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**Geneva-Jerusalem, 19 January 2005**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Concern for the Independence of CEDAW Experts**

***The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI) express their deep concern for the statement by a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Ms. Krisztina Morvai, regarding the alleged move by the Israeli Government to prevent the continuation of her mandate.***

At the opening of the 34<sup>th</sup> session of CEDAW on Monday 16 January 2005, the Hungarian independent expert Ms. Krisztina Morvai made a statement alleging that the Israeli Government had sent a letter to the Chair of the Committee and the Secretariat targeting her personally for some critical remarks she had made on the implementation of the Convention by Israel, in July 2005. Indeed, at the 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the Committee Ms. Morvai addressed the situation of Arab female citizens of Israel and of women in unrecognised Bedouin villages and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), which the State report and delegation had failed to address. Ms. Morvai also stated that after Israeli authorities contacted her own Government she was notified that she would not be nominated for the next four-year term on the Committee, and that the new Hungarian nominee was reportedly a founding member and leader of a Zionist women's association in Hungary.

OMCT and PCATI submitted a shadow report on violence against Palestinian women to the CEDAW on the occasion of the consideration of the Israel State report in July 2005 (See [http://www.omct.org/pdf/vaw/2005/israel\\_cedaw33rd.pdf](http://www.omct.org/pdf/vaw/2005/israel_cedaw33rd.pdf)). During the briefing session with the Committee's members, both organisations underlined the impact of the occupation on the situation of women in the OPT. Attention was drawn particularly on the torture and ill-treatment of Palestinian women from the OPT who have been detained, interrogated and imprisoned by Israeli security forces as well as on the loss of life of Palestinian women as a result of military actions and the cases of women who have been forced to give birth at checkpoints because of delays or denial of passage.

These concerns were reflected on the dialogue between the independent experts and the Israeli delegation despite the latter's refusal to report on the situation of women in the OPT. The CEDAW issued recommendations on the situation of Palestinian women and renewed other Committee's call on Israel to report on its international obligations "in regard to all persons under its jurisdiction".

The effectiveness of the treaty monitoring bodies relies on the independence of their members. Ms. Morvai's allegations need to be closely examined and, if found to be true, acted upon so as not to constitute a precedent that would pave the way to continued intervention in the functioning and membership of the Committees for political purposes. Such a practice undermines the credibility of the entire treaty monitoring system and should be vigorously denounced.

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