



Wilton Park

Provisional programme

Strategies for tackling torture and improving prevention

Monday 30 March – Wednesday 1 April 2015 | WP1382

There is an absolute prohibition on torture in international law; this is contained in various treaties and is also a peremptory rule of customary international law (*jus cogens*) binding on all states. At the global level, the Convention against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) provides for the criminalisation of torture, while its Optional Protocol (OPCAT) enables regular visits to places of detention by an expert international committee and the establishment of National Preventive Mechanisms. Torture is also addressed by other general UN human rights treaties and provisions of international humanitarian and criminal law. Despite this extensive web of international commitments, torture is still practiced throughout the world. While the framework of domestic and international law, and the monitoring of it, remains key to combating torture, to end torture there also needs to be some fresh thinking on how to have impact on the ground. Attention needs to focus on identifying additional strategies, drawing on recent and ongoing studies assessing evidence on impact.

The prevalence of torture in the contemporary world, combined with a renewed impetus in the international community to tackle it, illustrated, for example, by the Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI) launched in March 2014, provide the framework and stimulus for this two-day meeting. It will explore the impact of UNCAT and OPCAT, as the most developed global mechanisms to prevent torture, together with the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture, the longest-established regional mechanism. It will bring together policy makers, parliamentarians, experts from international and regional human rights bodies, and civil society groups active at the national and local level in combating torture and assisting its victims. The aims of this meeting are to:

- Map what is being done in different situations to prevent torture to share best practice and lessons learned.
- Critically assess the mechanisms and methods of those bodies and organisations

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currently mandated to address the phenomenon of torture.

- Identify the aids and obstacles to effective prevention to enable further coordination between international, national and local efforts to monitor and address torture.
- Contribute to ongoing discussions at international and national levels on shaping strategies to prevent and combat torture;
- Seek to identify innovative approaches to torture prevention which can be developed alongside existing efforts, and how to shape these in policy terms.

In partnership with the Human Rights Implementation Centre, Law School, University of Bristol

With support from the Human Rights Initiative; Open Society Foundations, Budapest; Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

Monday 30 March

1300-1430

Participants arrive and buffet lunch available

1500

Welcome and introduction

Isabelle Jaques

Programme Director, Wilton Park, Steyning

1515-1645

1. Tackling torture: mapping the contemporary context of torture. How have strategies evolved and what are the challenges and opportunities?

How are torture and ill-treatment defined in different countries and regions? Should each of these aspects be treated differently? How have strategies to prevent torture changed over time? What key factors can be identified which lead to a reduction in torture? What successful examples may be cited? What obstacles allow for the continuation of torture and how can they be overcome? What needs further exploration?

Manfred Nowak

Professor of International Law and Human Rights, Section for International Law and International Relations, University of Vienna

Mark Thomson

Secretary General, Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), Geneva

Carsten Staur

Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations, Geneva

1645-1730

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

1730-1900

2. Evaluating impact in torture prevention strategies: key lessons

What evidence is available on the effects of interventions aimed at torture prevention? What is seen to have an impact and why? How can academic research be best related to practise? How are the experiences of policy makers, courts and civil society reflected in analysis? Are the existing approaches and methodologies optimal? How might they be improved and/or supplemented?

Richard Carver

Senior Lecturer, Human Rights and Governance, Centre for Development and Emergency Practice (CENDEP), Oxford Brookes University, Oxford

Erica Dailey

Senior Officer for Research, Open Society Justice Initiative, New York

1900

Chairs of working groups at session 4 and 6 to meet Isobelle Jaques in the Conference Room

1930

Reception followed by dinner

Tuesday 31 March

0800-0845

Breakfast

0900-1030

3. A critical assessment of international legal frameworks

What has been the impact of UNCAT, OPCAT and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ECPT)? What mechanisms or strategies work in practice, for example:

- Reporting procedures
- Communications and enquiry
- Preventive visits
- Political engagement
- Informal or ad hoc diplomacy

How do these legal frameworks relate to the national level, and how could this be improved? How can civil society groups best seek to prevent and address torture through utilising these frameworks?

Felice Gaer

Director, Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights; Vice-Chair, United Nations Committee against Torture (UNCAT), New York

Therese Rytter

Director, Legal Affairs and Advocacy, Dignity, Danish Institute against Torture; member, Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), Copenhagen

1030-1100

Tea/coffee

1100-1230

4. Parallel working groups: what has impact and why?

Participants will divide into four parallel working groups to examine further international legal frameworks, or other strategies, for preventing and combating torture. Is there evidence that torture can be prevented through oversight, and if yes, what are the good practices? What is the evidence for the efficiency of UN, as well as regional or local, mechanisms? What is the potential of regional bodies/initiatives to 'fill the gap' in the implementation of the prohibition/prevention of torture? What has been the experience of National Prevention Mechanisms (NPMs)? Or National Human Rights Institutions?

Working group I:

Chair: Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, London

Working group II:

Chair: Lukas Muntingh

Co-founder and Project Coordinator, Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI), Cape Town

Working group III:

Chair: Mari Amos, Member, United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), Tallinn

Working group IV:

Chair: Elizabeth Abi-Mershed, Assistant Executive Secretary, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), Washington DC

1300-1430

Lunch

1500-1600

5. Drivers of change: how can examples of successful strategies from other international initiatives inform new thinking?

What lessons can be learned from the strategies pursued in other international initiatives, for example small arms control and climate change and environment? What causes things to change? Which factors can be seen to be decisive, for example political strategy or legal oversight? How can public awareness and support play a role in reducing the use of torture? How can the different tools available be combined most effectively? How can actors at different levels of the international system best support each other?

Lord Dr Hastings of Scarisbrick

Member, House of Lords; Co-chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Trade Out of Poverty; Global Head of Citizenship, KPMG International, London

Oliver Sprague

Programme Director, Military Security and Police, Amnesty International UK, London

1600-1630

Tea/coffee

1630-1830

6. Parallel working groups: what is needed to improve the prevention of torture and combat its practice?

Four parallel working group discussions to brainstorm and generate fresh and creative thinking on other options: 'what more' is needed to raise the priority of torture prevention, effect change and have impact on the ground? How can new points of leverage be identified? How can the changing relationship between international and national actors inform the development of future strategies to monitor and prevent torture? Alongside the current legal frameworks, what else is needed? What would an international framework look like if it was introduced today, or what other mechanisms or measures could be envisaged if starting anew?

Working group I:

Chair: Victor Madrigal Borloz, Secretary-General, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims; member, Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), Copenhagen

Working group II:

Chair: Renate Kicker, Director, European Training and Research Center for Human Rights and Democracy; Deputy Head, Institute of International Law and International Relations, University of Graz; former member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT), Graz

Working group III:

Chair: Carla Ferstman, Director, REDRESS, London

Working group IV:

Chair: Lilian Artz, Associate Professor and Director, Gender Health and Justice Unit, University of Cape Town, Observatory

1845

Chairs of working groups at session 4 and 6 to meet Isobelle Jaques and Rachel Murray, Rapporteur in the Conference Room

1930

Reception followed by dinner

Wednesday 1 April

0800-0845	Breakfast and checkout
0900-1030	7. Conclusions from working groups This plenary session will draw together and discuss the recommendations or options, opportunities and lessons learned identified from the working group discussions for developing future strategies for torture prevention. Rapporteur: Rachel Murray , Professor of International Human Rights Law; Director, Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol Law School, Bristol
1030-1045	8. eQuestionnaire Completing eQuestionnaire online: http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/WP1382/
1045-1115	Tea/coffee
1115-1245	9. Effective strategies to tackle torture: what are the next steps? What are the innovative ideas which can provide the next steps forward? Malcolm Evans Chair, United Nations Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture (SPT); Professor of Public International Law, University of Bristol Law School, Bristol Gerald Staberock Secretary General, World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), Geneva
1245	Lunch
1400	Participants depart

This is a preview programme and as such may be subject to change.

This is an invitation only conference.

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