



INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION'S HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE

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NEWS RELEASE

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IBAHRI calls on states to uphold international law as International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is marked



To mark the 2021 **United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture** on 26 June, the **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute** (IBAHRI) calls for international law prohibiting torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment) to be upheld across the world, and where such crimes have taken, or are taking, place to be investigated and perpetrators to be prosecuted and punished. Furthermore, the IBAHRI calls for states to provide adequate remedy and reparation to victims, including, but not limited to, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition.

IBAHRI Co-Chair and former Justice of the High Court of Australia (1996-2006), the Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG, commented: *'Today we stand in solidarity with victims of torture and ill-treatment.'*

We remind UN Member States of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which asserts, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.” States must move beyond rhetoric into action and ensure that their national legislation, policies and practices reflect and uphold international human rights law, standards and norms. The IBAHRI echoes the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres: “Torturers must never be allowed to get away with their crimes, and systems that enable torture should be dismantled or transformed”.

Despite being prohibited under international law, torture and ill-treatment remain widespread. Repressive responses to social movements and demonstrations are increasing, with government authorities using excessive force to quell opposition voices. In Belarus, for example, there are reports of more than **2,000 documented cases of allegations of torture** since the disputed presidential election in August 2020. No investigations have been initiated into the allegations. Conversely, the complainants are prosecuted.

Across the globe, arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders, peaceful protesters and political opponents continue to enable occurrences of torture and ill-treatment with impunity. Furthermore, under the guise of enforcing COVID-19-related restrictions, the pandemic is being used to detain, mistreat and torture citizens. An example of such incidents is the death of **lawyer Javier Ordóñez** who, on 9 September 2020 in Bogota, Colombia, was apprehended and repeatedly tasered by police for allegedly flouting coronavirus regulations. He died later in hospital.

IBAHRI Co-chair and Immediate Past Secretary General of the Swedish Bar Association, Anne Ramberg Dr jur hc, said: ‘*We applaud the vital work of human rights defenders around the world in the fight against torture and ill-treatment, from promoting prevention measures to securing justice for such atrocious crimes. The IBAHRI has been working with the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (MNPT) in Peru to raise awareness and knowledge of the Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, commonly known as the Istanbul Protocol. Through our ongoing work we encourage all legal professionals including judges, prosecutors, and lawyers to recognise their responsibility to do all that they can to ensure that allegations of torture are properly investigated, and perpetrators are prosecuted and punished.*’

In January, the IBAHRI held an expert workshop for members of the MNPT and the Ombudspersons Office from Lima and Lambayeque. In May, in partnership with the MNPT, the IBAHRI delivered eight virtual workshops on ‘*Investigation and Documentation of Torture: Theoretical Approaches to the Istanbul Protocol*’. More than 75 judges, prosecutors, public defenders, forensic medical

professionals and members of the Ombudspersons Office from Lima and seven regions in the north of Peru – Áncash, Cajamarca, La Libertad, Lambayeque, Piura, San Martín and Tumbes – participated in the training. On 23 June, the IBAHRI and MNPT co-hosted an online Open Forum to mark the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture in Peru. This work was supported by the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) Special Fund and the IBAHRI Trust.

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Notes to the Editor

For comment/further information, please contact: IBAHRI@int-bar.org

1. The **[International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute](#)**, an autonomous and financially independent entity, works with the global legal community to promote and protect human rights and the independence of the legal profession worldwide.
2. Find the IBAHRI ([@IBAHRI](#)) on social media here:
 - twitter.com/IBAHRI
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3. The **[International Bar Association](#)** (*the global voice of the legal profession*), is the foremost organisation for international legal practitioners, bar associations and law societies. Established in 1947, shortly after the creation of the **[United Nations](#)**, it was born out of the conviction that an organisation made up of the world's bar associations could contribute to global stability and peace through the administration of justice.

The IBA acts as a connector, enabler, and influencer, for the administration of justice, fair practice, and accountability worldwide. The IBA has collaborated on a broad range of ground-breaking, international projects with the **[United Nations](#)**, the **[European Parliament](#)**, the **[Council of Europe](#)**, **[The Commonwealth](#)**, the **[Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#)** (OECD), the **[World Trade Organization](#)**, the **[International Monetary Fund](#)** and the **[World Bank](#)**, among others.

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