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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment: Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors**

### **Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards**

#### *Summary*

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards, presents the new Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (see annex), shaped entirely by survivors' experiences and voices. The Charter provides a framework for action for States and other actors to strengthen accountability, justice, reparation and rehabilitation. In her report, the Special Rapporteur aims to deepen understanding of how torture occurs, its effects on individuals, families and societies, and the challenging paths that survivors have to navigate in seeking justice and redress. The report offers practical recommendations and includes an overview of the mandate holder's annual activities.

## I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Jill Edwards, submits the present report alongside the new Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (see annex), with the aim of contributing to a deeper understanding of the global phenomena of torture and related ill-treatment from the perspective of those who have directly experienced those acts. In the report, the Special Rapporteur seeks to provide further insight into how torture occurs, how it affects individuals, families, communities and societies, and the complex and often painful paths that survivors have to take in their pursuit of justice, reparation and healing.

2. The purpose of the present report is to strengthen awareness among policy and decision-makers, parliamentarians, judges, diplomats, experts and practitioners, civil society actors, international and regional organizations and entities, and the broader public of the following:

(a) The extent to which torture and related ill-treatment have permeated societies globally and the reasons why they persist;

(b) The profound and far-reaching harms that torture and related ill-treatment cause to survivors, their families and their societies;

(c) The pervasive obstacles that survivors face in obtaining justice and reparation, as guaranteed under international law;

(d) The transformative potential of survivors' testimonies and leadership in reshaping global responses to torture and related ill-treatment and ensuring effective support for those seeking justice and redress.

3. In the report, the Special Rapporteur builds upon the extensive work that has been carried out by individual survivors and survivor-led organizations to claim their rights and secure a place for their voices to be heard in national, regional and global dialogues on the eradication of torture and other ill-treatment. In preparation for the report, the Special Rapporteur convened three regional hearings – in Bogotá (November 2023), Nairobi (September 2024) and Kathmandu (May 2025) – which brought together 42 survivors representing 36 different nationalities.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the participants recounted being subjected to acts of torture and ill-treatment in their own countries; a few described being tortured while abroad. The Special Rapporteur is grateful for the support provided and the care taken in those hearings by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the World Organisation against Torture and local host organizations, namely the Corporación Centro de Atención Psicosocial (Psychosocial Care Centre) of Colombia, the Independent Medico-Legal Unit and the Mwatikho Torture Survivors Foundation of Kenya, and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal (TPO Nepal).

4. Additional insights have been shared by individual survivors and groups since the Special Rapporteur took office. The Special Rapporteur is immensely grateful to the many survivors and survivor-led organizations who made submissions, over 120 of which were received.<sup>2</sup> She thanks the seven States<sup>3</sup> and four independent national institutions<sup>4</sup> that also contributed.

<sup>1</sup> Participants in the hearings were from the following countries: Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Iraq, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Uganda, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup> All submissions will be available at the following link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/experiences-and-perspectives-victims-and-survivors-torture-and-other-cruel>.

<sup>3</sup> State submissions were received from Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Iraq, Israel and Mexico.

<sup>4</sup> Independent national institution submissions were received from the Public Defender's Office of Brazil; the National Directorate of the Mechanism for the Protection of Disappeared Persons and

## II. Activities of the mandate holder

5. From 1 January to 30 November 2025, the Special Rapporteur carried out a number of important activities, as outlined below.

6. She issued two thematic reports: one on hostage-taking as torture,<sup>5</sup> presented to the Human Rights Council at its fifty-eighth session; the other on trends and developments in the global struggle to end torture,<sup>6</sup> submitted to the Third Committee of the General Assembly at its eightieth session. She conducted an official country visit to Senegal, which will be covered in a separate report.

7. The Special Rapporteur transmitted to States and non-State actors 92 communications documenting allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and issued 63 press statements, either individually or jointly with other special procedure mandate holders.<sup>7</sup> She prepared a position paper concerning “Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (*Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic*)”, a case pending before the International Court of Justice.<sup>8</sup>

8. The Special Rapporteur issued a fact sheet on sexual torture in wartime<sup>9</sup> and a “questions and answers” document on the subject of torture and hostage-taking.<sup>10</sup> She submitted a contribution to the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee in response to its questionnaire on technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women and girls.<sup>11</sup>

9. There was considerable public interest in the work of the mandate holder, with hundreds of media mentions in more than 46 States. The Special Rapporteur published opinion pieces in *The Economist*,<sup>12</sup> *The New York Times*<sup>13</sup> and the *EUobserver*.<sup>14</sup> She was interviewed on multiple global news networks, including major interviews on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) *HARDtalk* programme<sup>15</sup> and on United Nations News,<sup>16</sup> and participated in a documentary.<sup>17</sup>

10. The Special Rapporteur’s major speaking engagements included:

(a) A speech and meetings with survivors at a Freedom from Torture event in London (January);

Reparations for Victims Documented by the Truth Commission and the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, both part of the Office of the Ombudsman of Ecuador; the Committee for the Prevention of Torture of Chile; and the Federal Public Defender Service of Mexico.

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/58/55.

<sup>6</sup> A/80/137.

<sup>7</sup> The communications and press releases cover a 12-month period from 1 November 2024 to 30 October 2025. All communications are available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

<sup>8</sup> Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/position-papers/position-paper-special-rapporteur-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or>. See also <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/188>.

<sup>9</sup> Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/sexual-torture-fact-sheet-july-2025-fin.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Available at [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/srtorture/activities/202503-torture-hostagetaiking-qa.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/srtorture/activities/202503-torture-hostagetaaking-qa.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/torture/sr/activities/sr-torture-submission-26-feb-2025.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> “It’s time to treat sexual violence in war as torture, writes a UN rapporteur”, *The Economist*, 3 March 2025.

<sup>13</sup> “I’ve seen how Russia is torturing prisoners of war, and it’s horrifying”, *The New York Times*, 7 August 2025.

<sup>14</sup> “Torture weapons are being used on Europe’s streets to put down protests”, *EUobserver*, 2 October 2025.

<sup>15</sup> BBC News World Service, “Alice Edwards: Is it possible to eradicate torture?”, *HARDtalk*, 10 January 2025.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdTzLDrDRRA>.

<sup>17</sup> BBC, *When Water Burns: The Fight for Georgia, Eye Investigations*, 1 December 2025.

(b) A presentation on torture and ill-treatment in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe area to the members of the Human Dimension Committee (February);

(c) Presentations at three side events during the fifty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, in Geneva (March), on the following themes:

- (i) “Freedom of religion or belief and the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment: towards a holistic approach”, with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief;
- (ii) “Prohibition of torture: The need to recognize hostages and their families as direct victims”, organized by the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists and the Hostages and Missing Families Forum;
- (iii) Commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, with a focus on victims’ and survivors’ journeys for justice amid ongoing challenges in Latin America, organized by the World Organisation against Torture, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, the Due Process of Law Foundation and Protection International;

(d) A briefing on her work and a discussion at the Standing Police Capacity of the United Nations, in Brindisi, Italy (April);

(e) Remarks on framing sexual violence as torture at an event organized by Women in Journalism at the Imperial War Museums in London (June);

(f) A keynote address on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture at the closing session of the Global Week against Torture, on the theme of “Carrying the struggle forward: strategy, solidarity and the next four years”, organized by the World Organisation against Torture (26 June);

(g) As a panellist at an event on international humanitarian law and contemporary challenges, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (August);

(h) Opening remarks at a regional seminar on the prevention and eradication of torture in Latin America and the links between international oversight and preventive action, held in Buenos Aires (September);

- (i) Remarks at a side event during the eightieth session of the General Assembly on tackling the trade in tools of torture, organized by Amnesty International, the Omega Research Foundation, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, Asociación Civil, in New York (October);
- (j) Remarks at the launch of a report of the Independent International Panel on Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations, hosted by Canada (October);
- (k) A keynote address at the Ensemble contre la peine de mort (Together against the Death Penalty) fifth Regional Congress on the Death Penalty in East Asia, held in Japan (November);
- (l) A keynote address at an event on survivors’ voices and State responsibility, with a focus on aligning laws in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland with the prohibition on torture, hosted by the Redress Trust, the Survivor Advisory Group and the United Kingdom All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group, held at the Houses of Parliament, London (November);

(m) A presentation on the impact of hostage-taking on families at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Arbitrary Detention and Hostage Diplomacy, hosted by the United Kingdom All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arbitrary Detention and Hostage Affairs, London (November).

### **III. Introducing the Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

11. The new Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (see annex) reflects the experiences, priorities and demands shared by survivors across the world. Developed in close collaboration with the Special Rapporteur, it contains a common call for dignity, justice, reparation and reform. Grounded entirely in survivors' experiences, the Charter sets out the rights and protections that they have identified as essential for rebuilding their lives and preventing future harms.

12. The Special Rapporteur recommends the Charter to all States Members of the United Nations and urges them to adopt it as a framework for action, integrating its demands into laws, policies and practices so as to ensure that no one else should ever have to endure what survivors have endured and that justice and reparation contribute to rebuilding societies and the global community on the basis of peace, harmony and humanity.

13. The Charter builds upon and should be seen as complementary to the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.<sup>18</sup> The Special Rapporteur also commends the Charter to, among others, national human rights institutions and national preventive mechanisms, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, bodies and mechanisms, and non-governmental and civil society actors.

### **IV. Views and perspectives of victims and survivors**

14. Survivors have made it clear that torture and other ill-treatment do not occur in a vacuum; they are sustained by structural conditions and have consequences that extend far beyond the moment of violence. To prevent future abuses and ensure meaningful redress, it is essential to understand the broader patterns that give rise to torture and ill-treatment, the deep and lasting impacts on individuals, families and societies, and the forms of support that survivors have identified as necessary to be able to rebuild their lives. In the following subsections, insights drawn from survivors' experiences that were shared at the regional hearings and through the submissions to the present report are set out as the foundation for more effective prevention, accountability and reparation efforts. The insights inform the Special Rapporteur's recommendations and the Charter.

#### **A. The ordinariness of torture**

15. What many people imagine torture to be may bear little resemblance to what some survivors have endured. Even the survivors themselves expressed disbelief when hearing the testimonies of others. Time and again, survivors said that they had assumed that their own experiences were rare or exceptional. Instead, they had discovered how widespread such violations were, how many other people carried similar scars and how many had lived through the same cruelty.

16. Survivors described the torture that had been inflicted upon them. Those attending the regional hearings were workers, students, migrants, entrepreneurs, artists, politicians, diplomats and community members – people from all sectors of society who lived ordinary lives and who never imagined that they could be targeted. They spoke of motivations for torture that challenge common assumptions, such as police efforts to meet arrest quotas, personal vendettas, extortion and even “entertainment” for officers on duty. They described

<sup>18</sup> General Assembly resolution 60/147, annex. See also the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, Assembly resolution 40/34, annex.

contexts far broader than the interrogation rooms or war zones often depicted in public discourse.

17. Their testimonies reveal the true scale of violence and cruelty committed against human beings everywhere, every day. For too long, legal and policy language has sanitized torture, rendering it abstract and distant – as something that happens to someone else. The accounts shared with the Special Rapporteur during the regional hearings and reinforced in the submissions received strip away that distance. They show torture for what it is: deliberate, targeted cruelty against vulnerable human beings – and far more common than most societies acknowledge or wish to believe.

## B. Patterns and conditions that enable torture

18. Criminal justice and policing policies and practices can either prevent inhuman treatment or create conditions in which such treatment becomes incentivized or tolerated. Across regions, survivors described being arrested arbitrarily – often from poor or marginalized neighbourhoods – and pressured to confess to crimes for which there was no evidence against them. In some contexts, police performance was measured by case clearance rates that were unrealistic or externally imposed, creating incentives for the police to obtain rapid and forced confessions regardless of legality or accuracy. Others spoke about police harassment, with threats of being arrested if they did not pay a bribe. Corruption, weak rule of law and institutionalized cultures of power were identified as major obstacles to torture-free societies.<sup>19</sup> Survivors explained that they had been “convenient targets” in systems where resolving cases – or exercising power – took priority over respecting rights. The risk was deemed greater in societies in which the police saw themselves as an extension of the arm of the State rather than as belonging to – and ultimately accountable to – the communities they serve and are mandated to protect.

19. Survivors identified public protests as risk sites for arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment, and the excessive and indiscriminate use of force. They described the use of highly injurious crowd-control weapons, including multishot rubber-bullet launchers, deployed in ways that were disproportionate and contrary to international guidelines.<sup>20</sup> Many reported that they had simply been in the vicinity of a protest or on their way to work when they had been shot, beaten or detained.

20. Survivors consistently identified systemic discrimination as a central factor that shaped their experiences of torture and ill-treatment. They described being targeted because of their gender, ethnicity, social status, political opinion, sexual orientation, gender identity or other characteristic that marked them as being outside the dominant social groups. In most cases, the torture itself was discriminatory in nature; however, some survivors emphasized that the torture often occurred within a broader context of lifelong exclusion, marginalization and abuse that could not be separated from the specific act of torture or other prohibited treatment or punishment. For many, torture represented one point along a continuum of discrimination and abuse experienced at the hands of the authorities and society.

21. Survivors recounted being dehumanized because of who they were. Women and girls described circumstances in which State authorities had failed to protect them from rape or sexual harassment by private actors and had denied them access to essential reproductive health services, including abortion, when needed. Survivors of conflict-related sexual torture reported that entire ethnic communities had been targeted, with sexual violence being used systematically to terrorize, displace or destroy them. Several noted that renewed hate speech directed at their communities had generated widespread fear and led to retraumatization, as it signalled the potential for repeated violations.

22. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons described being targeted because of their identity. They recounted being abused in police stations and subjected to

<sup>19</sup> For more information on the relationship between corruption and torture, see [A/HRC/40/59](#).

<sup>20</sup> For more information on weapons, equipment and devices used by law enforcement and other public authorities that are capable of inflicting torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, see [A/78/324](#).

coercive and abusive “conversion” practices that caused serious psychological and physical injuries. Their testimonies underlined the heightened vulnerability of individuals who already face stigma and discrimination in daily life.

23. Survivors described how torture was frequently used to control populations, suppress dissent and advance political or military objectives. Former detainees described being beaten as a form of “entertainment” by intoxicated public officers, reflecting deep-seated prejudices and the devaluation of certain social groups. They shared accounts of communities being attacked by armed groups, with women and children being raped, abducted and forced into slavery or conscripted as child soldiers – acts that had been carried out to terrorize or dismantle entire communities. Others recounted being disappeared or losing family members in the context of political repression or power struggles. In many instances, the torture experience started with an enforced disappearance and often involved threats of being killed. In too many cases, torture results in death.

24. Survivors explained that such violence was often deliberately committed in public, made highly visible and marked by extreme brutality: “They wanted to make an example out of you. They wanted society to see it, that they fractured your skull, that they broke your nose.” The purpose in such cases was not only to inflict suffering on the individual victim but also to send a broader warning to the surrounding population: “They tortured one to scare a thousand [people].”

25. Despite the public nature of such abuses, survivors frequently had to continue living in the same communities where the violations had occurred, often living with their suffering in silence and without acknowledgement. Their presence became an unspoken reminder of the consequences of disobedience or dissent. Many described decades of enduring the psychological burden of knowing that the perpetrators remained in positions of authority or influence.

26. The ongoing impact of such a dynamic was captured by a survivor from the Gambia: “We have been tortured mentally. What hurts most is that we are meeting these people every day; they are driving luxurious cars and living a luxurious life, while the victims are suffering.” Such testimonies illustrate how torture, when used to enforce political control or wage conflict between communities, generates long-term fear, mistrust and deep divisions.

27. Survivors also described situations in which torture was carried out for private gain or in environments marked by widespread lawlessness. Several reported that family members had been killed in local political power struggles or that they themselves had been targeted as a means of settling personal disputes between families or community actors. Others recounted being tortured for financial motives, including as part of attempts to extort bribes, seize property or force compliance with illegal demands.

28. According to survivors, those types of violations often occurred in contexts where public authority had broken down or was weak, particularly following elections marked by instability or contestation. In such environments, individuals with formal or informal power operated with little oversight or accountability, creating conditions in which personal interests could be pursued through violence, while the authorities looked the other way.

29. The Special Rapporteur received testimony from peasants and Indigenous individuals who had experienced violent raids and forced evictions carried out on the basis of judicial orders issued in response to complaints by businesses. Survivors described how accusations of “trespassing” had been used to justify the dispossession of their land and the dislocation of their communities, with torture and ill-treatment being used to intimidate, punish or remove those who resisted. Such accounts highlight the ways in which torture may be used to advance private or commercial interests in contexts where legal protections are weak or selectively applied.

30. Survivors from every region described how asylum and migration routes were marked by violence and how torture and ill-treatment could occur at multiple points along a person’s journey. Many who had already fled persecution also faced beatings and humiliation by smugglers en route or by officials at border crossings. Others recounted being turned back at border points, including collective pushbacks carried out without screening, safeguards or medical assistance. Regarding transit zones and immigration detention centres, survivors

spoke of cramped and degrading conditions, prolonged isolation and the denial of food, water and healthcare. Several recounted how sexual violence, extortion and threats of deportation had been used to control or punish them.

31. The Special Rapporteur heard accounts of the use of torture and ill-treatment during deportations or removal flights, with excessive force, restraints and deliberate humiliation being used to subdue individuals who resisted being returned. Survivors reported being beaten or suffocated by escort officers and being sedated without their consent. In many cases, the return itself exposed the individual to a foreseeable risk of renewed torture, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits transfer to any country where there are substantial grounds to believe that a person would face such risk.

### C. Impacts on survivors, families and communities

32. Torture leaves survivors with deep, long-lasting trauma, affecting them physically, psychologically and emotionally. Many live with chronic pain, neurological injuries, restricted mobility and other long-term health problems that persist for years or even decades. The psychological consequences are equally serious. Survivors frequently develop post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and complex trauma responses that compromise their ability to trust others, sustain relationships or manage aspects of daily life. Survivors repeatedly described how torture had shattered their trust not only in the authorities but also in people more broadly, even close family members. They described living with a constant fear of being deceived, targeted or disbelieved. Many survivors described having trusted the State before they had been tortured; some expressed genuine shock at what had happened to them, believing that torture was something that happened only to others.

33. In dialogues with survivors, the Special Rapporteur noted that the effects of torture are rarely confined to the individual. The consequences of torture reverberate across every dimension of life, shaping family dynamics, undermining community cohesion and weakening the broader social fabric. Its impact is personal, relational, societal and economic, thus revealing the expansive nature of such a violation.

34. Torture leaves many survivors with permanent disabilities that affect every aspect of their lives. Survivors described having chronic pain, nerve damage, paralysis and injuries that never healed, noting that the physical pain could not be separated from the psychological impact. Those who were rebuilding their lives in conflict-affected or resource-poor regions said that the impact of their disabilities had been compounded by inaccessible environments. As one survivor with a severe physical disability put it: “The torture took my body; the environment took my autonomy.” Survivors who lost their eyesight during protest-related acts of torture spoke of losing their livelihoods, being “publicly marked” persons and being treated as criminals rather than victims. Several described feelings of deep isolation and moments when the future felt unbearable.

35. Social isolation emerged as one of the most pervasive and damaging consequences of torture. Survivors across regions told the Special Rapporteur that after their ordeals they had withdrawn from others, living with their pain in silence for years or decades. Many said that they had isolated themselves out of fear that the perpetrators would return, out of shame or stigma, or because those closest to them had been involved in the abuse or their neighbours had been complicit in it. Others spoke of feeling detached from their own emotions, as though a part of themselves had been shut down.

36. For those who had been forced into exile or internally displaced, the separation was even more of a wrench. They described the heartbreak of leaving family behind and rebuilding their lives in unfamiliar countries or regions, while fearing for the safety of the loved ones they had left behind. Some had been excluded from justice or reparation measures owing to limited outreach to those living in exile. As one survivor from the Syrian Arab Republic said: “Now I live alone, not behind bars, but in a prison of exile and pain.”

37. Some of the most painful accounts came from those who had spent years in detention, missing births, deaths and other life events that could never be recovered. Their absences,

combined with the emotional and practical burdens placed on families, illustrate how torture reverberates through entire households long after the physical acts have ended.

38. The impact of torture extends far beyond the individual, reshaping entire families and even communities. While torture often devastates survivors' socioeconomic lives, it also plunges entire families into long-term hardship. Many survivors said that they could no longer perform the work on which they once relied because of chronic pain, permanent disability or trauma that had made concentration and routine impossible. Others had returned home to find their jobs gone, their businesses closed and their futures erased.

39. For some, the economic loss had been a deliberate part of the abuse. Survivors recounted being tortured by corrupt officials seeking bribes or trying to seize their property, land or businesses. Those who had been tortured as children or adolescents spoke of having lost years of schooling to imprisonment or trauma, leaving them unable to return to education and shutting off possible career paths before they had even begun. There were also some inspiring stories, showing what could happen when the right interventions were made. In one case, a survivor of torture and sexual enslavement had been granted a government scholarship to pursue her studies. She said that she wanted to be known not always as a survivor but now as a human rights advocate.

40. Families described facing impossible financial choices. When a breadwinner was tortured into confessing to crimes that they had not committed, their relatives had drained their own savings, sold their homes or taken on debt to help them to fight the wrongful charges – often within justice systems that were stacked against them. Survivors who had been forced into exile spoke of arriving in new countries with nothing: no property, no networks, no resources to be able to start again. In their testimonies, survivors described living in situations of economic difficulty – struggling to afford medical care, therapy or even basic necessities – compounding their trauma.

41. Survivors and relatives described how everyday life had changed: children of torture survivors grew up with parents who were distant, hyperalert or haunted by nightmares; spouses became full-time caregivers, managing the financial strain and bearing the emotional weight of supporting someone affected by torture or locked in detention. Families spoke of witnessing suffering that they could neither stop nor fully understand. They described how communication broke down and trust was eroded when survivors could not talk about what they had endured or when relatives misinterpreted trauma-related behaviours.

42. Survivors described how the impact of torture extended far beyond their own bodies, affecting their place in their communities and the way that society saw them. Many spoke of their testimonies being met with disbelief or silence, making them feel that their pain was invisible and that their accounts were unworthy of recognition. The lack of acknowledgement left deep emotional wounds, reinforcing the sense that what had happened to them could happen again without consequence.

43. Authorities often labelled survivors as criminals or terrorists, and communities frequently absorbed those narratives. A Chilean survivor who had been subjected to forced abortion was told: "It was better this way; one less terrorist to worry about." The stigma compounded the isolation. Those with visible injuries said that they felt "marked" every time they walked through public spaces. For some, the trauma was collective, woven into the destruction of a whole people. Even where States later admitted wrongdoing, survivors said that the initial labels and the social exclusion had endured and that much more had to be done to combat that narrative.

#### **D. What justice means for survivors**

44. For survivors, justice does not begin or end in a courtroom. For many, formal justice systems have been the setting for silence, dismissal or further humiliation rather than meaningful redress. They described justice first and foremost as recognition: recognition of their pain, of the truth of what was done to them and of their right to be treated as human beings. In contexts where criminal accountability was inaccessible or unsafe, survivors

explained that publicly sharing their experiences, being believed and participating in anti-torture advocacy created a form of self-driven justice that helped to restore their dignity.

45. Survivors repeatedly described justice systems as extensions of the suffering that they had endured. Many explained that filing a complaint required having to return to the very institutions where the torture had occurred, confronting the same police or military units that had been involved or recounting their experiences to officials who were dismissive, mocking or openly hostile. Others said that they had faced procedural obstacles that felt intentionally obstructive: repeated demands for new documents, files that disappeared or hearings being delayed for years. In several countries, survivors reported that progress in their cases depended on paying bribes to police, prosecutors or judges. Survivors across all regions reported facing threats, harassment or reprisals after filing complaints or testifying publicly.

46. Testifying or seeking justice often reopens wounds. Many survivors described the emotional cost of recounting their torture to untrained officials. Women who had survived sexual torture said that having to repeat details in front of male officers or to courtrooms full of strangers felt like being violated again. Survivors with disabilities, women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons face further obstacles, ranging from inaccessible courtrooms to discriminatory remarks and outright disbelief.<sup>21</sup>

47. For some survivors, the legal system became a continuation of their torture. They spoke of facing fabricated charges that kept them tied to the court system for years, recurring summonses that disrupted their lives and legal costs that pushed their families into poverty. Survivors described how those tactics – misuse of laws, prolonged proceedings and weaponized bureaucracy – created a new cycle of psychological and economic suffering.

48. In almost every testimony, survivors spoke of impunity. The police officers who tortured them still wear their uniforms and get promotions; the judges who dismissed their cases continue their work without consequence; the perpetrators live comfortably, while the victims struggle to cope with daily tasks.

49. Some survivors wanted justice and reparation to be part of the same process; other survivors called for parallel but connected approaches, recognizing that while both justice and reparation contribute to their recovery they may advance on different timelines.

50. When national systems fail, survivors often turn in hope to regional and international mechanisms; however, many described those processes as slow and opaque and said that the decisions are rarely implemented. On the other hand, many acknowledged that international advocacy had saved lives or drawn critical attention to abuses when Governments had turned away. Survivors from Burundi and Ecuador, for example, expressed gratitude that international and regional bodies had listened to them and received their cases, yet voiced deep frustration that proceedings were sluggish and decisions remained unimplemented. Waiting years without updates was described as retraumatizing and reminiscent of the powerlessness they had felt during their torture. “Seven years have passed ... our suffering was filed away”, said one Burundian survivor. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that, as States bear the primary responsibility for justice and accountability for torture, much more must be done by them to develop prompt, fair and impartial proceedings.<sup>22</sup>

51. The Special Rapporteur also received information about positive developments, demonstrating that meaningful justice is possible. Survivors cited the trial of the former President of Chad, Hissène Habré, by the Extraordinary African Chambers in Senegal, which found him guilty of a range of atrocity crimes, as proof that persistence can lead to accountability.<sup>23</sup> Some survivors in Colombia welcomed the first restorative sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which included orders to preserve memory and search for the

<sup>21</sup> For more on appropriate responses to sexual torture, see [A/79/181](#), [A/HRC/31/57](#) and [A/HRC/31/57/Corr.1](#).

<sup>22</sup> See [A/HRC/52/30](#).

<sup>23</sup> Extraordinary African Chambers in Senegal, *Prosecutor v. Hissène Habré*, Judgment, 30 May 2016. Available at <http://www.chambresafricaines.org/pdf/Prononc%C3%A9%C3%A9sum%C3%A9du%20Jugement%20HH%2020160528%20%5B620786%5D.pdf>.

disappeared, describing that development as “a light in a dark field”.<sup>24</sup> An Economic Community of West African States court was praised for having recognized that pain and suffering experienced by torture survivors forced into exile amounted to torture and ill-treatment as a continuing violation.<sup>25</sup> Much hope was expressed regarding the pending case concerning *Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic)* that was before the International Court of Justice.<sup>26</sup>

52. Promising practices of the International Criminal Court were identified. In the *Al Hassan* case,<sup>27</sup> over 2,000 survivors had been authorized to participate – an unprecedented level of collective engagement of victims. Survivors highlighted the importance of accessible outreach, such as the International Criminal Court workshops held in Timbuktu, Mali, that had helped them to understand the procedures and their rights.

#### **E. The limits of existing reparations and what survivors need**

53. Survivors were clear that all forms of reparations must be designed, implemented and monitored with their full participation, address the full scope of wrongdoing and be supported by stable, long-term funding.

54. Despite those clear needs, survivors across regions described existing reparations programmes as fragmented, inaccessible or inadequate. Compensation, recognition and public acknowledgement were repeatedly identified as being central parts of reparation. When financial compensation was not accompanied by measures of non-repetition, survivors saw the payment as insincere or as a form of “hush money”. Survivors in Colombia rejected public apologies that were not accompanied by institutional reform, while Yazidi survivors stressed that recognition of genocide was important only when it was combined with measures for healing and prevention of recurrence.

55. Beyond individual measures, survivors emphasized the need for collective forms of reparation in cases where torture had devastated communities. They called for the rebuilding of schools, health posts and cultural spaces, as well as livelihood support, such as seed capital or tools, to restore traditional economic practices and community life.

56. Survivors stressed that reparations must be practical, sustained and delivered in ways that reflect their realities. Compensation, when available, must cover basic medical or psychological needs. Survivors in the Gambia emphasized the need for regular rather than one-off payments to meet household needs and that women must receive such support directly. Syrian survivors stated that reparations would have greater legitimacy if they were financed from the seized assets of perpetrators and those who enabled their crimes. “These assets belong to us”, they said.

57. The \$325 million in compensation awarded by the International Court of Justice in the case concerning armed atrocities committed by Uganda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo stands as a notable example.<sup>28</sup> However, survivors warned that the absence of dedicated reparation funds threatens to undermine progress, illustrating the persistent gap between legal recognition and practical implementation. The Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which establishes an inventory of damage in Ukraine, including from torture and inhuman treatment,<sup>29</sup> and the Council of

<sup>24</sup> For information on the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, see <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sgsm22808.doc.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Community Court of Justice, *Federation of African Journalists and others v. the Gambia*, Judgment No. ECW/CCJ/JUD/04/18, 13 February 2018. Available at <https://ghalii.org/akn/aa-au/judgment/ecowasccj/2018/4/eng@2018-02-13>.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/188>.

<sup>27</sup> *The Prosecutor v. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud*. Court records available at <https://www.icc-cpi.int/mali/al-hassan>.

<sup>28</sup> *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda), Reparations*, Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2022, p. 13. Available at <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/116>.

<sup>29</sup> See <https://www.r4u.coe.int/en/>.

Europe draft convention establishing an international claims commission for Ukraine<sup>30</sup> were considered important steps towards justice and compensation and provided hope to Ukrainian victims of torture during the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation.

58. The use of formal reparations has both potential and limits. On the one hand, a public acknowledgement ordered by a court can transform the standing of a survivor in their community; on the other, survivors face practical barriers, such as poverty or a lack of support to pursue criminal proceedings. Even where State-led reparation programmes were established, survivors said that the funding was often subsequently reduced and that, in some instances, victims were forced to litigate in order to enforce reparation orders.

#### **F. Civil society organizations as a lifeline**

59. Survivors across all regions described civil society organizations and networks as a lifeline when State institutions had failed them. They spoke with deep gratitude about organizations that provided legal aid, psychological care and shelter or simply believed their stories. Many said that they had survived – and begun to rebuild their lives – not because of State support but because of community networks and civil society groups. Survivors also described global networks and initiatives providing reparation programmes and support during court proceedings as essential to helping them in overcoming trauma and moving forward.

60. In Kenya and Mali, survivors explained how joining survivor networks had helped them to recover, rebuild their livelihoods and regain a sense of belonging. “I’m a victim, but today I am also strong”, said one survivor from Mali, crediting civil society support for her ability to lead others. In Latin America, survivors’ collectives have turned testimony into education through art, archives and memorial initiatives that serve as both social reparation and community memory.

61. Activism itself was described as a form of survival. Helping others enables survivors to reclaim agency and resist being defined only by what has been done to them. As a child survivor from the Philippines explained it: “I studied psychology to give children the help I never got.” Through networks, survivors can build their own forms of justice when formal systems have failed to protect them. Survivors acknowledged that not everyone was able or wished to engage in collective action, and that they respected the different ways in which victims and survivors approached their experiences and recovery.

### **V. Conclusions and recommendations**

62. The hearings with survivors, coupled with the important survivor and survivor-led submissions received in relation to the present report, offer personal insights into the lives of those who have endured torture and other ill-treatment – their struggles, triumphs, goals and dreams, their determination to rebuild and their unwavering hope for a future in which others are spared what they have suffered. The encounters also demonstrated that when survivors are placed at the centre of discussions, when they are supported to speak freely and are genuinely listened to, they become not only witnesses to injustice but also architects of change. Their recommendations – as reflected in the Charter (see annex) – are, unequivocally, the Special Rapporteur’s recommendations. They reflect a shared vision for justice, reparations and a global blueprint for ending torture and ill-treatment in all their forms.

63. It is now the responsibility of States and all relevant actors to integrate the insights into every legislative, administrative, judicial and policy measure taken to prevent and respond to torture and ill-treatment. The survivors who contributed to the present report have shown remarkable courage in transforming their pain into

<sup>30</sup> See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/draft-convention-establishing-an-international-claims-commission-for-ukraine>.

purpose; the least that the international community could do is to act with equal courage to ensure that their Charter leads to real and lasting change.

64. Drawing on the views and perspectives of victims and survivors of torture and other ill-treatment, the Special Rapporteur recommends that States:

- (a) Adopt the Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (see annex) as a framework for action, integrating its demands into laws, policies and practices;
- (b) Design, implement and monitor torture prevention, justice and reparations programmes in genuine partnership with victims and survivors;
- (c) Recognize the diversity of survivors – who include women, children, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, refugees and migrants and individuals from minority and marginalized communities – and ensure that their experiences are used to shape prevention and support initiatives;
- (d) Support the establishment, funding and long-term sustainability of survivor-led networks and community organizations as essential partners in prevention, justice and reparations, and monitoring;
- (e) Implement measures to counter the stigma faced by victims and survivors, including through community education, awareness-raising campaigns and by formally recognizing the torture and related ill-treatment committed;
- (f) Demonstrate unequivocal political commitment to ending torture by criminalizing, investigating and prosecuting torture, issuing clear, public statements of zero tolerance for torture to all national institutions and instituting reforms that match that commitment;
- (g) Promote accurate public understanding of torture and ill-treatment, using media partnerships, education campaigns and school curricula to reinforce the fact that torture is illegal, harmful and can never be justified;
- (h) Conduct comprehensive reviews of the law enforcement, prison, military, social, health and criminal justice sectors to identify laws, policies and practices that create risks or incentives for torture, and revise them accordingly;
- (i) Combat the discrimination that gives rise to torture and ill-treatment by implementing comprehensive measures to address discriminatory attitudes within law enforcement and public administration as an integral element of torture prevention;
- (j) Promote law enforcement models that emphasize service, community partnership and accountability to replace cultures of impunity and insularity within law enforcement;
- (k) Ensure transparent, inclusive recruitment processes for the public service that reflect the diversity of the communities served, including with regard to gender and ethnic representation;
- (l) Expand the use of practical, low-cost alternatives to coercive practices so as to reduce reliance on force, including by adopting dynamic security techniques,<sup>31</sup> reviewing the use of case clearance targets and confessional evidence, and embracing rapport-based interviewing;<sup>32</sup>
- (m) Review and strictly regulate the type of equipment<sup>33</sup> issued to law enforcement and ensure clear, detailed guidance and training on the use of force in all contexts, including in crowd control operations;

<sup>31</sup> See A/HRC/55/52.

<sup>32</sup> See Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, May 2021. Available at <https://www.apt.ch/our-priorities/dignity-and-fairness-criminal-justice-system/principles-effective-interviewing>.

<sup>33</sup> See A/78/324.

(n) Carry out necessary reform of prisons and other places where people are deprived of their liberty to prevent torture and inhumane conditions, including by reducing overcrowding, overincarceration, violence and abuse and improving infrastructure, oversight and opportunities for social rehabilitation and reintegration;<sup>34</sup>

(o) Strengthen oversight by national preventive mechanisms and similar monitoring bodies by ensuring their political and financial independence and providing them with a statutory basis to inspect places of detention unannounced and monitor compliance with safeguards;

(p) Ensure trauma-informed, age- and gender-appropriate and victim- and survivor-centred investigations and witness protection, and establish protocols addressing safety, retaliation and revictimization;

(q) Improve transparency, timeliness and survivor communication in all justice and reparation processes to avoid the retraumatization caused by delays, opacity and inaction;

(r) Develop individual and collective forms of reparation in consultation with victims and survivors, especially where entire communities have been affected;

(s) Support survivors' rehabilitation, autonomy and independent living, including by ensuring accessible infrastructure, mobility support, reasonable accommodation and community-based services;

(t) Adopt special measures for victims and survivors of sexual torture to ensure their safety, rehabilitation and access to justice and reparation;<sup>35</sup>

(u) Recognize that economic repair is indispensable to physical and psychological well-being by providing victims and survivors with legal aid, education and vocational training, livelihood support and access to employment, including through measures tailored to address lost years of schooling or long-term disability, and restitution or compensation for lost property, land, businesses and earnings;

(v) Sustainably fund reparation programmes so that they are not symbolic or one-off initiatives, and tailor such programmes to survivors' priorities;

(w) Consider the use of perpetrators' assets, where possible, for reparations, in accordance with human rights standards, to enhance survivors' sense of justice;

(x) Capacitate domestic courts and institutions to deliver justice and ensure the independence, impartiality, promptness, fairness and effectiveness of proceedings and outcomes;<sup>36</sup>

(y) Strengthen cooperation with the United Nations and with international and regional courts, tribunals and bodies, ensuring that their recommendations and judgments are implemented expeditiously and that survivors are kept informed of the measures taken;

(z) Implement the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur in her reports.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See A/HRC/55/52.

<sup>35</sup> See A/79/181.

<sup>36</sup> A/HRC/52/30.

<sup>37</sup> Those reports include A/77/502, A/78/324, A/HRC/55/52, A/79/181 and A/HRC/58/55.

## Annex

### **Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

We, the victims and survivors of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,

We are mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, grandparents, friends and members of our communities,

We come from different regions and countries, from many races, nationalities, ethnicities, faiths and beliefs. We hold different political opinions and speak many languages. We represent every walk of life – across social classes, generations, sexes and genders, abilities and disabilities, and experiences – carrying our own strengths and vulnerabilities,

We are tired of being humiliated and stigmatized, beaten and left with visible and invisible wounds, sexually violated and psychologically tormented because of who we are or what we represent,

We have lost pregnancies, fertility and physical function. We have been left with temporary and permanent disabilities and chronic illnesses. We have been unlawfully detained, disappeared, and killed,

Our families, too, have suffered, waiting without answers, fighting for our lives and our rights and carrying the burden of our pain,

We are outraged that we have been subjected by those in power to the cruellest forms of mistreatment and crimes – in places of detention, during war and unrest, under authoritarian and oppressive regimes, through so-called wars on terror or drugs, in crowd control operations, while seeking safety as refugees or migrants, in situations of internal displacement and forced exile, and even in our homes, schools and workplaces,

Our experiences are not isolated. Many of us have endured a lifetime of harassment, discrimination and oppression, before and after the acts that can be legally classified as torture,

We have also suffered other grave violations of our human rights and the laws of armed conflict, including threats to our lives, enforced disappearances, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, unfair trials, hostage-taking, persecution and genocide,

Our life paths have been shattered. We have lost years to pain and recovery, missed education and other opportunities and may never fully reclaim the lives we had imagined for ourselves,

We have endured physical, psychological, sexual and reproductive torture – the ultimate abuse of power – fracturing our ability to trust not only the authorities but also others around us,

The long road we have walked for justice, truth, reparation and non-repetition has too often led to silence and disappointment,

Too many of us have been branded as criminals or terrorists by those sworn to protect us. We have been threatened into silence; when we have dared to speak, we have faced renewed persecution against us and our families,

Our experiences will mark us for the rest of our lives; and yet we are still here, still standing, still fighting for justice, for reparation and for a world where no one else will have to endure what we have suffered. We demand accountability for perpetrators, and we dream of societies grounded in dignity, law and democracy,

No one understands the suffering from torture better than we do. We insist that this knowledge be respected by all involved in the global struggle to eradicate all forms of torture and ill-treatment,

Joined by our shared humanity and experiences, we are demanding the realization of our human rights and the restoration of our dignity and our futures through the following actions:

## **Article 1**

### **Right to live free from torture and ill-treatment**

1. We have the right to live free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and from all related human rights and humanitarian law violations, including threats to our lives, extrajudicial and unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary deprivations of liberty, unfair trials, hostage-taking, persecution, oppression, genocide, apartheid and systemic discrimination that destroys families and communities.
2. States must end these crimes in law and practice and take concrete action so that they never happen again.

## **Article 2**

### **Right to truth and accountability**

1. States must publicly acknowledge the truth about what has been done to us and our loved ones. They must bear responsibility for the commission of torture and related abuses, disclose the full facts about these crimes and ensure that those responsible, including those who ordered or enabled those acts to be carried out, are brought to justice.
2. Many of us are victims and survivors of torture perpetrated by non-State actors, such as armed groups, terrorists, organized criminal gangs and other violent individuals and entities. They, too, must be held accountable for the atrocities committed against us in fair proceedings before independent courts of law.

## **Article 3**

### **Right to participate and to lead**

1. We have the right to fully participate – as stakeholders and leaders – in all efforts to address torture and other ill-treatment.
2. We assert this right for every actor involved in the fight against torture and other ill-treatment, including States,<sup>38</sup> national human rights institutions, national preventive mechanisms, the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, bodies and mechanisms, and non-governmental and civil society actors.
3. This entails:
  - (a) Engaging with victims and survivors as equal partners and stakeholders at every stage in the design, implementation and monitoring of anti-torture and human rights laws and policies, strategies, campaigns and advocacy, rehabilitation programmes and training;
  - (b) Formalizing the role and participation of victims and survivors in national efforts to prevent and respond to torture and other ill-treatment;
  - (c) Ensuring that survivor participation is inclusive so that women, children, minority groups, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities have the space to be heard and can shape decisions that affect them;
  - (d) Providing direct funding to survivor-led networks and community organizations so that they have the resources to participate effectively;
  - (e) Recognizing that victims and survivors have unique knowledge of torture and other ill-treatment that cannot be obtained through formal education and which should be

<sup>38</sup> This covers national legislative, executive and judicial entities.

considered when identifying and recruiting experts, trainers, researchers and other persons to act in relevant roles and take up relevant employment.

## Article 4

### Right to a victim- and survivor-centred approach in all actions

1. We have the right to be treated with dignity and to have our humanity and autonomy respected in all interactions with State and other relevant bodies and actors, which requires them to adopt a truly victim- and survivor-centred approach in all their actions.
2. This means:
  - (a) Guaranteeing safe, confidential and accessible spaces where victims and survivors can share their testimonies, experiences and expectations for justice, reparation and healing;
  - (b) Providing clear, timely and ongoing information about the progress and outcomes of our cases and about reparation processes, as well as about the implementation of judgments and rulings;
  - (c) Disseminating the information available about medical, psychosocial and legal services that can support us and our families;
  - (d) Ensuring that we can express our views on the forms of reparation and redress that are most meaningful to us;
  - (e) Recognizing that torture is often linked to broader systems of oppression, including poverty, gender-based violence, racism, casteism and other forms of discrimination, and addressing them;
  - (f) Strengthening follow-up and coordination by the authorities with victims and survivors on anti-torture and human rights strategies and plans of action, on truth, reconciliation and reparation mechanisms and on the implementation of judgments and decisions of national, regional and international courts and tribunals.

## Article 5

### Right to justice

1. We have the right to equal, accessible and effective access to justice and to all available remedies – whether judicial, administrative or other – without discrimination of any kind. States must:
  - (a) Define and prosecute torture as a crime not subject to any statutes of limitation, immunities, amnesties or the defences of superior orders or public authority;
  - (b) Safeguard our right to complain and guarantee our privacy, health, safety and dignity while doing so, protecting survivors, our families and witnesses from retaliation, intimidation and revictimization;
  - (c) Investigate all acts of torture and other ill-treatment – and any suspicious deaths at the hands of public authorities – promptly, impartially, independently and thoroughly;<sup>39</sup>
  - (d) Guarantee the independence of investigative, forensic and judicial institutions and officials;
  - (e) Provide free and qualified legal advice and representation so that we can pursue justice without plunging ourselves or our families into further economic hardship;

<sup>39</sup> See A/HRC/52/30; see also the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), as revised, and the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death.

(f) Ensure that we are interviewed safely, respectfully, confidentially and by qualified experts trained in trauma-informed and gender- and age-sensitive methods that allow time and space for us to tell our stories in our own words, without coercion, pressure or retraumatization;<sup>40</sup>

(g) Allow us, wherever possible, to choose the sex/gender of the interviewer and ensure that interpreters are trained in cultural and linguistic sensitivities;

(h) Eliminate obstacles that prevent victims and survivors of sexual or gender-based torture from reporting or seeking justice;<sup>41</sup>

(i) Impose on perpetrators penalties that reflect the gravity of the crime;

(j) Implement, without delay, all judgments and decisions of national, regional and international courts and tribunals and human rights bodies.

2. Ethical, and human rights-based victim- and survivor-centred investigations not only uphold justice, they also help to restore our dignity and support our recovery.

## Article 6

### Right to reparation and rehabilitation

1. We and our families have the right to full and effective reparation for the damage we have suffered, in accordance with the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.<sup>42</sup>

2. To be full and effective, measures must:

(a) Identify and address the specific impacts that we, our families and communities have suffered as a consequence of torture and/or other ill-treatment;

(b) Be implemented as a comprehensive response that addresses the individual and collective impacts identified using the appropriate combination of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantee of non-repetition;

(c) Include, at a minimum, elements of acknowledgement of wrongdoing and measures to prevent similar violations from happening in the future. Without these elements, reparations are not considered sincere;

(d) Remove barriers to reparation and rehabilitation, including bureaucratic hurdles, statutes of limitation or funding shortfalls;

(e) Guarantee prompt access to comprehensive medical care for all victims and survivors, covering physical, mental, gynaecological and reproductive care;

(f) Make available rehabilitation services to victims and survivors and their families, ensuring that they are gender- and age-sensitive, trauma-informed, confidential and free from stigma and that they address intersecting forms of discrimination;

(g) Ensure that gaining access to rehabilitation is not conditional on the filing of a criminal complaint or the conviction of a perpetrator;

(h) Address the socioeconomic impacts of torture and other ill-treatment through initiatives such as livelihood and educational support, access to meaningful employment without stigma, restoration of property and full inclusion of persons with disabilities in social and economic life;

<sup>40</sup> See Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information-Gathering.

<sup>41</sup> See A/79/181. See also the Special Rapporteur's "Factsheet: sexual torture", available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/sexual-torture-fact-sheet-july-2025-fin.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> General Assembly resolution 60/147, annex. See also the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power, Assembly resolution 40/34, annex.

(i) Support the creation of survivor networks where survivors can meet to break the isolation, create new, meaningful connections and communities and work together to claim their rights and support other survivors;

(j) Recognize that while non-State entities may deliver reparation and rehabilitation programmes, the State is responsible for ensuring that these programmes are available, accessible and fully funded;

(k) Ensure that, when implementing judgments and decisions of courts, tribunals and human rights bodies, compensation payments and other outcomes are made promptly.

3. Reparation must restore what torture tried to erase: our dignity, our agency and our right to live without fear.

## Article 7

### Right to international solidarity and cooperation

1. We have the right to live in a world free from torture.

2. To achieve this, States must:

(a) Ratify and effectively implement all international and regional human rights and humanitarian law treaties that prohibit torture and related ill-treatment;

(b) Ensure the incorporation and application of international guidelines and best practices on the rights of victims and remedies and on the prevention and eradication of torture and related ill-treatment;

(c) Collaborate actively and in good faith with the United Nations, including the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and the Special Fund established by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and regional courts and mechanisms, and ensure that they are adequately resourced;

(d) Ensure that United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and regional observers, including the Special Rapporteur, are permitted to visit our countries and monitor places where people are deprived of their liberty, listen directly to us and our communities and reflect our realities in their reports and recommendations.

3. A single act of torture against one of us is an attack on the humanity of us all.

### Final declaration: our resolve and commitment

We, the victims and survivors of torture and other inhumane acts, speak with one voice,

Our pain has been silenced, denied and forgotten too many times, but through the present Charter we reclaim our truth and our place in the world,

We stand together to demand justice, recognition and reparation, not as an act of charity, but as our right. We call upon States, institutions and all people of conscience to join us in ending torture in every form, everywhere,

We will continue to tell our stories, to support one another and to transform our suffering into strength. We will honour those who did not survive by ensuring that no one else endures what we have suffered,

Our voices will not be taken from us again.