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Report

Strategies for tackling torture and improving prevention

Monday 30 March – Wednesday 1 April 2015 | WP1382

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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. 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. The meeting therefore brought together policy makers, experts from international and regional human rights bodies, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and civil society groups (CSOs) active at the national and local level in combating torture and assisting its victims with a view to:

- Mapping what is being done in different situations to prevent torture, to share best practice and lessons learned.
- Critically assessing the mechanisms and methods of those bodies and organisations currently mandated to address the phenomenon of torture.
- Identifying the aids and obstacles to effective prevention to enable further coordination between international, national and local efforts to monitor and address torture.
- Contributing to ongoing discussions at international and national levels on shaping strategies to prevent and combat torture.
- Seeking to identify innovative approaches to torture prevention which can be developed alongside existing efforts, and how to shape these in policy terms.

Key points

- There is in place an elaborate framework of legal standards and associated mechanisms in relation to the prohibition and prevention of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- Tackling impunity has proven to be one of the greatest challenges but remains essential to address, in particular the need for fully empowered independent investigatory bodies coupled with effective sanction in terms of prosecution and prison sentences.
- There has been an increased focus on prevention and the opening of places of detention to expert scrutiny, which has developed into a more holistic approach centred on access to justice for detainees, thus enabling greater cross-sectoral understanding and analysis of the root causes of torture and ill-treatment.
- Given the multiplicity of international and national bodies in combating torture, there are increasingly different standards at different levels. There is a need to be alert to the problems that can arise if they all say slightly different things: this

creates confusion and a lack of clarity that risks letting the state avoid its obligations.

- There is an evident lack of co-ordination between the various mechanisms that exist, a lack of focus on national contexts and an apparent lack co-ordination between the international framework and domestic regimes in particular.
- There is also a problem of laxity and a lack of precision around terminology; using imprecise terminology without consideration of what it means in a national context fosters impunity by creating a lack of clarity that allows states to evade their responsibilities.
- Political context is an important factor; in relation to torture in particular, political will can be one of the biggest elements in compliance and yet it is largely, almost conveniently, ignored. It is nonsensical to talk about strategies for prevention without engaging with the political realities in a given situation.
- The efforts of donors are important, both bilateral and multilateral, particularly those which are focussed on structural and institutional reform centred on improving access to justice or building the rule of law more generally which are essential components in preventing torture.
- Those who work in the intergovernmental human rights system, as well as on treaty monitoring bodies, rely heavily on information from and engagement by civil society organisations. Civil society in turn faces numerous challenges related to knowledge, capacity, relevance to domestic efforts and responsiveness, risk to personal safety and professional or organisational survival, and lack of resources.
- Public attitudes are recognised as hugely influential in affecting or preventing societal change. These are influenced in several ways with the media playing a hugely important role. Programming that perpetuates in the public mind the perception of torture as necessary in extracting the information needed to keep society safe is particularly problematic. If public attitudes are a key factor in affecting change then a challenge is to make torture something that people care about.
- There are a range of ideas for complementary initiatives or strategies that would not abandon current approaches but could buttress what exists already to enable the current system to work more effectively.
- There is a need to put human faces and voices front and centre of the debate in order to build public awareness and influence public attitudes on the realities of torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- The debate on torture necessarily is focussed on the legal standards and mechanisms. But not everyone is a lawyer or human rights expert, and thus engaging solely in legal and technical terms can be off-putting and exclusionary. While remaining strictly true to basic standards, there is a pressing need to make the debate more accessible to those not immersed in legal norms and standards. There is also a need to engage persons outside the range of 'usual suspects'.
- The international standards on torture and cruel inhuman and degrading treatment are by their very nature and necessity written to cover all situations. Yet every situation is unique and thus different strategies are going to be required for different countries. While maintaining consistency in relation to the standards, better ways to engage with domestic realities have to be found.
- There are many crucial actors in this field spanning the international, regional and national contexts: each have an important role to play but there needs to be increased co-ordination and synergy between them. Sharing of information between bodies is also important and a compilation of such good practices would

be a useful tool.

- A need has been identified for a new strategic direction that focuses on the inhumanity of torture and incorporates more of a human aspect into the debate. Alongside this, more attention is needed on supporting and complementing current standards, mechanisms and strategies

Context

1. At the global level, the Convention against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) provides inter alia for the criminalisation of torture and is structured around four key elements of impunity, prevention, redress for victims and implementation.¹ One hundred and fifty eight states have ratified UNCAT; 39 have yet to ratify.² Of those that have ratified, twenty seven have never submitted a report.³ The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) established the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture and Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment (SPT), an expert international committee enabled to undertake regular visits to places of detention. OPCAT also requires the creation of bodies at the domestic level in the form of National Preventative Mechanisms (NPMs). Seventy eight States Parties have ratified OPCAT, of whom 61 have designated NPMs. There are also regional standards and mechanisms, the longest established of which is the European Convention on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ECPT). Thus, taken together with provisions of other UN human rights treaties, extensive soft law standards in this area, and international humanitarian and criminal law, there is in place an elaborate framework of legal standards and associated mechanisms.
2. As legal frameworks have developed, so too have strategies. Tackling impunity – both domestically and internationally – has proven to be one of the greatest challenges but remains essential to address, in particular the need for fully empowered independent investigatory bodies coupled with effective sanction in terms of prosecution and prison sentences. Recent years have however seen a paradigm shift towards prevention, based on the premise that improving conditions of detention will have a knock-on impact on reducing the incidence of torture. There has also been an increased focus on the domestic level with the role played by NHRIs and the advent of NPMs. What started as a strategy of opening places of detention to expert scrutiny has developed into a more holistic approach centred on access to justice for detainees, thus enabling greater cross-sectorial understanding and analysis of the root causes of torture and ill-treatment. At the same time, in some societies, for example in Latin America, access to official information is a serious challenge, impeding informed analysis of the situation.
3. There has been innovative work around strategic litigation in Central Asia that has led to decisions by the UN Committee against Torture on communications resulting in domestic recognition of international jurisdiction and subsequent compensation of a victim of torture in police custody in Kazakhstan. Decisions on communications by the Committee have also impacted positively on policy in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with the introduction of zero tolerance policies where previously the very existence of torture was denied. The use of paralegals and community-based, lower cost legal services in other contexts is beginning to show the impact of legal intervention and knowledge at the point of arrest or detention.
4. Cognisant of the centrality of political and contextual factors in the responsiveness or otherwise of States, there are other examples of particular strategies that have worked at the domestic level. Pursuing cases at the European Court of Human Rights has had an impact in Turkey as the implementation of judgments has led to concrete changes. In Nepal accountability of individual perpetrators worked: those accused of engaging in torture and ill-treatment were refused employment in international peace-keeping missions. In other contexts, donor-supported training in investigation and criminal procedure and techniques has helped. But where states lack the political will or interest

to end torture, options become much more limited or ineffective.

5. There have been some efforts to evaluate and assess what strategies have an impact on torture prevention. Ongoing research based on cross-regional, multi-country quantitative data gathering and analysis to determine whether torture prevention works and what factors reduce the risk of torture is indicating that detention practice is by far the most important: is detention officially recorded, is a detainee informed of the right to a lawyer and able to exercise this right? This is followed by prosecution practice, and particularly the importance of penalties commensurate with the seriousness of the crime. Monitoring and particularly mechanisms that can undertake regular, unannounced visits and interview detainees is the next most important factor; followed by training, the most effective of which is that framed as enhancing and affirming personal and professional development. Complaints mechanisms – while important vehicles or points of access for individual victims – are being shown to have limited impact as a mechanism for preventing torture. Thus quantitative data indicates the effectiveness or otherwise of certain strategies. It is acknowledged, however, that quantitative data can be patchy and problematic, and thus its analysis also has limitations. It needs to be matched with an assessment of qualitative information and the links between various elements that enable torture and strategies to prevent it, and consider the wider context and political environment in order to ascertain what the ‘game-changers’ might be in any situation.

Challenges

Legal, policy and practical

6. As already outlined, there is an elaborate legal framework in place that prohibits torture and seeks to prevent it. More standards or mechanisms in this field are not necessarily required; however there may be scope to refine and harmonise what is there, with one particular issue being that there are so many at various different levels. This is not to advocate for the removal or diminution of existing protections; rather there is a need to be alert to the problems that can arise if they all say slightly different things. For example, if different recommendations with different priorities emerge from the Committee against Torture, the SPT, the Special Rapporteur, and the NPM for a particular state, this creates confusion and a lack of clarity that risks letting the state avoid its obligations.
7. A further related challenge is the evident lack of co-ordination between the various mechanisms and in particular between the Committee against Torture, the SPT and NPMs. Despite being set up under the auspices of an Optional Protocol to UNCAT, there is as yet no clear framework of interaction or co-ordination between the NPMs and the Committee against Torture. NPMs are the bodies which are working on the ground in the domestic context on an ongoing basis and should thus have access to all the information in relation to a particular state at their disposal. The Committee is potentially missing out on vital knowledge and analysis and needs to engage with these bodies on a more regular basis.
8. In general, a lack of focus on national contexts and co-ordination between the international framework and domestic regimes is apparent: “what happens in Geneva stays there”. While there are evident resource issues for the international mechanisms in trying to engage more effectively at the domestic level, as well as valid questions about the extent to which it is appropriate for them to do so, there is a sense that the interaction is insufficient at present. This is seen by a focus on engagement in the periodic reporting process with much less attention to ongoing dialogue, follow-up and implementation. There may also be a lack of adequate engagement in international processes by relevant domestic-level actors, for a variety of reasons. This is compounded by the current approach to examinations by the Committee which proceeds article-by-article to review violations and compliance and often misses out on linkages and the underpinning reasons why states fail to comply. This can prevent the

Committee from posing more targeted, relevant questions that fail fully to test a state's fulfilment of its obligations. It may also discourage engagement by relevant civil society organisations that tend to take a more holistic view which the current approach does not easily facilitate.

9. There is also a problem of laxity and a lack of precision around terminology, for example, using 'torture' without being clear on whether the definition of torture is met in Article 1 of UNCAT in that particular context or rather cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as in Article 16. There are both varying degrees of standards and societal tolerance depending on what is at issue. The prohibition on torture is clear and absolute while sanction for cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment is much more complex. A danger in using imprecise terminology without consideration of what it means in a national context is that it again fosters impunity by creating a lack of clarity that allows states to avoid their responsibilities.
10. In sum, better interaction and co-ordination between domestic and international, and on a more continuous than periodic basis, is recognised as valuable and necessary; but answers to the question of how this might be done in practice remain challenging.

Political

11. As with many other human rights violations, political context is an important factor; however in relation to torture in particular, political will can be one of the biggest elements in compliance and yet it is largely, almost conveniently, ignored.
12. It is nonsensical to talk about strategies for prevention without engaging with the political realities in a given situation; there is little point for example in conducting training on interrogation techniques if there are quotas in place for, or orders from above to extract, confessions. In countries where torture is endemic, concentrating on individual perpetrators will not necessarily address the systemic issues: what or who is a perpetrator in that context? In any given situation, how much a government wants to change but doesn't know how, or simply doesn't want to change, is of fundamental importance to what strategies are adopted. These kind of nuanced understandings and assessments must therefore inform engagement at all levels.
13. Here the efforts of donors are also important, both bilateral and multilateral, particularly those which are focussed on structural and institutional reform centred on improving access to justice or building the rule of law more generally. These are essential components in preventing torture and yet connections are often not made between them; or resources are not targeted at the right places or used as leverage. This is applicable also to the broader development agenda which does not base its approach sufficiently on the human rights framework despite its clear connectivity to it and potential ability as a vehicle to promote and improve compliance with human rights obligations.
14. For human rights experts too, who may be comfortable only with human rights law and standards, 'politics' can be a 'black hole' or void at which they stop as they struggle to find ways either to engage in a non-partisan way or for fear of perceived impact on independence.
15. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an increasingly influential instrument at the broader geopolitical and intergovernmental level. Positively, it is leading to greater awareness among States Parties about their human rights obligations as Ministers know they will be questioned by other member states, and this is taken seriously. OHCHR reports are an effective tool in injecting treaty body findings into the process. However the reality remains that it is an inherently political process with those undertaking the monitoring having no in-depth expertise, resulting in often poor questioning.

Advocacy

16. Those who work in the intergovernmental human rights system, as well as on treaty

monitoring bodies, rely heavily on information from and engagement by civil society organisations (CSOs). CSOs are recognised as providing the much needed expertise and contextual knowledge that Committees require, particularly in a context where a state is either bombarding the Committee with too much (perhaps irrelevant) information or indeed not providing enough or any detail. On a broader scale, it is pressure from civil society that has been a very important force for change and progress that has taken place at the international level. In relation to torture, cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment, some feel that there is not enough engagement from civil society or it is not forthcoming. Unless there is such engagement by civil society with the human rights mechanisms, the latter lacks the necessary domestic context and there is not enough pressure for change.

17. On the other hand, civil society faces numerous challenges. CSOs need knowledge about international standards and mechanisms and the capacity to engage with them. Is the international framework seen as relevant to domestic efforts? Or useful? Civil society can and will only use it where it can be a tool to support their own objectives: if there is no domestic responsiveness to international criticism, for example, is it strategically worth their while to expend valuable time and energy engaging with it? In contexts in particular where torture may be most prevalent, it is often dangerous for civil society to engage: both their personal safety and professional or organisational survival could be at risk. On a more practical but real level, many lack the internal resources even to engage in the process from a distance, much less travel to Geneva to be present during international examinations of their government's record.
18. An impasse of sorts can be observed whereby the system needs information and engagement from civil society to be more effective, but civil society either does not know how to engage, have the resources, or it is not seen as relevant. The responsibility does not lie solely with civil society: the international framework also needs to be responsive; new and creative ways are needed, such as video-links and webcasting used for other processes that are beginning to make the international human rights system more interactive at the domestic level.

Societal

19. Public attitudes are recognised as hugely influential in affecting or preventing societal change. Recent and relatively rapid advancement in relation to recognition of LGBTI rights, for example, can at least partly be attributed to changing public attitudes. In domestic contexts too, when society is mobilised, change has happened. In Kenya seemingly intractable issues such as abortion, circumcision and death sentences which were all taboo twenty years ago have now progressed.
20. Public attitudes are in turn influenced in several ways – for example, effective civil society-led campaigns, the advent of technology and social media, or the influence of a more progressive young generation. The media has a hugely important role to play: in relation to LGBTI rights, programmes such as Will and Grace and Glee, and other routine casting of prominent gay characters, has undoubtedly contributed to greater societal understanding and acceptance of the LGBTI community that has in turn positively influenced recognition of their equality and rights. This is in stark contrast to productions that feature torture, with programmes such as 24 or Homeland perpetuating in the public mind the perception of torture as necessary in extracting the information needed to keep society safe. Yet brutality is abhorrent to many people, and the portrayal by these programmes of torture in that national security, geopolitical, 'ticking bomb' context masks the routine violence and brutality in police cells and other places of detention that constitutes the majority of torture in reality. Presented in this context, what do the public actually think about torture? Do they know what it is? It may be the case that, like the death penalty for example, the public perception, or unpopularity of those detained as criminals, is they might deserve whatever treatment or punishment they get. But if public attitudes are a key factor in affecting change then a challenge is to make torture something that people care about.

What needs to be done?

The meeting's aim was to encourage new thinking or strategies on what is needed to improve the prevention of torture and combat its practice. But there are caveats that come with a drive or impulse to 'think creatively,' one being the risk of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'. There are a range of ideas for complementary initiatives or strategies that would not abandon current approaches but could buttress what exists already to enable the current system to work more effectively. Likewise, however, perfect is often the enemy of the good, and fear of not getting it right prevents risks being taken and new approaches being tried. Nonetheless there are clear themes and suggestions that emerge for moving forward.

Enhance the human aspect of the debate:

21. There is a need to put human faces and voices front and centre of the debate in order to build public awareness and influence public attitudes on the realities of torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
22. Key to this are survivors and victims of torture – they must be enabled to participate and to do so in a meaningful way and on their own behalf. For as long as the public is not confronted with the human impact of torture then they will fail to empathise or understand what it really means. There is a need to shift focus away from the stereotypes of 'deserving criminals' to the 'ordinary' people who find themselves caught up in the system and particularly those from vulnerable groups such as children, minorities or people with learning disabilities.
23. The faces and voices of less usual allies to champion the issue are also needed. Who are the people beyond the legal, political and international networks that could be involved? Are there public or celebrity figures who could be anti-torture supporters or even UN envoys? Who are the domestic level stakeholders and actors that are involved in and witness conditions of detention – can churches be more active? How can healthcare professionals be engaged? Other successful campaigns have focussed strategically on involving those deemed most unlikely to speak up to great effect.
24. Likewise in other contexts and campaigns, perpetrators have been an important voice in challenging and changing attitudes. In relation to torture, accountability must remain as the key focus in relation to perpetrators. However, there may be opportunities or even a need to work with those who have reformed, for example, as a potentially powerful voice in speaking up against torture, as well as helping to increase understanding of the reasons why it happens.
25. Torture is not a 'sexy' topic or one which many can engage with in terms of having sympathy for the victims if they are detainees, but putting a face to the abuses could help generate change and sway public opinion.

Make it more accessible:

26. The debate on torture necessarily is focussed on the legal standards and mechanisms. To do otherwise risks inconsistency and accusations of cultural relativism that enable politicisation and impunity. But not everyone is a lawyer or human rights expert, and thus engaging solely in legal and technical terms can be off-putting and exclusionary.
27. While remaining strictly true to basic standards, there is a pressing need to make the debate more accessible to those not immersed in legal norms and standards. This would enable engagement by a broader spectrum of important stakeholders. Parliamentarians for example are becoming more engaged through receiving reports from NPMs; they in turn have ready access to the media. With a few exceptions, the media by and large do not carry stories that are based on what is seen as legal and technical discussion. In the age of social media and the 140 character soundbites in particular, new ways of communicating are needed.
28. Parliamentarians and the media are often already engaged in some way and there is a

need to go beyond them and look at how to engage with police associations, professional organisations, trade unions, forensic experts, community workers, business and others. There are lots of actors who are relevant to the discussion and could have a role to play in combating torture but they are not necessarily seen as human rights actors, and often do not speak or understand the language of human rights.

29. This is also linked with the need for clarity on terminology – much degrading treatment for example takes place in residential homes and yet it is not understood by a variety of key stakeholders as a human rights issue to which standards apply. Being clearer what is being talked about, what is meant and thus what responses are required from a human rights perspective will build both understanding and prevention.
30. Making the discussion more accessible in this way also helps generate the unusual alliances identified as important in challenging and changing public attitudes and shifting the debate. It is important more generally in creating greater ownership of the human rights standards that apply.

Make it more bespoke:

31. The international standards on torture and cruel inhuman and degrading treatment are by their very nature and necessity written to cover all situations. Yet every situation is unique and thus different strategies are going to be required for different countries. For this, state specific expertise and a nuanced understanding of the context are needed. Thus, while again maintaining consistency in relation to the standards, better ways to engage with domestic realities have to be found.
32. In particular, more understanding and identification of the root causes within a jurisdiction is required. Being locked up for 23 hours in one country may be a policy, whereas in another it may be due to staff shortages and a lack of resources. In different countries, different groups will be vulnerable, and will have different needs. This kind of knowledge is needed in order to ensure the right response is adopted and more focus is necessary on this.
33. Government is not a monolithic entity and yet recommendations are most often addressed broadly to the state. In many respects this is important as the state is the ultimate duty-bearer. However a lack of specificity as to which institutions within a state might be empowered or enabled to progress certain recommendations – that can be gained only from greater knowledge of the domestic context – may also enable governments to evade their responsibility.
34. There is also a need to be more bespoke in tailoring different messages for different audiences; for this clear communication and advocacy strategies are needed. Communication is often the last thing to be considered and yet more time spent planning who needs to hear a message, what they need to hear and who they should best hear it from, enables more effective advocacy. Otherwise energy spent engaging in processes and writing reports that have no follow-up is largely wasted.

Build synergy:

35. There are many crucial actors in this field spanning the international, regional and national contexts: the Committee against Torture, the Sub-committee, other treaty bodies, other international human rights mechanisms, NPMs, NHRIs and civil society to name a few. Each have an important role to play but there needs to be increased co-ordination and synergy between them.
36. The distribution of roles and responsibilities is often not clear and as a result the necessary action falls between the gaps. For example, a clear need has been identified for engaging in follow-up work and a more continuous dialogue or monitoring between treaty body reporting processes. A more honest discussion needs to happen on whose responsibility this is. Is it for the treaty body? Or the SPT? Or NPMs? Who is responsible for implementation? Who measures it? Can a treaty body offer advice and

technical assistance, or should this be done by others at UN level, or national level?

37. Coordination and synergy is therefore key: recognising respective strengths and roles and working together. Sharing of information between bodies is also important and particularly mechanisms need to be found to link NPMs and the valuable knowledge and information they possess into the international monitoring and reporting process. There are also many examples of good practice and strategies that have worked that need to be shared across sectors, among civil society organisations and across states. A compilation of such good practices, to include any relevant from outside the human rights field, would be a useful tool. This enables engagement beyond a denunciation approach that is often more appropriate to a torture prevention or dialogue model.

Be creative and practical:

38. Finally, it is in many ways easy to generate ideas but less so to address what actually needs to be done in practice to make them happen. It is essential to always ask and answer the question “but how?” if real and meaningful change is going to take place. There are a number of practical suggestions to improve the operation of the UN frameworks and mechanisms in particular:
- Prioritise recommendations, keep them focused, simple and clear.
 - Adopt more informal and face to face engagement which is crucial in building trust and relationships that are prerequisites to creating the political goodwill that enables change.
 - Facilitate more engagement by NPMs with treaty bodies, in particular beyond the SPT.
 - Consider different types of reports for different audiences, and make websites more accessible beyond lawyers.
 - Make more use of video-links and webcasting of treaty bodies to reach domestic level.
 - Cultivate a culture of developing more specific questions among treaty bodies.
 - Re-shift focus from pre-reporting to post-reporting and thus more on Concluding Observations and their implementation, with a corresponding shift at national level.
 - Use actors already on the ground such as NPMs to promote a process of continuous dialogue rather than leaving it to treaty bodies.
 - Have NPMs and the SPT conduct joint visits.
 - Give the Special Rapporteur the power to participate in national procedures.
 - Build into the field presences of OHCHR offices a specific mandate for cooperation with SPT, and existing regional systems, such as CPT, or broaden the mandate of UNHCR field offices to support NPM, the SPT and regional systems.
 - Consider more punitive measures for non-reporting states to submit reports, such as a bar on membership of the Human Rights Council, or holding an examination on their compliance in their absence.
 - Encourage more co-operation from non-reporting states by developing an initial list of issues for them to engage on.
 - UNDP should systematically incorporate recommendations from human rights monitoring into programmes for justice and security reform, as should bilateral and other multilateral donors.
 - Human rights should be specifically included in the Sustainable Development

Goals.

- Develop clear and publicized protocols for law enforcement officials to follow for operationalisation of the legal and institutional infrastructure.

These suggestions are more than tweaking at the edges; they are practical proposals which can be acted on. Meanwhile, additional and more creative and strategic thinking is needed which should be tailored to national or regional context. Ideas flagged in concluding discussion which could be further reflected upon, included:

Policy measures

- Pursue the creation of a full-time Special Representative or Envoy of the UN Secretary General on the Fight against Torture with appropriate support staff
- The majority of torture victims are poor so link anti-torture work to anti-poverty work and build alliances
- Frame torture as not only a human rights violation but an impediment to development
- Examine the links between poverty, drug policies and torture
- Use economic levers, ethically
- Provide alternatives to detention for migration
- Early education efforts on non-violence
- Build prisons with see-through materials
- Campaign promoting diversity of the police and criminal justice workforce
- Develop five minimum standards as indicators
- Create building blocks at regional level which can spiral out

Legal measures

- Criminalise glorification of torture akin to glorification of terrorism
- Mainstream paralegal assistance in police stations and provide them with access to places of detention
- Send a clear message by using strategic litigation to take more perpetrators to court with winnable cases
- Combat arbitrary arrests
- Campaign for police prosecutions and encourage the High Commissioner for Human Rights to take part in legal proceedings
- Focus on decriminalizing and reconceptualising punishment

Training

- Involve security personnel to be part of the team of facilitators for training and creating awareness against torture and also providing alternative investigative techniques
- Expand initiatives directly strengthening the capacities of prisoners to defend themselves
- Improve judicial decision-making by running an online certified course for judges
- Provide training of journalists
- Involve victims of torture in police and prison officer training
- Make politicians sit an unseen written exam at the beginning of every CAT

session

- Research/publications
- Get OHCHR to commission a study/publication on 'voices of torture victims'.
- Establish stronger evidence base on public attitudes to torture – what does the public really think?
- Try to 'cost' torture in financial terms, illustrating to governments the implications for health, justice budgets etc.
- Stakeholder mapping, and design mitigation strategies for 'spoilors'
- Create a central repository or forum for materials, e.g. like the UN elections encyclopaedia of good practice and a website for sharing information and creative ideas

Advocacy, awareness-raising and influencing attitudes

- Launch a global awareness-raising anti-torture campaign, such as a one-year campaign from 26 June 2015 (International Day in Support of Victims of Torture)
- Launch a global awareness campaign, *à la Swissleaks*, with involvement of major international newspapers which expose concrete high profile torture cases simultaneously to the global audience
- Work with manufacturers of defence and law enforcement supplies to include a simple piece of written guidance/best practices/etc. about the proper use of force with each piece of equipment they disseminate
- Involve celebrities as UN Ambassadors, like Kiefer Sutherland or the Clooneys
- Involve media companies to explore programming on the reality of torture beyond the '24' depiction
- Reorient focus on victims and perpetrators
- Open up to young people through essay competitions
- Bring in more voices from global south
- School visits to places of incarceration
- Create anti-torture heroes or champions generally
- Encourage world leaders to make statements condemning torture
- New awards for media efforts on preventing and combating torture
- Link to the medical community and World Health Organisation
- Raise public awareness by printing anti-torture messages on public transport tickets
- Organise a global student moot on torture issues, possibly linked to security and counter-terrorism
- Choose a word in different languages which all can identify with, e.g. 'inhumanity' as a means for campaigning
- Get religious leaders to speak out
- Link into and learn from equality or other relevant movements and initiatives
- Create a survivors forum
- Engage youth via social media, schools and universities
- Greater engagement by state officials in events and discussions

Conclusion

There is an opportunity to re-energise and shape the debate about torture, as well as supporting the current system to work more effectively. A need has been identified for a new strategic direction that focuses on the inhumanity of torture and incorporates more of a human aspect into the debate. This should have at its centre the voices and faces of victims of torture but be supported by 'anti-torture champions' and other high profile spokespeople, all of whom can help shift the narrative, engage society and influence public attitudes on the realities of torture and its unacceptability. Further thinking is needed on how to make this happen in practice and there remains a pressing need for resources generally to support existing work as well as any new ideas coming forward.

Alongside this, more attention is needed on supporting and complementing current standards, mechanisms and strategies. In particular, the legal and institutional framework is comprehensive in the standards it sets, but needs to become more co-ordinated and responsive to domestic contexts. There are a range of practical steps that can be taken to make this happen and a desire and enthusiasm for doing so.

There is no one strategy or solution that will successfully combat and prevent torture; yet it is important to persist with the basic principles of an absolute prohibition of torture and combating impunity. It is also a matter of being patient and strategic, crafting different messages and tactics for different situations, and engaging in efforts for the long-term. Continuing discussion in regional contexts would constitute a valuable next step.

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¹ Via the establishment of a Committee Against Torture that receives periodic reports (Article 19), can make confidential inquiries (Article 20) and receive individual complaint communications (Article 22).

² As of 6 May 2015, see <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>

³ As of March 2015, 66 State Parties recognise Article 22 on individual complaints. 639 communications have been registered before the Committee addressing 34 State Parties. Of those 190 were discontinued; 68 were found inadmissible; in 154 the Committee found no violations; and in 97 the Committee found violations of the Convention. The rest are pending. All but 11 State Parties have accepted Article 20 on inquiries. There have been nine inquiries since the Convention came into force.