

STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE

Stand: 26 June 2021

On the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Fundamental and Human Rights (LBI GMR) highlights the need to increase and join efforts to effectively implement standards preventing torture and other forms of ill-treatment worldwide.

The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture was established by the United Nations in 1997. This day is intended not only to give a voice to victims of torture and their families, but also to strengthen political commitment against torture. The date commemorates the entry into force of the UN Convention against Torture on 26 June 1987.

Torture is a crime under international law. It is absolutely prohibited for all States and cannot be justified under any circumstances. Today reminds us that torture remains a global challenge and that much still needs to be done to eradicate it.

Torture most often occurs with the aim to extract a confession by law enforcement, intelligence officials, and military personnel. 'In my time as UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, I observed that the most frequent setting where torture and coercion take place is the course of the interrogation of suspects and for the purpose of obtaining confessions' say Juan E. Méndez.

For this reason, time and again international experts have urged to move away from accusatory, coercive, manipulative and confession-driven practices towards the adoption of investigative interviewing techniques ([UNSR, Méndez, 2016](#)). This year the adoption of the '[Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering](#)', also referred to as 'Mendez Principles', marked a monumental achievement in this regard.

The Principles were adopted after almost four years of drafting process - led by the Association for the Prevention of Torture, the Anti-Torture Initiative of the American University Washington College of Law, and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights of the University of Oslo - and propose a concrete alternative to interrogation methods that rely on coercion to extract confessions. They include six main principles spanning from setting the foundations of effective interviewing, to offering guidance on the practice of interviewing, including on procedural safeguards, as well as on vulnerabilities, training, accountability, and implementation.

The [United Nations General Assembly](#), the [Human Rights Council](#), the [UNODC Crime Congress](#), and the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) have already endorsed this initiative.

On the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Fundamental and Human Rights welcomes this achievement and stands ready to join efforts for the implementation of this landmark development.

Amongst others, the Institute is contributing to the discussion with the implementation of the EU funded Project "[From law to practice: Strengthening procedural rights in police custody](#)" conducted in cooperation with Rights International Spain, APADPOR-CH, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Fair Trials Europe. We hope that our work will facilitate the advancement of the procedural safeguards of suspects and accused and, thereby, facilitating effective interviewing.

For more information see:

<https://www.apd.ch/en/resources/publications/new-principles-effective-interviewing-investigations-and-information>

<https://www.justsecurity.org/tag/mendez-principles/>

The Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Fundamental and Human Rights' Human Dignity and Public Security Department has long-standing experience in the field of torture and other forms of ill-treatment. With its work, the LBI GMR hopes to make a valuable contribution supporting States, academia and civil society organisations worldwide in their fight against torture and ill-treatment.

For further information on the torture prevention work at the LBI GMR visit: <https://bim.lbg.ac.at/en/human-dignity-and-public-security>.

Giuliana Monina

Head of Department Human Dignity and Public Security,

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Fundamental and Human Rights