



Preventing torture and ill-treatment in the OSCE region

Statement to the 2015 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Working Session 8, “Rule of law”

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The APT would like to take the opportunity of this session on the prevention of torture to welcome the enhanced focus of the OSCE on the topic and the creation of a dedicated position within ODIHR.

We would like to recall that a set of preventive measures can indeed be taken to effectively reduce risks of torture and ill-treatment- by building effective legal frameworks, ensuring effective procedures and practices, and enabling effective and independent oversight. The OSCE has the capacity to strengthen all these elements of prevention and contribute to ensuring their effectiveness. **We call on the OSCE to make full use of its resources and develop its expertise to advance the combat against torture and the protection of all those who are deprived of their liberty, in its participating States.**

Among other important elements, the APT would like to specifically emphasize the instrumental role that the OSCE could play in ensuring effective oversight of places of deprivation of liberty throughout its region. Unfortunately, National Preventive Mechanisms sometimes do not enjoy the independence or the adequate human and financial resources required under the OPCAT. In addition, they could also be more strategic in the implementation of their preventive mandate. **We encourage the OSCE to further develop its role in this regard and to support National Preventive Mechanisms in its participating States, and strengthen their capacities and effectiveness.**

It is well-known that the risks of torture and ill-treatment are higher in the first few hours of police custody, and we would also like to remind that the OSCE’s contribution

to reducing them through increased cross-cutting work on its first and third dimensions of security, could be instrumental. **The APT calls on the OSCE to increase its torture prevention work with the police and other law enforcement officials, and contribute to reducing the risks of torture in police custody throughout the OSCE region.**

The APT would also like to invite the OSCE to expand its well-known expertise on combatting discrimination so as to address this issue in situations of deprivation of liberty. **The APT believes that the OSCE could greatly contribute to advancing the protection of individuals and groups in specific situations of vulnerability in detention, among others by raising awareness on their situations and needs, and enabling the set-up of effective protection measures.**

Finally, the APT would like to emphasize that the primary responsibility of preventing torture and protecting the rights and dignity of all those who are deprived of their liberty lies on States. All 57 OSCE participating States are parties to the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT). The OSCE region also bears the highest number of OPCAT ratifications worldwide, with 41 participating States being parties to this Treaty- and hence having committed to opening up their places of detention to external and independent oversight. Yet we know that torture and ill-treatment remain prevalent in the OSCE region. **The APT calls on all OSCE participating States to follow up on their commitments to combat and prevent torture and ill-treatment, and ensure that all persons deprived of their liberty are effectively protected from any abuse.**