

## **Turkey: UN expert says deeply concerned by rise in torture allegations**

GENEVA (27 February 2018) - The UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, expressed serious concerns about the rising allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in Turkish police custody since the end of his official visit to the country in December 2016.

Melzer said he was alarmed by allegations that large numbers of individuals suspected of links to the Gülenist Movement or the armed Kurdistan Workers' Party were exposed to brutal interrogation techniques aimed at extracting forced confessions or coercing detainees to incriminate others.

Reported abuse included severe beatings, electrical shocks, exposure to icy water, sleep deprivation, threats, insults and sexual assault.

The Special Rapporteur said no serious measures appeared to have been taken by the authorities to investigate these allegations or to hold perpetrators accountable.

Instead, complaints asserting torture were allegedly dismissed by the prosecutor citing a 'state of emergency decree (Article 9 of Decree no. 667)' which reportedly exempts public officials from criminal responsibility for acts undertaken in the context of the state of emergency.

"The human right to be free from torture and other ill-treatment is absolute and non-derogable, and continues to apply in all situations of political instability or any other public emergency," the Special Rapporteur said. No circumstances, however exceptional and well argued, can ever justify torture or any form of impunity for such abuse.

"Torture is not only a notoriously ineffective interrogation method, but it constitutes the most fundamental assault on human dignity and is invariably listed among the most serious international crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity."

Melzer said by inviting his mandate to visit the country in December 2016, soon after an attempted coup, the Government had demonstrated its commitment to its official "zero tolerance" policy on torture.

"However, the authorities' failure to publicly condemn torture and ill-treatment, and to enforce the universal prohibition of such abuse in daily practice seems to have fostered a climate of impunity, complacency and acquiescence which gravely undermines that prohibition and, ultimately, the rule of law," he said.

The Special Rapporteur also said he remained keen to engage in a “direct and constructive dialogue” with the Turkish authorities to achieve full implementation of the prohibition on torture and ill-treatment.

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**Mr. Nils Melzer** (Switzerland) was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council as the [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#) in November 2016. Mr. Melzer has previously worked for the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and is currently the Human Rights Chair of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, and Professor of International Law at the University of Glasgow.

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