



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

On the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (26th June), the European Union underlines again the priority which it attaches to the global eradication of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and to the full rehabilitation of torture victims.

In this year of celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the EU recalls the absolute prohibition placed on the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. All States need to take persistent, determined and effective measures to eradicate these practices.

Recalling the Resolution 62/148 adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December 2007 and Resolution HRC/8/L.9 adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 18 June 2008, the EU reiterates its principled condemnation of any action or attempt by States or public officials to legalise, authorise or acquiesce in torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under any circumstances, including on grounds of national security or through judicial decisions.

P R E S S

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The EU urges all States, which have not yet done so, to become parties to the International Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment as a matter of priority.

Scrutiny and openness are essential factors in combating torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In this context the EU has warmly welcomed the entry into force on 22 June 2006 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture as a milestone towards the establishment of an effective and innovative torture preventive mechanism at the universal level. The EU urges all states to designate or establish truly independent and effective national preventive mechanisms. The EU strongly encourages all States to give early consideration to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture. The EU welcomes the ratification by Guatemala on 9 June 2008.

The EU attaches prominent importance to the UN's role in fighting torture and supporting victims and underlines its support for the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the OHCHR, UNCAT, SPT, the UN Voluntary Fund for the Victims of Torture and other mechanisms making valuable contributions in this field, such as CPT. The EU is continuing to undertake political, diplomatic and financial initiatives to combat torture within the framework of the EU Guidelines against Torture which were updated earlier this year. A new set of measures to improve implementation of the guidelines has been adopted.

The prevention of torture and the rehabilitation of torture victims remain major priorities for funding under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). 22 million Euro was allocated for prevention and rehabilitation projects in 2007 and 2008.

The EU takes this opportunity to commend the persistent efforts by the many NGOs and individuals working tirelessly for the prevention of torture and to alleviate the suffering of victims, as well as in mobilising public opinion on this important day in the UN calendar. The EU resolves to continue and intensify its own efforts to secure a world free from torture.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
