

# UN's Committee against Torture reviews Jordan



Representatives from the Jordanian government, the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have travelled to Geneva, where they participate in the UN Convention against Torture's 56th session. The review session in Geneva and the Committee's concluding report will contribute to the on-going torture prevention efforts in Jordan the next years - also for DIGNITY.

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*Photo: Consideration of Jordan, public event, at UNCAT's 56<sup>th</sup> session. Photo by JoCAT.*

Ratifying the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT) also means being monitored by the UN Committee against Torture. The Committee normally holds two regular sessions each year, and each country is being reviewed every fourth year. At the 56<sup>th</sup> session, Jordan, China, Denmark and a few other countries are on the agenda. And the review is important:

- The periodic review is important because it evaluates the countries' fulfillment of the convention's obligations that the countries automatically are held accountable for once they ratify the convention, says a member of the Jordanian Civil Alliance against Torture (JoCAT).

The review of Jordan takes place Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> and Monday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2015. During the review the Committee (re)addresses the Jordanian government questions, comments and gives recommendations. The discussion in Geneva and the concluding report from the Committee can support the work on torture prevention for the coming period.

- The upcoming CAT recommendations and concluding observations will be a national roadmap with clear milestones, specific and realistic goals that are measurable and achievable within a specific time duration which is the next four years, says a JoCAT-member.

The members of JoCAT have decided to continue their joint effort after the review through: 1) establishing a follow-up mechanism on the recommendations, 2) prepare an advocacy plan, 3) establish a committee to follow up with the present Committee against Torture in Geneva and the one which will be mandated starting May 2016, and 4) plan to invite the members of the Committee against Torture and mandated rapporteurs to Jordan.

### **Getting ready for Geneva**

In January 2013 the Committee against Torture published a list of issues that it wished the Jordanian government to provide information on. The government replied in its report published in August 2014. Based on this report, NCHR wrote a report and CSOs wrote the so-called *shadow reports*, which supplemented or discussed the information given in the government's report. Read the reports [here](#).

DIGNITY has supported JoCAT with providing them with the formal guidelines for the submission of a shadow report and financial support for travelling to Geneva so they could present their report for the Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 along with other CSOs, the NCHR and the Jordanian government. A JoCAT member comments on this particular review being different from earlier ones.

- This review has a different methodology and technical tactics where the CSOs working in JoCAT have benefitted from each other's skills in lobbying and advocacy through preparing the shadow report and the distinctive attendance in meetings in Geneva with CAT members and other key stakeholders on the international level. Finally, using a constructive dialogue with the official Jordanian delegation promoting the participatory approach to improve the human rights environment in Jordan.

### **A look in the rear-view mirror**

Although there are still important challenges that can be worked on in Jordan, positive changes can be observed.

- Jordan has been going forward with steady steps towards the development and improvement of the human rights environment using the political will which was expressed clearly in His Majesty King Abdullah II's speech from the Throne at the Parliament on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, where His Majesty emphasized the importance of democracy and human rights as a standing approach in the Kingdom, says a member of JoCAT.

DIGNITY has been working in Jordan since 2008, and DIGNITY's Country Representative in Jordan, Lubna Nasser, points out examples of national achievements since the last review in 2010.-The taboo of torture has been lifted and there is now a more open debate about the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment and also about ways to prevent torture. Concrete action has also taken place. Torture and the use of evidence obtained by torture are now prohibited by the Jordanian Constitution's article 8, there is now a national monitoring team and an electronic system for filing torture cases is under development. Some of the achievements can be seen as results of the Karama programme and other initiatives. The Karama programme is a national anti-torture program, started in 2008, with three key Jordanian partners: the Ministry of Justice, NCHR and Mizan for Law – whereas a number of other

stakeholders participate in various activities. The program is financially supported by the Danish Foreign Ministry under The Danish-Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), and DIGNITY and the Danish prosecution office provide technical assistance. At the UNCAT's 56th session a number of other countries are being reviewed, including Denmark. Read more about that [here](#).

Webcast from the review will be available [here](#).

### **Media coverage**

Jordan Times: Jordan to submit report on commitment to convention against torture à <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/jordan-submit-report-commitment-convention-against-torture>

Alrai: UNCAT discusses Jordan's situation tomorrow à <http://www.alrai.com/article/750321.html>

Addustour: UNCAT starts its meeting on Jordan tomorrow <http://pdfstore.addustour.com/1/4/28/7-local.pdf>

Al Mostaqbal Al Arabi: The international community's questions on torture puzzles our governmental delegation in Geneva à <http://www.almustaqbal-a.com/local/65344.html>

Webcasts from the review will be available here à <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/MediaInformation.aspx>

Review of Jordan at the UNCAT's 56th session

The examination of Jordan will take place Friday the 20th and Monday the 23rd of November 2015. The last review of Jordan was in 2010.

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