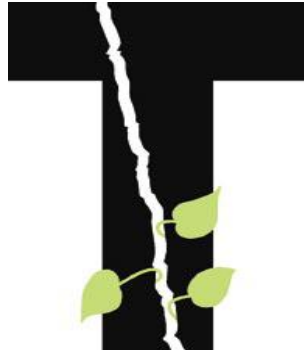




UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



Joint Press Statement on the Commemoration of the UN Day In Support of Torture Survivors:

Theme: Implement the Anti-Torture Law Now and
Compensate Torture Survivors

Monday 24th June 2013

Hotel African, Kampala

The United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is held annually every 26 June providing an opportunity to speak out against the crime of torture and to remember and support victims and survivors throughout the world.

As we commemorate this year's United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on Wednesday June 26th, the duty of citizens, civil society and most importantly the State in the preservation, promotion, protection and creation of a conducive environment for the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights especially the right to freedom from torture becomes a glaring reality more than ever before.

The right to rehabilitation is the international theme for the 2013 campaign in line with the General Comment on Article 14 of the Convention Against Torture published by the UN Committee Against Torture in 2012, which among other requirements recommends that rehabilitation of torture victims should be holistic including medical, psychological, social, access to justice and redress.

In Uganda, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), members of the Coalition Against Torture (CAT), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Human Rights Center (HRCUG), Uganda and the Article 5 Initiative together with the European Union (EU) have therefore adopted a local theme: ***'Implement Anti-Torture Law Now: Compensate Torture Survivors.'*** The focus is on the implementation of the new Anti-Torture Law and the need to compensate survivors of torture which has also been aligned with the international theme which is calling for holistic rehabilitation of survivors of torture.

Whereas international and domestic law grants all torture victims a right to rehabilitation, in practice, this is not always a reality. As such, 26th June 2013, is yet another great opportunity for human rights defenders to reiterate that victims of torture have a right to rehabilitation. In Uganda, the day (June 26th) provides a great opportunity because of the existence of a new law that criminalizes torture; the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act 2012. It is more than a year since the government of Uganda enacted the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture law which was the brain child of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)-Kampala and members the Coalition Against Torture (CAT) led by the African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV). As we commemorate the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the UHRC, OHCHR and CAT wish to register our

profound appreciation to all arms of government; the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary for enacting this landmark legislation. We also recognize the contribution made by development partners, other CSOs, the media and all concerned citizens.

However, the new Anti-Torture Law and other efforts to stem the vice notwithstanding, recent reports still reveal that cases of torture particularly in the recently released UHRC Annual Report still top other categories of human rights violations. This therefore calls for all actors to use the new anti-torture law more effectively and progressively in order to curb the vice.

Additionally, with an outstanding bill of over 3 billion Uganda shillings in compensation awards, some of which dating 12 or more years back, there is apparent slowness on the part of government in fulfilling the payment of these compensations all of which have been awarded against the state. UHRC and the coalition Against Torture with the other partners strongly note that this state of affairs breeds impunity on the part of perpetrators and further impoverishes the survivors of torture some of whom have had their livelihoods completely disrupted and destroyed, yet it is expected that the compensation awards would contribute to the rehabilitation of the lives of survivors of torture.

As we commemorate the UN International Day in support of Victims of Torture, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, the Coalition Against Torture, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights-Kampala, the Human Rights Center Uganda and other partners make the following recommendations in order for us to have a torture free Uganda:

1. Enhance efforts in implementing the anti-torture law through its widespread dissemination, timely and fair redress, rehabilitation and compensation of survivors;
2. Urge for joint efforts of state and non-state actors to fully commit themselves to the elimination of torture;
3. Strongly urge law enforcement agencies particularly the police to carry out their duties in strict conformity with provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and other regional and international human rights standards signed and ratified by Uganda.
4. Call for the full implementation of the law as laid down in a road map developed with support from the European Union through the Article 5 Initiative project early this year.
5. We call upon government to urgently ratify the Optional Protocol to the UNCAT and adhere to all its provisions as another step towards the stemming of torture from Uganda and comply with all its provisions.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission, OHCHR, members of CAT and other partners have lined up a number of activities starting today to raise awareness about the need to stamp out torture from Uganda. Other activities include presentation of a petition to the Speaker of Parliament tomorrow Tuesday 25th June 2013 at 10:30am calling on government to pay outstanding compensation awards to victims of torture, which will be followed with a public dialogue by key actors to lay out strategies of effectively implementing the new anti-torture law. Commemoration activities will be crowned with a peaceful procession and an exhibition by survivors of torture at Buganda Road Primary School Grounds on Wednesday June 26, 2013.

Finally, we urge government and all other actors to enhance their commitment to the fight to eliminate torture in Uganda and call upon government to protect, fulfill and uphold its duty to promote and protect human rights and human dignity for ALL.

For God and My Country

Dr. Katebalirwe Amooti wa Irumba

Acting Chairperson UHRC

For and On Behalf of the Coalition Against Torture (CAT).

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