



## **Joint Statement marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture 2025**

As delivered by Switzerland on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the member states of the European Union at the 1527<sup>th</sup> meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 3 July 2025.

Mister Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of 42 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the member states of the European Union and my own country Switzerland.

On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This prohibition is clearly enshrined in international human rights law and international humanitarian law – in particular in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Convention against Torture. We recall that the prohibition of torture is also considered a peremptory norm of general international law (*jus cogens*) and therefore does not allow for any derogation, even in situations of emergency.

Five years after the adoption of the Tirana Ministerial Council Decision on the Prevention and Eradication of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the eradication of the use of torture in the OSCE region remains a distant goal. Torture and ill-treatment continue to occur across the region. Let us use this anniversary to redouble our efforts.



Preventing torture requires transparency and independent monitoring. We call on all participating States to consider ratifying and implementing the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) and to ensure that independent and effective National Preventive Mechanisms are in place. Regular and unrestricted access to all places of detention is essential.

In many detention facilities, conditions remain dire: overcrowding, lack of medical care, unsanitary conditions, prolonged isolation, and abuse during custody or interrogation. These conditions can amount to inhuman or degrading treatment and, at times, to torture.

Perhaps even more pressing, torture has reemerged as a systematic and widespread practice in the context of armed conflict including occupation in the OSCE region. Torture and other inhuman treatment or acts may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the systematic use of torture by Russian forces has been thoroughly documented – including by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, the OSCE Moscow Mechanism and ODIHR.

Mister Chair,

We are also alarmed by numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment used to suppress civil society and silence dissent. We express our strong support for civil society and human rights defenders. Their role in documentation, victim support and independent oversight is indispensable – and must be protected from reprisals.

The use of torture and ill-treatment as means of intimidation, punishment or coercion are unacceptable in any context, and no derogation is permitted. We stand firm in our commitment to justice and accountability. These grave violations of international law, including human rights law and OSCE commitments, must not go unpunished.



We urge all participating States to adopt a victim-centered and gender-responsive approach in all anti-torture efforts. Rehabilitation, justice and prevention must be guided by the voices and needs of survivors. The Méndez Principles should guide ethical and non-coercive interviewing practices.

Mister Chair,

Torture must never be tolerated. Let us renew our collective efforts to uphold human dignity, support victims and survivors, and ensure accountability across the OSCE region and beyond.

Thank you.