



HAUT-COMMISSARIAT AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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REFERENCE: AA/MED

14 April 2020

Excellency,

I have the honour to write to you on behalf of the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT), established in accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

The current Covid-19 pandemic presents enormous challenges and I wish to express my sincere hope that your country overcomes and recovers from it quickly. Given its mandate, the SPT is particularly interested in how, during these difficult times, States are responding to the challenge of tackling the coronavirus in places where persons are deprived of liberty, including those in places of quarantine. The SPT has issued an **Advice to State parties and National Preventive Mechanisms (CAT/OP/10)**<sup>1</sup> concerning this, which has already been shared widely.

In pursuance of our Convention mandate, the SPT would kindly request that your Excellency's Government inform the SPT of the measures it has taken to address the effects of the pandemic in places of deprivation of liberty under its jurisdiction, including places of quarantine, and how it has taken account of the content of the SPT's Advice when doing so.

We would suggest that it would be helpful if you were to structure your responses by addressing:

- (a) Measures taken to reduce numbers held in detention settings
- (b) Measures taken concerning the provision of appropriate healthcare facilities for those in detention
- (c) Measures taken which may limit or reduce movements within places of detention
- (d) Measures taken concerning visits and maintaining family contacts, etc,

You may find it helpful to refer to the relevant paragraphs of the SPT Advice (paragraphs 9, a) to t), and 10, a) to h) when doing so.

We are also anxious to benefit from your views on how best to combat the threat posed by the coronavirus in places of deprivation of liberty and so we would welcome information on other measures taken which you would like to draw to our attention, irrespective of whether they are mentioned in the SPT Advice.

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<sup>1</sup> Versions in the official UN languages are available at the following link:  
<https://undocs.org/en/CAT/OP/10>.

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I should be grateful if you would send the information requested **no later than 30 April 2020**, addressed to SPT's respective Country Rapporteur, with a copy to Mr. Armen Avetisyan ([aavetisyan@ohchr.org](mailto:aavetisyan@ohchr.org)) and Mr Joao Nataf ([jnataf@ohchr.org](mailto:jnataf@ohchr.org)), Secretary of the SPT, at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The SPT will also be contacting all designated NPMs concerning their experience of exercising their preventive mandates during the pandemic, taking account of the Part IV of the Advice and we would encourage you to inform your State Party's designated NPM of your response to this request.

The SPT reiterates its commitment to cooperate with your Excellency's Government and its availability to provide advice and assistance in accordance with its OPCAT mandate.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Sir Malcolm Evans  
Chairperson  
Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture

Annex: Advice of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture to States Parties and National Preventive Mechanisms relating to the Coronavirus Pandemic (adopted on 25th March 2020)

CC:

Mr Daniel Fink, Head of SPT's Regional Team for Europe

Mr Victor Zaharia, SPT's Country Rapporteur for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Norway and Poland.