



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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Excellency,

I am writing again in my capacity as Rapporteur for Follow-up on Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee against Torture.

The Committee continues to follow closely the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and notes with deep concern the latest findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic that torture remains widespread. According to the Commission of Inquiry's most recent report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/24/46), published in September 2013, and brought to the attention of the Committee, "[t]he Government, including its intelligence agencies, employed systematic torture to interrogate, intimidate and punish its perceived opponents. Torture was used in detention centres, security branches, prisons and hospitals". Moreover, "[m]any of the victims interviewed carried visible scars consistent with their accounts and exhibited symptoms of psychological trauma" (see, paras. 77-78). The second thematic report by the Commission of Inquiry on Syria also indicates that survivors of enforced disappearances "consistently described being subject to torture during their detention" (Without a trace: Enforced disappearances in Syria, para. 11).

The Committee also notes with grave concern reports about the severe conditions of detention at Aleppo Central Prison, especially the acute shortage of food for prison inmates (approximately 3,500 individuals). According to the information received, this detention facility, which is partially besieged by opposition combatants, is also being used as a military base by the Government, thus seriously hampering the delivery of humanitarian aid. It is further reported that more than 400 detainees have died since then and that the main causes of death are starvation and lack of medical care, although there are also reports of torture and inmates being caught up in clashes between Government and opposition armed groups. To assess these reports fully, the Committee seeks information from the State party regarding the situation in Aleppo central prison, in particular the measures taken to protect prisoners' life and physical integrity and to remedy the reported shortage of food. Additionally, the Committee would appreciate receiving statistical data regarding deaths in custody that occurred in Aleppo Central Prison since January 2013, including an analysis of these death by sex, age and ethnicity or nationality of the deceased, as well as the charges (for remands) or sentences (for the convicted) and cause of death.

His Excellency

Mr. Faysal Khabbaz HAMOUI

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

to the United Nations Office at Geneva



In view of the above, I am writing to request an urgent meeting to discuss the matters above with a representative of the Syrian Arab Republic as soon as possible, preferably at United Nations headquarters in New York. Otherwise, it may be possible for such a meeting to be held in Geneva. I look forward to the Permanent Mission's response concerning a mutually convenient time for the meeting. In regard to scheduling a meeting in New York or Geneva, please contact Mr. Joao Nataf, Secretary of the Committee against Torture as soon as possible (jnataf@ohchr.org, tel. +41 22 91 79 102).

Additionally, I refer to the examination in May 2012 by this Committee at its 48th session, in the absence of a special report requested pursuant to article 19, paragraph 1, *in fine*, of the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in the Syrian Arab Republic. At the end of that session, the Committee adopted concluding observations (CAT/C/SYR/CO/1/Add.2), in which it requested the State party to submit, by 31 August 2012, a special follow-up report on the measures taken to implement its recommendations in its concluding observations.

During its 49th session, held in November 2012, the Committee noted that no information had yet been supplied in response to the measures referenced above, despite its request. On 21 December 2012, a reminder was sent to your Permanent Mission, observing that the information sought by the Committee had not yet been provided. At its 51st session, held in November 2013, the Committee noted that no such information had been provided by the State party, although more than a year had elapsed from the transmittal of the Committee's concluding observations. Accordingly, I would be grateful for clarification as to the current status of your Government's responses on these matters, and as to when the information will be forthcoming. A Word electronic version of the reply should be sent to the Secretariat of the Committee against Torture (cat@ohchr.org).

Accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Felice D. Gaer

Rapporteur for Follow-up on Concluding Observations
Committee against Torture