



PRESS RELEASE

URUGUAY: Children abused in Uruguayan Prison:

How many more children must suffer?

Geneva, 10 August 2015 - Last week a [video](#) was released in the Uruguayan media showing a group of Prison officers violently containing unarmed children in a juvenile detention centre in Montevideo. Some of the children were beaten while handcuffed, and others had respiratory problems after being forced out of their cells with the use of a fire extinguisher.

The officials on the video are members of the Uruguayan syndicate of the Instituto del Niño y Adolescente de Uruguay (SUINAU). They operated in the presence of the president of the syndicate who described the approach publicly declared as “usual practice”.

“We have raised repeated concerns of what appears to be SUINAU’s connivance to practices of violence and reprisals including against those that who have reported and denounced abuses. The depiction in the video is just an illustration of disproportionate use of force. It reaffirms an urgent need to address the bigger issues of violence and impunity against children in detention.” declared Gerald Staberock; OMCT Secretary General.

In Uruguay, cases of torture and ill-treatments of children in detention have been widely documented by IELSUR and the OMCT. Indeed, last year IELSUR and the OMCT contributed to the prosecutions of 8 prison officers who had allegedly tortured and abused children in custody.

“Children should be safe in prison. Acts of torture or any form of ill-treatment must be eradicated from all juvenile detention centres in Uruguay and elsewhere. The only way forward is that any credible allegation is independently investigated and those responsible are held to account.” stated Gerald Staberock, OMCT General Secretary.

In light of the recent evidence, the OMCT urges the state of Uruguay to:

(1) Follow-up on the criminal charges that were presented and ensure that all those responsible for committing acts of torture and ill-treatment or any other human rights violation in juvenile detention centres are held accountable.

(2) Conduct a comprehensive independent inquiry into policies and practices within SUINAU’s to prevent future violations and to ensure accountability for abuse. This should include allegations that employees accused of having committed torture or other abuses, resort to acts of reprisals and that there are attempts to cover-up cases of torture and ill-treatment.

(3) Implement as a matter of priority the recommendations from the Committee Against Torture issued to the authorities in 2014 to create mechanisms of effective civilian oversight and accountability in juvenile detention centres.

(4) Conduct a structural, and comprehensive legal and policy reform on the juvenile justice system, prioritizing non-custodial measures for children in conflict with the law.

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