaw: Justice Institute 2022; *International Crimes in National Regulations of Selected States*, Warsaw: Justice Institute 2022). I have lectured on international law and trained, e.g. military staff, prosecutors and judges since 2005. I prepared expert analyses in the area of international crimes for the Office of the Polish Ombudsman, the Polish MFA, and the Polish Ministry of Justice. I am a member of the Polish Ombudsman’s expert commission of the national mechanism of the prevention of torture.

### 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?

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To my knowledge I did not have and I do not have any experience or affiliation which could be considered a real or perceived conflict of interest.

**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?**

As an academic, I am privileged to have flexibility concerning time management of my work (research and teaching obligations), and I have the full support of my authorities to make necessary arrangements to effectively contribute to the work of the CAT.

**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?**

The civil society, NHRIs and NPMs have a tremendous role in the work of the CAT as the information provided by them help to better assess the situation in a particular state; they provide detailed information about practical problems to report torture and to respond to torture, therefore they help the Committee to properly assess the reports submitted by states and prepare meaningful observations/recommendations for a state. They also provide valuable information in the follow-up procedure, that is why the engagement of the civil society is of great importance for the effective functioning of the state reporting procedure. The difficulties in the organization of hybrid meetings of the CAT which negatively impacted civil society organizations, NHRIs and NPMs participation in the works of the Committee must be of particular concern and the other possibilities of engagement of the mentioned entities should be considered by the Committee. The engagement of the civil society should not be limited only to the state reporting procedure, but this engagement is of great value also e.g. in inquiry procedures and in the preparation of general comments.

The voices and experiences of survivors of torture and other ill-treatment must be considered by the Committee within its procedures, as this is the condition that the Committee is well informed about a particular situation; however, those voices must always be confronted with other evidence (according to the Istanbul Protocol). In my opinion, this is one of the most difficult tasks of the Committee to properly address the voices of survivors and at the same time to confront them with other types of evidence to be able to prepare unbiased observations.

Expectations of victims cannot always be met by the CAT, having in mind its mandate, but the dialogue between the CAT and organisations of survivors must be continued. References to the voices of the survivors could also be included in the CAT's statements on states' compliance with the Convention, but the CAT always needs to consider whether other channels of communication with a state could be of better use to help victims.

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We could observe many times that the mere numbers concerning incidents of torture do not have such an impact on public opinion as individual voices of survivors, and this fact was also noticed by the Committee in a public campaign to mark the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, during which stories of survivors were also presented. Hearing the voices is a tool to express support for victims and to contribute to the reconciliation in a particular state. The CAT which work focuses on state's compliance with the Convention should not double efforts of other mechanisms of the support for victims of torture (e.g. of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture), but in my opinion it should refer to them and strengthen the exchange of the information with other bodies and if needed prepare further general comments concerning rehabilitation of victims of torture, taking into account the voices of survivors.