



Global torture prevention community calls for protection of Afghanistan's national preventive mechanism

23 August 2021

We, the undersigned national preventive mechanisms (NPMs) and members of the torture prevention community, express grave concern for the threat posed by the recent Taliban military offensive to the continued independence and functioning of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and for the safety of its members and staff. We jointly call on those in power to respect the mandate and independence of the AIHRC and to ensure the protection of those involved in its work.

As United Nations agencies, international NGOs and Afghan civil society organisations have noted, civilians who have engaged in work to promote human rights and democracy now face a serious risk of reprisals under the Taliban.

Afghanistan ratified the OPCAT in 2018 and decided that the AIHRC would perform the NPM mandate. NPMs are independent bodies that visit places of detention, monitor conditions, interview detainees in private, prepare reports and engage in constructive dialogue with relevant authorities to implement recommendations that reduce the risk of torture and ill-treatment.

We know from our own experience that independent oversight is important everywhere and at all times and, in particular, during times of transition and crisis.



This kind of independent human rights monitoring – focused on those in situations of vulnerability – is emblematic of the hard-won progress that Afghanistan has made over the past two decades. This is the kind of progress that we have all fought for in our own jurisdictions. This is the progress we stand together to defend, wherever it is under threat.

The OPCAT is the international torture prevention treaty that has been operational since 2006. Ninety States have ratified the OPCAT, with more than 70 establishing NPMs. The OPCAT is clear that NPMs must be protected against reprisals and sanctions for the work they do. Annual resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly also repeatedly call for the protection of national human rights institutions and their staff from threats, intimidation and reprisals.

As members of this global torture prevention community, we call on those in positions of power to stand by their international obligations to respect the independent work of the AIHRC and to guarantee the safety of its members and staff.

The undersigned organisations

Albania, Avokatit të Popullit/People's Advocate Institution, MKPT/NPM

Argentina, Comité Nacional para la Prevención de la Tortura, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención

Argentina, Procuración Penitenciaria de la Nación. Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención



Argentina, Mecanismo Local de Prevención de la Tortura de la provincia de Buenos Aires

Armenia, Human Rights Defender (Ombudsman) of Armenia

Asia Pacific Forum for National Human Right Institutions

Association for the Prevention of Torture

Australia, ACT Inspector of Correctional Services

Austria, Austrian Ombudsman Board (Volksanwaltschaft)

Brasil, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevenção e Combate à Tortura/MNPCT

Brasil, Mecanismo Estadual de Prevenção e Combate à Tortura do Rio de Janeiro/ MEPCT/RJ

Burkina Faso, Commission Nationale des Droits Humains

Cabo Verde, Comissão Nacional para os direitos humanos e a cidadania (Mecanismo Nacional de Prevenção da Tortura)

Chile, Comité para la Prevención de la Tortura, (MNP)

Costa Rica, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura.

Croatia, Ombudswoman of Croatia

Ecuador, Dirección Nacional del Mecanismo de Prevención Contra la Tortura y Otros Tratos o Penas Crueles, Inhumanos y Degradantes (Defensoría del Pueblo)



France, Contrôleur général des lieux de privation de liberté, National Preventive Mechanism

Georgia, Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia

Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, Ombudsman, NPM

Guatemala, Oficina Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura

Honduras, Comité Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura

Italy, National Guarantor for the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty, NPM

Maldives, National Human Rights Commission

Mali, Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme

México, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura y Otros Tratos o Penas Crueles, Inhumanos o Degradantes, Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (CNDH)

Moldova, Council for the Prevention of Torture

Moldova, Office of the People's Advocate

Panamá, Mecanismo Nacional para la Prevención de la Tortura y Otros Tratos o Penas Crueles, Inhumanos o Degradantes - Defensoría del Pueblo

Perú, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura

Paraguay, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura (MNP)

Philippines, Commission on Human Right - Interim National Preventive Mechanism



Poland, National Preventive Mechanism

Portugal, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevenção da Tortura (Provedor de Justiça)

Romania, The People's Advocate - National Preventive Mechanism

Sénégal, Observateur National des Lieux de Privation de Liberté

Slovenia, The Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia

South Africa, National Preventive Mechanism

Spain, Defensor del Pueblo - National Preventive Mechanism

Togo, Commission nationale des droits de l'homme (CNDH)

Tunisie, Instance Nationale de Prévention de Torture (INPT)

Uruguay, Mecanismo Nacional de Prevención de la Tortura