

Federica Mogherini

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice President of the European Commission
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Brussels, 5 February 2015

Our Ref: B1653

Dear High Representative Mogherini,

EU MUST INTENSIFY EFFORTS TO STOP TORTURE WORLDWIDE

This year, 2015, will be a key opportunity for the European Union (EU) and its member states to step up their efforts against torture and ill-treatment. Amnesty International urges you to take this opportunity to translate EU human rights commitments into practice.

Amnesty International has reported on torture and other forms of ill-treatment in at least 141 countries from every region of the world over the past five years. This amounts to virtually every country on which we work. The secretive nature of torture however means the true number of countries where torture takes place is likely to be higher still. Since 1984, 156 states have ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention Against Torture (CAT), 142 of which are researched by Amnesty International. Amnesty International observed at least 79 of these still torturing in 2014 – more than half the states party to the Convention on which the organisation reports.

In 2014, Amnesty International launched a global campaign, [Stop Torture](#), calling on governments to genuinely implement effective safeguards against torture and other ill-treatment. These safeguards include: prompt access of detainees to lawyers, families and courts; monitoring of interrogations; allowing independent checks on all places of detention; independent and effective investigations of torture allegations; the prosecution of suspects; and proper redress for victims. The campaign focuses on five countries where torture is persistent, and where Amnesty International believes that developments at the national level make it possible to achieve significant improvement in the near future. These are: [Mexico](#), Morocco, [the Philippines](#), [Nigeria](#) and Uzbekistan.

Today, people at risk of, or experiencing torture in these countries and worldwide, are in urgent need of concrete, pro-active and relevant responses from the EU and its member states.

Around last year's 30th anniversary of the UNCAT, and in connection with the revision of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, Amnesty International called on the EU to step up efforts against torture at home and abroad, with a number of specific recommendations.ⁱ These include calls to the EU and its member states to reinforce the full use of existing instruments, such as the EU Guidelines on Torture, to strengthen capacities to address torture concretely and holistically, to move beyond quiet diplomacy with explicit public stances on torture, and to ensure EU credibility by acting against torture both at home and abroad.

Your stated commitments on torture in your European Parliament hearing, and on Human Rights Day, pointing to the need for “urgent attention” to the widespread practice of torture around the world, would be a positive point of departure for the EU to take concerted action against torture.ⁱⁱ

Building on your statements, and in line with EU and member states' commitments to place human rights at the centre of all external action, and with the EU Guidelines on Torture, Amnesty International calls on you to:

- Adopt clear and public stances against torture and ill-treatment in all high-level meetings, public statements and Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions, as well as in key forums such as the UN Human Rights Council

- Fully use the opportunity of this year's revision of the EU Guidelines on Torture to support Council Conclusions committing to intensify EU and member states' action against torture worldwide, on the model of recent Council Conclusions calling to step up EU political and material support on human rights defenders (HRDs) at the 10th anniversary of the EU Guidelines on HRDsⁱⁱⁱ
- Work with your fellow Vice President of the Commission, Frans Timmermans, and your fellow Commissioners, Věra Jourová and Dimitris Avramopoulos, to ensure that the EU and all its member states remain credible and legitimate actors against torture and ill-treatment worldwide, by taking concrete action and commitments at home that match efforts abroad. These should include the criminalisation of torture in all national law, and the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the CAT (OPCAT) by all member states
- Ensure that this year's revision of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy not only supports ongoing activities against torture and ill-treatment, but also commits to redouble EU and member states' engagement to monitor, prevent, act and speak out against torture.

We welcome your action to ensure the strongest possible engagement by the EU and its member states against torture and ill treatment now and in future; and we stand ready to provide any further information you may require.

We look forward to meeting you in person to discuss the above and other pressing matters in the near future.

Yours sincerely,



Ivana McGowan
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ⁱ Amnesty International, "The EU must step up efforts to stop torture: the UN Convention against Torture 30 years on," 26 June 2014 http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Press_Release_images/260614_Stop_Torture_public_statement.pdf, and Amnesty International with other organisations, "Revision of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy," 19 November 2014, http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Letters2014/Combating_torture_AP_revision_suggestions_NGOs.pdf.

ⁱⁱ "Declaration by High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the European Union on Human Rights Day," 10 December 2014, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/146137.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ "EU Council conclusions on 10th Anniversary of EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders," 23 June 2014. http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_15216_en.htm