UNITED AGAINST TORTURE



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2023-2026

UNITED AGAINST TORTURE 2023-2026

THREE YEARS OF IMPACT

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Detainees stand in formation before being escorted to their cells at a high-security facility in Tecoluca, El Salvador | © Shutterstock

1 THE CONTEXT

The global movement against torture stands at a critical moment, operating in an increasingly volatile environment. There are now more conflicts than at any time since the Second World War, while rising authoritarianism, shrinking civic space, and attacks on the rule of law are eroding decades of human rights progress.

Despite its absolute prohibition under international law, torture and other ill-treatment remains prevalent worldwide. Recent global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and conflicts in Iran, Israel/Palestine, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine have further exposed civilians to abuse and weakened mechanisms for holding perpetrators to account.

Governments increasingly justify violations in the name of security or emergency measures, while civil society faces growing restrictions. At the same time, chronic underfunding for prevention and victim rehabilitation has been further exacerbated by the withdrawal of key support, including USAID programmes and funding cuts from several European governments.

This is the context in which the United Against Torture Consortium (UATC) operated from 2023 to 2026, confronting these interconnected harms and strengthening collective responses.

This is also a moment of opportunity. Public support for human rights remains strong, new accountability mechanisms are emerging, and survivors are increasingly leading justice efforts. Building on these gains, the UATC remains committed to advancing prevention, protection, accountability, and rehabilitation for survivors, and to upholding the global prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

> **We stand together to demand justice, recognition and reparation, not as an act of charity, but as our right. We call on States, institutions and all people of conscience to join us in ending torture in every form, everywhere."**
>
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>
> *Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*



Activist stands in front of the police in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
© Shutterstock

2 WHY UNITED AGAINST TORTURE

> **Tyranny will seize any chance and exploit any opening. We must keep standing up for human rights, in solidarity with each other. When we come together, we wield more power than any autocrat or tech billionaire."**
>
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>
> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk

Torture is a complex global challenge that cannot be tackled in isolation. Real impact demands coordinated action across prevention, protection, justice, accountability, reparation, and rehabilitation. Survivors need sustained, holistic support, while stronger documentation, legal action, and advocacy are essential to combat impunity.

By pooling expertise and resources, the UATC can overcome political resistance, funding constraints, and fragmented interventions, while engaging more strategically with committed institutions, including the European Union.

The UATC demonstrates the strength of such collaboration. It brings together six leading anti-torture organisations: the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), the International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT), the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), Omega Research Foundation, REDRESS, and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

The UATC applies an integrated model that empowers survivors as agents of change, supports over 350 civil society partners, and combines rapid crisis response with long-term reform efforts.

Through coordinated action, the UATC is helping build a future where torture and other ill-treatment are prevented, protection and accountability are strengthened, and survivors receive as full rehabilitation as possible and lead the pursuit of justice.



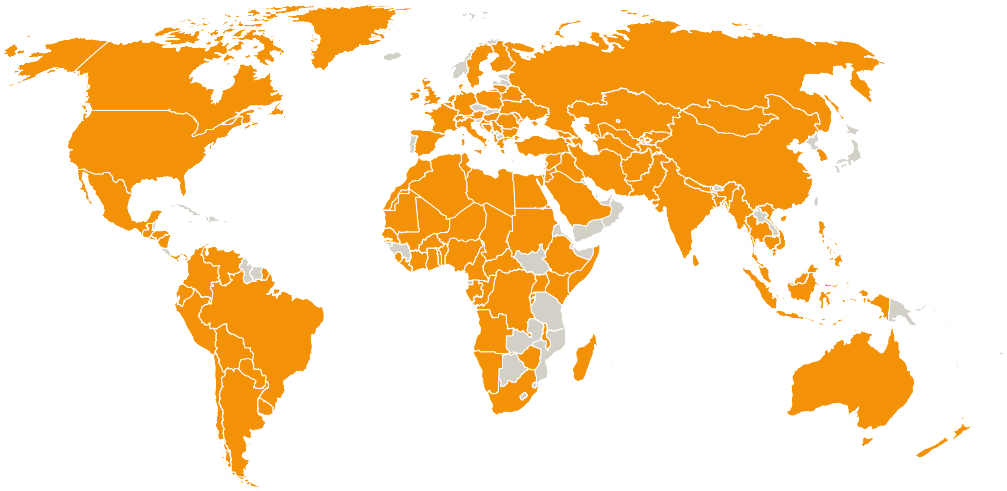
A protester holding a sign demanding justice and change.
© Logan Weaver|Unsplash

3 OUR IMPACT

Since its formation in 2023, the UATC has built a network of members and partners across

123 countries,

strengthening our ability to deliver impact through close collaboration with trusted and expert partners.



OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

From 2023 to 2026, the UATC contributed to strengthening the global anti-torture movement, showing how coordinated action across prevention, protection, justice, reparation, accountability, and rehabilitation can make a meaningful difference.

SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT

- **18,000+ survivors** of torture and their families received tailored, holistic support, including medical care, psychosocial assistance, and legal aid.
- **40+ survivors from 36 countries** across Africa, Asia, and Latin America participated in hearings with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture.
- **Survivor contributions** shaped the *Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*.
- **Survivors' voices** informed a thematic report by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture on the impact of torture and the challenges survivors face.
- **Regional survivor networks** were established and strengthened in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- **Survivor representation ensured** at the official commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT).

MOVEMENT DRIVERS

- **€2.2 million in financial and technical support** was distributed to more than 350 organisations in 67 countries.
- **2,000+ anti-torture actors** participated in the Global Week Against Torture.
- **700+ monitors in 40 countries** participated in 90 capacity-strengthening initiatives for oversight bodies.
- **37 human rights defenders** from 17 African countries convened in Banjul, The Gambia, for strategic discussions and solidarity-building.
- **80 young human rights defenders** across Francophone Africa benefited from thematic and project implementation training.
- **44 South African civil society representatives** were trained on The Abidjan Rules.
- **Partners from 11 countries** (Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Serbia and the Republic of Korea) received training or technical support on monitoring protests.

PROHIBITION AND IMPLEMENTATION

- **3 historic ratifications** of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture secured in Bangladesh, Colombia and Congo through sustained advocacy effort.
- **15 national anti-torture policies adopted:** one each in Andorra, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Monaco, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, the UK and Uruguay; two in Brazil and three in Colombia.
- **239 organisations** engaged directly with the UN Committee against Torture (CAT).
- **Three National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs)** established in Nigeria, Gabon, and Benin, alongside **four Local Preventive Mechanisms** (LPMs) in Brazil and **the NPM designated** in South Africa.
- **Actionable CAT recommendations** secured across multiple countries, including Albania, Argentina, Burundi, Cameroon, Egypt, France, Honduras, Israel, Pakistan, Thailand, and Türkiye.
- **7 additional language translations** of the Méndez Principles produced, bringing the total to 24 languages, alongside initiatives across Africa, Asia, and Central and Latin America to support their dissemination and implementation.
- **100+ rehabilitation centres** using the new Global Standards on Rehabilitation, leading to improved treatment outcomes.

JUSTICE SEEKING

- **61 legal victories** achieved, securing or advancing accountability and justice for over **57,000 victims** across 26 countries.
- **€220,000+ in compensation** secured for survivors globally, alongside official public apologies, and convictions of perpetrators.
- **19 lawyers carrying out innovative anti-torture work** in adverse contexts across 13 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America received grants.
- **Three casebooks** featuring more than 80 landmark torture cases and litigation strategies were published to help lawyers and activists challenge torture and ill-treatment around the world.
- **Regional Litigators' Groups** were established and strengthened across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America to foster solidarity and collective action.

AWARENESS RAISING

- **7+ million** reached through campaigns and survivors' testimonies, including regional and youth-led initiatives.
- **100+ videos** featuring the voices of survivors and others confronting torture were produced in multiple languages.
- "**Voices for Human Dignity**" multimedia initiative produced to mark the 40th anniversary of UNCAT.
- **Users in 163 countries** reached through organisational websites.
- **Timely statements** published in response to crisis situations, including in Bangladesh, the DRC, Iran, Israel/Palestine, Georgia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Tanzania,Türkiye and the USA.

CRISIS RESPONSE

- **109 interventions reached 26 countries,** including major coordinated responses in Bangladesh, the DRC, and Israel and Palestine, and further interventions in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Iran, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, Serbia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Venezuela.
- **2,200+ survivors** in Bangladesh, DRC, and Israel/Palestine received psychological and therapeutic support.
- **Bangladesh**: Secured EU crisis funding, enabling grants for medical services, livelihoods, relocation of at-risk defenders, documentation, and prevention efforts.
- **Chad**: Filed a complaint against senior officials for mass violations during "Black Thursday".
- **DRC**: Advanced documentation of violations in North Kivu and South Kivu and accountability through UN engagement, national workshops, and diplomatic efforts.
- **Georgia**: Forensic mission findings prompted a UN allegation letter and informed high-level EU advocacy.
- **Sudan**: Delivered international advocacy and trained exiled defenders in remote torture documentation.
- **Ukraine**: Produced a major report and advanced accountability through UN submissions and ICC engagement.

UNITED FRONT: POLICING OF DISSENT

- **A global Working Group on Torture and Other Ill-Treatment in the Context of Protests and Other Assemblies** was established, bringing together experts and civil society representatives to analyse the issue and develop solutions.
- **European Court of Human Rights engagement**: Intervened in the first case on the use of explosive grenades against protesters in France and analysed the alleged use of acoustic weapons in Serbia, contributing to an interim measure by the Court prohibiting the future use of sound devices for crowd control.
- **Torture-Free Trade Treaty advocacy** advanced through the Torture-Free Trade Network, contributing to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture's thematic study on the torture trade, and the strengthening of the EU Anti-Torture Regulation.
- **Anti-torture safeguards secured** in the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association's *Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests.*
- ***Protesting Without Fear*** paper launched, setting out practical measures for States to end the use of force to intimidate or punish people exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.
- ***Challenging Repression*** guidance note developed to help human rights monitors identify, document, and challenge the misuse of police weapons during protests.

4 HOW WE DRIVE CHANGE

The UATC brings together expertise on prevention, protection, rehabilitation, documentation, accountability, advocacy, and movement strengthening, providing comprehensive coverage consistent with a holistic theory of change.

Our theory of change contributes to the eradication of torture and other ill-treatment worldwide. It does this by strengthening a coordinated global support system for the anti-torture movement. This reflects the need for sustained, aligned action across multiple pillars.

We deliver impact through three interconnected outcomes:

1 We strengthen the movement's core pillars—prevention, protection, accountability, justice, reparation, and rehabilitation—through coordinated, survivor-centred action.

2 We build the resilience and effectiveness of local civil society actors through sustained financial and technical support.

3 We ensure the UATC operates as an effective, globally coordinated system that reduces geographic and expertise gaps.



OUR AREAS OF WORK

The UATC's work is organised into seven connected areas:

SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT

Ensures rehabilitation and empowers survivors as actors of change.

MOVEMENT DRIVERS

Strengthens and diversifies local civil society organisations through technical and financial support, movement-building activities, and engagement with other national actors.

PROHIBITION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Improves compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture, OPCAT, the *Istanbul Protocol*, and the *Méndez Principles*, among others.

JUSTICE-SEEKING

Supports legal reforms, strategic litigation, and anti-impunity efforts.

CRISIS RESPONSE

Triggers rapid responses in acute or emerging crises characterised by widespread torture.

UNITED FRONT: POLICING OF DISSENT

Addresses torture and other ill-treatment in protests, strengthening monitoring, oversight, and advocacy.

AWARENESS RAISING

Enhances public communication and counters the erosion of the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

4.1 SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT

The UATC has placed survivors at the centre of the anti-torture movement, supporting them through capacity building, storytelling, and holistic care. It has recognised them as powerful agents of change thanks to their lived experience and expertise.

SURVIVOR-CENTRED SUPPORT

One of the UATC's greatest strengths has been delivering tailored, holistic medical, psychosocial, and legal support to more than 18,000 torture survivors and their families worldwide. This kind of support reached survivors across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, ensuring access to care, documentation, and justice, while prioritising the most marginalised groups and adapting services to diverse local contexts.

Building on this direct support, we also strengthened the capacity of 74 organisations worldwide to engage with survivors, while free webinars expanded expertise in rehabilitation and advocacy among more than 5,000 participants.

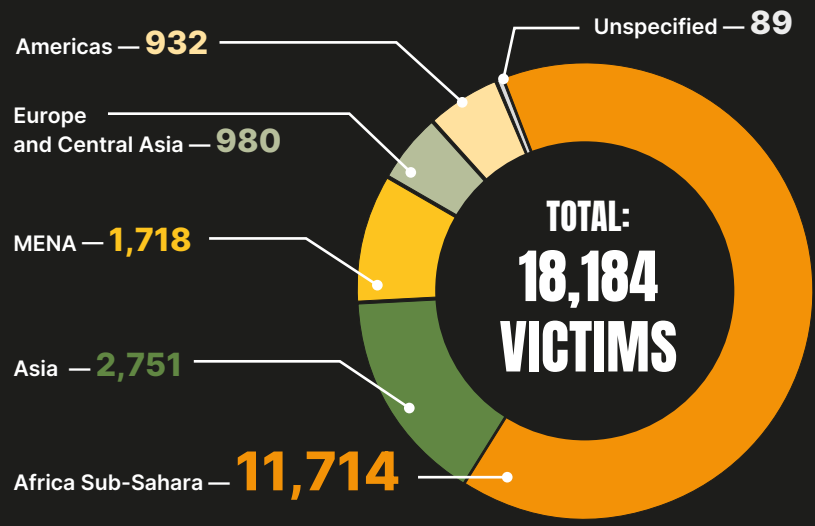
Established in 1994 to treat survivors of Soviet Russian torture, and Nazi concentration camps, IRC Kyiv received a UATC grant to expand its rehabilitation services to victims of Russia's latest war on Ukraine. The funding supported a mobile medical team driving a van through missile and drone attacks to reach clients who cannot travel to the centre. © IRC Kyiv





In November 2024, Kolbassia Haoussau, head of the UK's only torture survivor-led activist network Survivors Speak OUT, briefed the CAT on survivor empowerment as part of a UATC delegation. This was the first time in the Committee's history a survivor was invited to speak about increasing survivors' engagement with its work. © UN Photo

NUMBER OF VICTIMS DIRECTLY BENEFITING FROM EU-FUNDED ASSISTANCE (JUNE 2023-MAY 2026)



SURVIVORS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

We promoted good practices for survivor-centred approaches. Our survivor-centred approach led to significant milestones in advocacy, policy change, and institutional reform. Regional hearings became platforms for collective action. In Colombia (2023), Kenya (2024), and Nepal (2025), 42 survivors from 36 countries met in-person with the UN Special Rapporteur on torture to share their insights, leading to regional declarations and the publication of the groundbreaking *Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, the first time such a document has been entirely led by survivors' own voices and experiences.

Following the presentation of the Charter and an earlier thematic briefing with the CAT, we submitted a discussion paper setting out concrete measures to strengthen survivor participation across all areas of the Committee's work.

Survivor engagement and civil society mobilisation also led to the creation of new survivors' networks in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, including "Networking against Torture", a survivor-led platform advocating for justice and reparations, with survivors addressing the UN Human Rights Council.

SURVIVOR-CENTRED LITIGATION AND ADVOCACY

Our survivor-centred litigation and advocacy resulted in anti-torture victories across multiple regions, including novel judgments; compensation for victims in Kenya, Turkey, and Lithuania; public apologies to Chilean survivors; convictions of perpetrators in Peru and El Salvador; key policy recommendations on LGBTIQ+ rights in Peru, South Africa, and Malawi; measures to protect victims in Mexico; access to medical care in Iran; and sanctions against perpetrators from Georgia.

Survivor evidence also informed the UN Special Rapporteur on torture's 2025 report on hostage-taking as a form of torture and contributed to the first regional report highlighting the growing use of sexual and gender-based violence to repress peaceful protest in Latin America. This work demonstrates that empowering survivors is essential to achieving lasting, systemic change.

> READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT

FOCUS IN

A CHARTER BORN FROM SURVIVORS' VOICES

"We are mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, grandparents, friends—active members of our communities—affirming our agency, our support for one another, and our solidarity with all survivors of torture."

This declaration, issued in Nairobi in 2024, captures the force behind a historic, survivor-centred process. Over three years, 42 survivors from 36 countries came together at regional hearings in Bogotá, Nairobi, and Kathmandu to redefine what justice, reparation, and recovery truly mean — not in theory, but through lived experience. The hearings were convened by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and supported by the UATC.

The survivors' voices, alongside more than 120 written submissions from survivors and survivor-led organisations, shaped a landmark outcome: the *Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*.

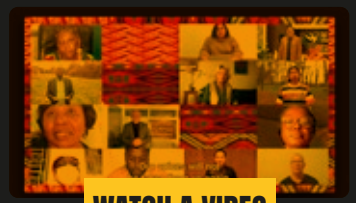
Launched on 3 March 2026 at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Charter is more than a document: it is a turning point. It sets out, in clear and uncompromising terms, the rights and protections survivors themselves say are essential for their recovery and prevention of future harm: ending torture, holding perpetrators accountable, and ensuring access to care, justice, and reparation. It is also a call to action. The Charter urges all UN Member States to move beyond rhetoric and embed these demands into law, policy, and practice.



"The Charter of Rights of Victims and Survivors of Torture represents our voices, our struggles, and our knowledge. It recognises that victims not only demand justice but must also take an active role in shaping public policies aimed at preventing and eradicating torture."

Italia Méndez, member of a collective of women survivors of sexual torture in Mexico who contributed to the Charter

Grounded in courage and collective voice, the Charter stands as both testimony and tool, a roadmap to end torture and support survivors' journeys toward healing and justice.



WATCH A VIDEO

4.2 MOVEMENT DRIVERS

The UATC has bolstered civil society's ability to prevent, monitor and respond to torture and ill-treatment, providing training, funding, technical support, and fostering coalitions. This has created a robust ecosystem of local actors shaping change on a global scale.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

Financial grants have enabled civil society organisations to advance anti-torture work across prevention, advocacy, protection, access to justice, rehabilitation, and coalition-building. In total, the UATC provided €2.2 million in financial and technical support to civil society organisations across 67 countries, reaching over 18,000 survivors.

Laura Guerrero stands in front of a mural to her son Nicolás Guerrero, a graffiti artist known as Flex, who was shot and killed during a police crackdown on social protests in Cali, Colombia, in 2021. © IRCT

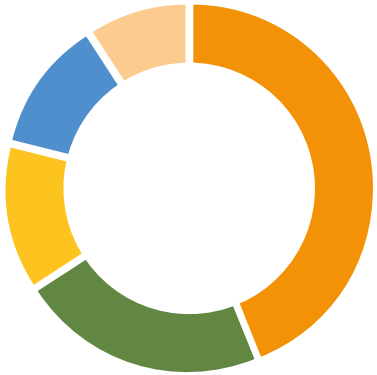


The grants funded diverse initiatives, including legal aid and strategic litigation, rehabilitation services (including in crises), documentation, survivor convenings, events, capacity building, national advocacy, submissions to anti-torture bodies, research, and awareness-raising.

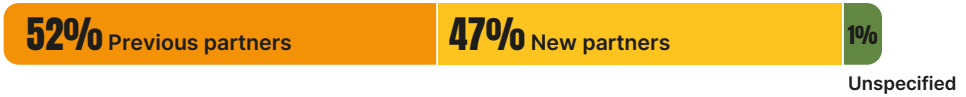
These efforts in coalition-building strengthened the anti-torture movement, contributed to lasting change, and led to major legislative achievements, including in Colombia, Bangladesh, and Bolivia.

HOW UATC GRANTS REACHED THE ANTI-TORTURE MOVEMENT

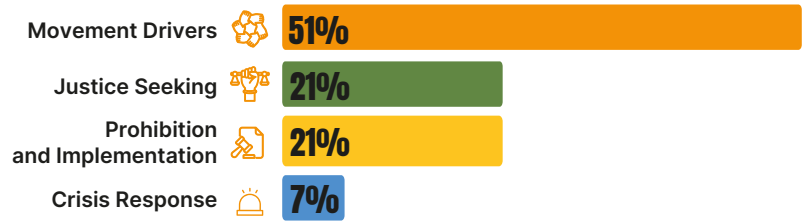
170 UATC sub-grants awarded to grassroots organisations per continent (June 2023-May 2026):



A significant proportion of grantees were organisations that were not already UATC partners, contributing to the growth of the anti-torture movement (June 2023–May 2026):



Sub-grants were spread across the four UATC work packages, ensuring support for a diversity range of anti-torture initiatives (June 2023-May 2026):



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ANTI-TORTURE ACTORS



Summer school for young human rights defenders across Francophone Africa. © FIACAT

The UATC provided stakeholders–including NHRIs, NPMs, State officials, journalists, legal professionals, and human rights organisations–with training, briefings, and resources on all aspects of anti-torture. This covered prevention, documentation (including in crisis and high-risk contexts), rehabilitation, litigation, the human rights impact of torture tools, and reporting to international and regional mechanisms.

We carried out 90 activities to strengthen the capacity of NPMs and LPMs, such as peer-to-peer exchanges, to carry out their torture prevention mandates in line with OPCAT, reaching around 760 participants across 40 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and Europe.

Building on this work with human rights institutions, we also strengthened the next generation of defenders. A key initiative was a multi-year training programme for 80 young human rights defenders across Francophone Africa, focusing on project implementation and thematic training.

BRINGING THE ANTI-TORTURE MOVEMENT TOGETHER



Regional meeting with human rights actors in The Gambia. © UATC

Beyond capacity-building, we also created spaces for global dialogue and collective action. The Global Week Against Torture, held in June 2025, brought together survivors, activists and experts from around the world, enabling them to strategise on urgent issues, share innovative tools, connect globally, and amplify the voices of survivors and human rights defenders.
In October 2025, the UATC convened its first in-person regional meeting for 37 African human rights actors in The Gambia, facilitating two days of strategic dialogue on regional challenges, priorities, and successful strategies, while fostering opportunities for movement building and solidarity.

Through capacity-building, advocacy, and direct support, the UATC empowered civil society, amplified survivor voices, and strengthened global standards to prevent torture and secure justice.

> READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT



#EndSARS protests in Nigeria. © Kaizenify | CC BY-SA 4.0.

FOCUS IN

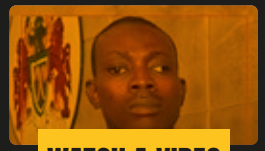
HOLDING THE LINE AGAINST TORTURE

In October 2020, thousands of Nigerians protested the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a police unit notorious for torture, extortion, and killings. The government responded with a harsh crackdown, arresting many protesters and detaining them without charge.

Videographer Taiwo Dosunmu went to a police station to clarify that he had not participated in the protests. When he got there, he was imprisoned without trial at Kirikiri Correctional Facility. For nearly four years, he endured overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate food and medical care, and complete isolation: conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. His case file disappeared, charges were inconsistent, and authorities offered no legal basis for his detention.

In January 2024, the Citizens' Gavel Foundation for Social Justice, a Nigerian legal advocacy NGO, took up his case. Gavel launched a strategic litigation plan, challenging his treatment, exposing procedural violations, and reinforcing Nigeria's obligations under the Anti-Torture Act and international law. They succeeded in securing Taiwo's release.

A financial partnership funded through the UATC made this possible. Taiwo's story shows how timely support can protect lives, restore dignity, and spark broader reform. With continued backing, local partners like Gavel can turn justice from a possibility into a reality.



WATCH A VIDEO

WITH GAVEL

4.3 PROHIBITION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The UATC has strengthened the global anti-torture framework by developing normative standards, advocating with the UN and regional mechanisms, and supporting civil society engagement for the implementation of anti-torture instruments and standards.

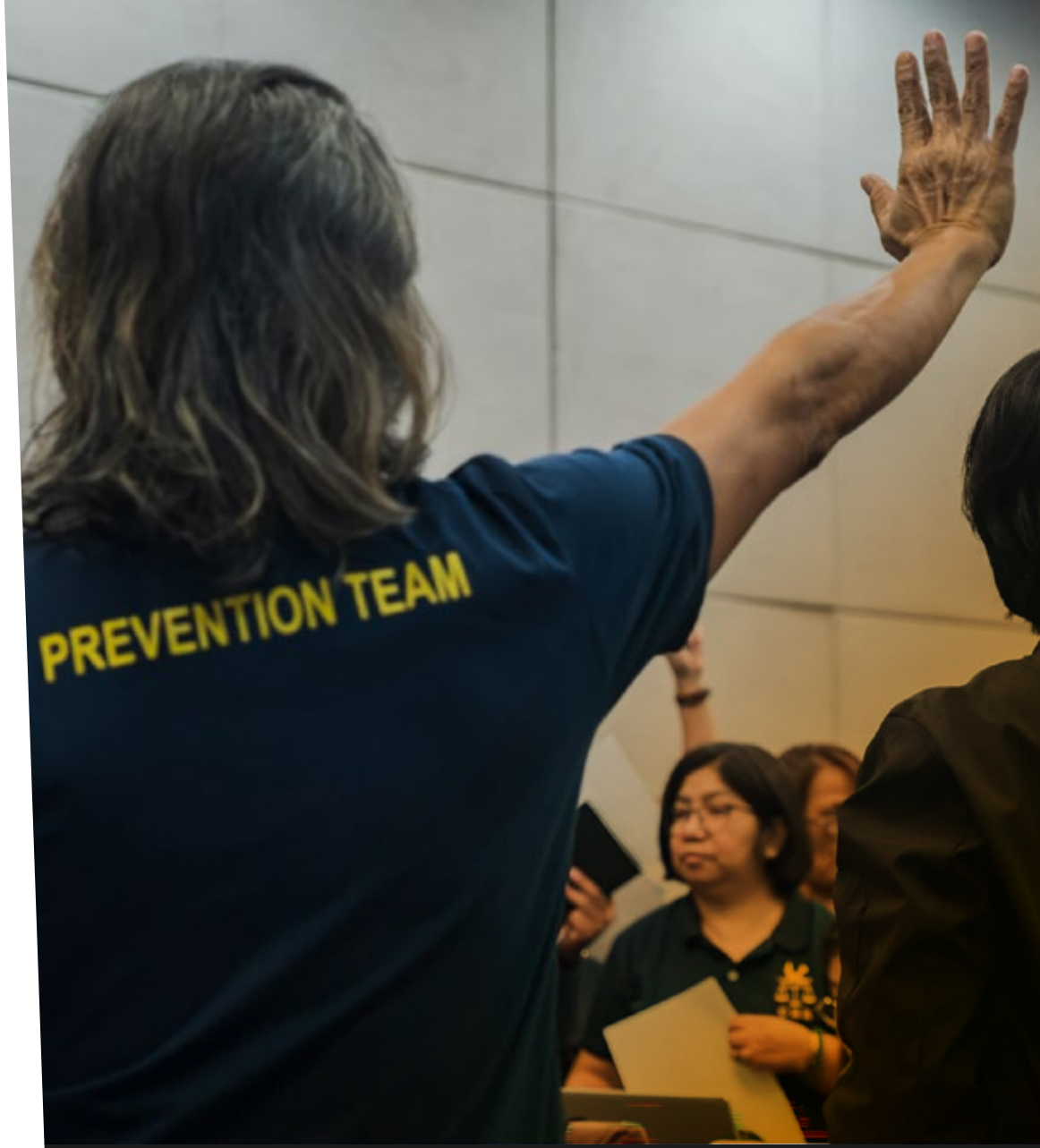
STRENGTHENING GLOBAL TORTURE PREVENTION FRAMEWORKS

15 government policies were developed or revised with civil society participation in Africa, the Americas and Europe including in follow-up to recommendations by the CAT.

Key milestones also included Bangladesh and Colombia's ratifications of OPCAT in 2025, following sustained coordination with local partners and survivor-led movements.

In Bolivia, continued advocacy contributed to the Senate's adoption of a comprehensive anti-torture bill in 2025 which is now before the Chamber of Deputies. In Honduras, national and international advocacy led to the State recognising the competence of the CAT to examine individual complaints.

In Brazil, civil society monitoring of more than 1,200 custody hearings across six states generated unprecedented evidence on the protection of safeguards against torture and ill-treatment during police custody. These findings contributed to the inclusion of custody hearing improvements as a strategic priority in the national «Pena Justa» plan, launched in 2025 by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the National Council of Justice and the Federal Supreme Court.



APT training in The Philippines. © APT | Ben Buckland

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

We also played a central role in CAT engagement, convening eight preparatory meetings to coordinate civil society participation, securing in-person participation of national civil society organisations in the NGO briefings ahead of the States' reviews, and promoting transparency and merit-based nomination in the CAT and Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) elections through virtual meet-and-greet events.

Our work enabled 239 civil society organisations to engage directly with the CAT during the review of the periodic reports of State parties, leading to concrete impacts including restored family and legal visits for prisoners in prolonged incommunicado detention, improved monitoring access to places of detention, new legislation, and States recognising the CAT's competence to review individual complaints.

INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The UATC became a strategic partner, regularly consulted by the CAT, the SPT, the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, UN experts and Special Procedures, and the European Union.

We engaged extensively with EU institutions, providing human rights briefings ahead of dialogues with Angola, Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines and Ukraine. We also contributed to discussions with the EU Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), highlighting torture and ill-treatment in the context of protests and promoting key prevention priorities, including OPCAT ratification and implementation, and torture-free trade. In December 2025, we organised a strategic workshop on ending torture and discrimination in protest policing at the EU NGO Forum.

Together, these coordinated efforts under UATC strengthened international norms and global torture prevention frameworks, while advancing accountability worldwide.

> READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT

FOCUS IN

COLOMBIA'S HISTORIC ACCESSION TO OPCAT

On 10 November 2025, Colombia acceded to the OPCAT, an international treaty that aims to prevent torture and ill-treatment of people deprived of liberty by establishing regular, independent visits to places of detention.

Colombia's historic accession did not take place overnight. It was the result of years of public debate, legislative proposals, and coordinated efforts by institutions and civil society, including the UATC, to build a stronger and more effective preventive framework. It exemplifies the transformative impact of collective anti-torture action in achieving systemic change.

Organisations in the Consortium had implemented missions since 2013, and in recent years, provided financial support to the Colombian Coalition Against Torture, which mobilised to advocate for OPCAT ratification, in line with recommendations from the CAT.

In 2023, the Colombian Coalition Against Torture explained the importance of torture prevention to members of Congress.

On 12 July 2024, Bill 2371, aimed at ratifying OPCAT, passed unanimously in Congress. When the Constitutional Court reviewed the bill in October 2024, UATC members submitted a joint citizen intervention highlighting OPCAT's significance. This contributed to confirming the bill's alignment with the Constitution.



©APT

4.4 JUSTICE-SEEKING

The UATC has advanced justice and accountability for torture through strategic litigation, medical documentation, capacity building, and legal advice across 26 countries in the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Asia–Pacific, and Europe.

JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The UATC secured 61 legal victories across 26 countries, including judgments, official recognition of violations, protective measures, compensation, public apologies, and convictions of perpetrators. Our interventions addressed torture and ill-treatment used to silence dissent–including during protests–as well as crimes committed during armed conflicts and historic dictatorships.

At a ceremony at Chile's Embassy in London, the Chilean State apologised to the family of the late Leopoldo García Lucero, a torture survivor exiled to the United Kingdom under the Pinochet regime, and pledged to improve extradition procedures for international crimes. © REDRESS



The UATC also advanced international case law on torture, including novel judgments on gender-based torture. An unprecedented decision by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) found that Egypt's use of forced genital examinations (also known as "virginity tests") on two women pro-democracy protesters constituted degrading, inhumane and torturous treatment.

Together with partners, we also supported efforts to recognise torture as a crime against humanity in Ukraine through advocacy within the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), informing findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry.

Additional cases advanced accountability worldwide. In Peru, perpetrators of discriminatory torture against transgender woman Azul Rojas Marín were convicted to 17 years in prison. In India, the human rights defender Jagtar Singh Johal was acquitted in one criminal case based on evidence obtained under torture. In El Salvador, we supported families' access to proceedings that led to convictions of former military authorities for wartime killings of Dutch reporters. In Mexico, advocacy and legal submissions contributed to the release of Keren Ordoñez Hernández after more than 9 years of arbitrary detention. We also pursued innovative accountability avenues, securing targeted sanctions against perpetrators, including Angolan State officials implicated in torture.

REPARATION AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED JUSTICE

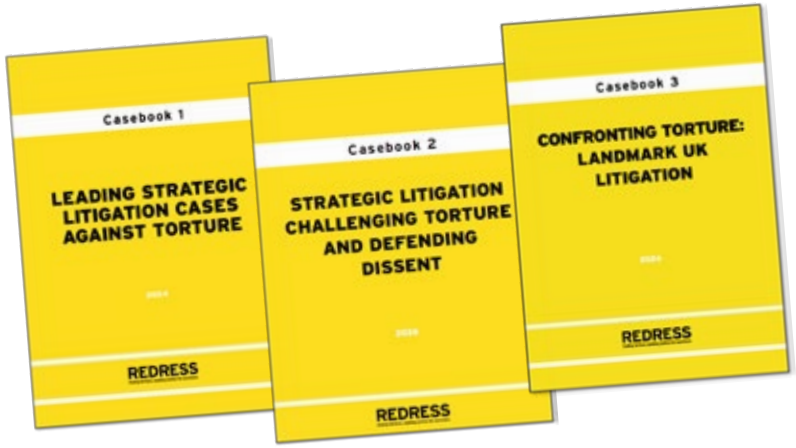
The UATC further advanced reparations and survivor-centred justice, helping secure more than €220,000 in compensation and broader reparative measures for survivors in Chad, Chile, Colombia, Kenya, Lithuania, Mexico, Peru, South Africa, Togo, Türkiye and Uganda. In Chad, we supported the implementation of reparations for 7,000 survivors of Hissène Habré through legal, medical, and psychological expert evidence. In Uganda, we advanced reparation for 50,000 victims of the Lord's Resistance Army through an amicus brief before the ICC.

In South Africa, we intervened in the first case under the national Torture Act, resulting in reparations awarded to five inmates who had been tortured by prison officials. In Mexico, two cases brought before the CAT led to a compensation agreement between the Mexican State and a victim of the Cuatro *Civiles* case, and the State's recognition of its responsibility, accompanied by a public apology to a torture victim, his family, and members of the indigenous Ayuujk community. In the UK, we secured a historic apology to the exiled family of a survivor of Pinochet's dictatorship.

The UATC combined litigation with rehabilitation and survivor support, including for a young activist from Western Sahara, who sustained severe injuries during a peaceful protest.

WATCH A VIDEO GARCÍA FAMILY 'AT PEACE' AFTER APOLOGY CEREMONY

STRENGTHENING LITIGATION EFFORTS

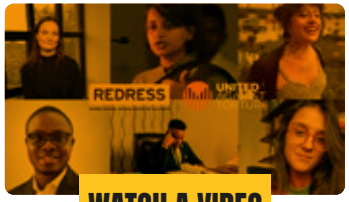


Beyond individual strategic cases, the UATC also strengthened anti-torture litigation through medico-legal evaluations, expert opinions, training, publications, specialised newsletters, workshops, and regional litigators' meetings across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

We published three casebooks featuring more than 80 landmark torture cases and litigation strategies to help lawyers and activists challenge torture and ill-treatment around the world, including abuse used to silence dissent. We also provided grants to 19 lawyers carrying out innovative anti-torture work in adverse contexts across 13 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

These initiatives fostered solidarity and collective action, enabling joint legal submissions and coordinated advocacy, including successful rulings by the ECOWAS Court of Justice against Togo and by the CAT against Burundi.

The UATC also expanded the Law on Police Use of Force database, which brings together information on policing legislation on 197 States, alongside relevant national and international case law.



WATCH A VIDEO

MEET THE WINNERS OF THE INNOVATIVE LAWYERS AWARDS

> READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT



FOCUS

In Peru, three police officers were sentenced to 17 years in prison for the discriminatory torture of transgender woman Azul Rojas Marín (left). © Promsex

PERPETRATORS' CONVICTION IN AN EMBLEMATIC LGBTIQ+ TORTURE CASE

15 December 2025 marked a major milestone in Azul Rojas Marín's long pursuit of justice after years of obstruction, discrimination, and prosecutorial inaction in Peru.

On that date, Peru's National Court of Justice found three police officers guilty of aggravated torture and rape against Azul, a transgender woman. The crimes date back to 2008, when–while living as a gay man–she was arbitrarily detained, beaten, and raped with a police baton because of her sexual orientation.

Despite substantial evidence, authorities initially refused to investigate her torture and eventually closed her case. But with support from civil society organisations in the UATC, Rojas Marín brought her case before the Inter-American system, securing a landmark ruling that ordered Peru to prosecute those responsible, and set standards to reduce the levels of violence suffered by LGBTIQ+ individuals in the Americas.

Five years later, justice has finally been delivered, thanks to a sustained campaign by the UATC and its partner organisations to secure the implementation of the judgment. Officers Dino Horacio Ponce Pardo, Luis Miguel Quispe Cáceres, and Juan Isaac León Mostacero were each sentenced to 17 years in prison in December 2025 and ordered to pay civil reparations to Rojas Marín.

This judgment represents a major victory for Rojas Marín, who once recalled a prosecutor telling her the case would be dismissed "because you have relationships with men", highlighting the deep prejudice she faced in her fight for justice.

4.5 CRISIS RESPONSE

The UATC rapidly responded to acute or emerging crisis characterised by torture through coordinated advocacy, emergency grants, documentation, and legal and psychosocial support to survivors and partner organisations.

CRISIS RESPONSES

The UATC established dedicated crisis teams, activating major coordinated responses in Bangladesh, the DRC, and Israel/Palestine, with additional interventions across 22 countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Iran, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, Serbia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Türkiye, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Venezuela.

Crisis responses combined capacity building, documentation, emergency grants, psychosocial support, and legal assistance.

In addition, the UATC led high-level advocacy with numerous UN mechanisms and Special Procedures as well as the UN Human Rights Council, ACHPR, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa (CPTA), the European Parliament and EU institutions. Joint submissions and advocacy influenced ICC communications, and UN treaty bodies processes, including States' reviews before the CAT.

EMERGENCY GRANTS

The UATC provided targeted emergency funding to frontline organisations in Bangladesh, Israel/Palestine, the DRC, Ukraine, and Chad. These grants enabled urgent support, including rehabilitation for survivors, livelihood assistance, and the relocation of human rights defenders at risk.

We delivered grants to civil society, to assist peaceful protesters, monitor detention conditions, and provide legal and psychosocial aid to over 2,200 survivors.



2024 protests in Bangladesh. © | Rayhan9d CC 4.0.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING AND DOCUMENTATION

Based on initial needs assessment, the UATC strengthened the capacity of partner organisations operating in crisis contexts through training, technical support, and documentation. We trained more than 25 civil society organisations and legal professionals in Bangladesh and supported exiled Sudanese human rights defenders through remote documentation workshops. We conducted forensic medical examinations, in-depth interviews, and fact-finding missions, including including the DRC, Georgia and Bangladesh, demonstrating systematic patterns of torture and other ill-treatment.

From analysing victims' testimonies from Ukraine to providing technical expertise on documenting protest policing and weapons use, across contexts, these efforts improved evidence collection, strengthened accountability processes, and enhanced the ability of partners to respond effectively to torture and other ill-treatment.

READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT

Russian missile attack on residential building in Dnipro, Ukraine, 2023. People honoured the memory of those who died during the attack. © Shutterstock



FOCUS IN

CRISIS RESPONSE ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE

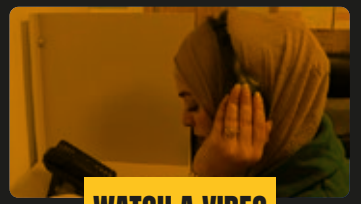
Since 7 October 2023, UATC member organisations conducted regular activities, both collectively and individually, in response to the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We stressed the urgent need to protect civilians and to ensure humanitarian access, and called on the international community to act on "the unfolding torture crisis".

In May 2024, the UATC established a dedicated crisis response team on Israel/Palestine. Following assessments with local partners operating under extreme conditions, the response focused on survivor support, documentation, and advocacy.

We provided nearly €60,000 in emergency grants, enabling psychological first aid for more than 700 survivors in Gaza, counselling for 400 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank (many recently released from Israeli detention), and the documentation of 100 cases of torture of Palestinian prisoners released by Israel since October 2023.

The UATC led sustained advocacy, issuing urgent appeals, engaging UN Special Rapporteurs, and supporting advocacy at the UN Human Rights Council and with the EU. Joint reporting to the CAT ensured that survivors' testimonies informed its November 2025 review of Israel. Online social media campaigns showcased the work of partners in the OPT, highlighting their needs, and called for long-term funding for torture rehabilitation for Palestinians, reaching an audience of over 1.5 million people around the world.

Through coordinated support, advocacy, and documentation, the UATC maintained international attention, strengthened accountability efforts, and helped to ensure that partners operating in near-impossible conditions of war and occupation could continue delivering life-saving psychosocial services to those most in need.



WATCH A VIDEO

UATC ISRAEL/PALESTINE CRISIS RESPONSE

4.6 UNITED FRONT: POLICING OF PROTESTS

> **Popular movements are one of the greatest tools we have to fight back, to come together, to confront the State in a systematic way, applying pressure on the State for reparation and non-repetition of these acts of violence."**
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> **Juan Pablo Fonseca**, survivor of torture in protests in Colombia and member of the collective action group MOCAO, which brings together victims of ocular injuries

Through our United Front, we addressed police violence as torture and other ill-treatment—especially during protests—and drove reform by developing standards and tools, supporting advocacy and litigation, and securing stronger international protections and accountability.

ADDRESSING TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT IN PROTESTS

The UATC worked to address torture and other ill-treatment in protests, drawing on our global expertise.

We established a Working Group of experts from diverse regions and disciplines to promote best practices. In consultation with civil society and other anti-torture actors, we developed key resources, including a policy paper, *Protesting Without Fear*, which outlines measures for States to take effective measures to safeguard against torture and other ill-treatment in protests; and a practical guide, *Challenging Repression*, for documenting and challenging misuse of police weapons.

The UATC organised regional monitors labs with partners from the Americas and Europe and Central Asia which allowed for the sharing of best practices and successful strategies in the monitoring of protests from key national actors.

We also provided technical assistance across Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Serbia, and the Republic of Korea through workshops, trainings, specialised and strategic advice, and forensic support.





Hong Kong police fired tear gas to disperse crowds during a 2019 pro-democracy protest. © Studio Incendo

These efforts supported documentation of abuses, analysis of weapons and equipment, and capacity-building for civil society and legal professionals. Advocacy efforts prompted UN responses, including CAT engagement with Kenya and a joint allegation letter from Special Procedures on violations in Georgia.

Further support to documentation efforts included updating the *Protest Toolkit* with guidance on police equipment training civil society, following Bangladesh's 2024 student protests, contributing to the OSCE-ODIHR policing assemblies' course, and supporting NPMs in assessing the human rights impact of law enforcement weapons.

IMPROVING STANDARDS AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

We strengthened international standards by integrating anti-torture safeguards into the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association's *Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials to Promote and Protect Human Rights in the Context of Peaceful Protests*, reinforcing human rights compliance in policing practices. We also advocated for the inclusion of stronger language on the absolute prohibition of torture during protests in the 2024 UN Human Rights Council resolution on peaceful protests.

Through the Torture-Free Trade Network, now comprising over 85 partners, we advanced the campaign for a Torture-Free Trade Treaty, contributed to the UN Special Rapporteur's 2023 thematic study exposing the torture trade, and supported the strengthening of the EU Anti-Torture Regulation, which addresses law enforcement equipment used for torture.

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABLE POLICING

The UATC used legal interventions to advance accountable policing. These included intervening in the *Theron v France case*, the first European Court of Human Rights case on the use of explosive grenades against protesters, providing specialised advice in domestic cases in Latin America and Africa, and the filing of a new UN complaint to strengthen the recognition of excessive use of force as torture, including in a case involving a human rights defender from Western Sahara who suffered severe injuries during a peaceful protest.

In Peru, financial support enabled a partner, APRODEH, to represent victims of torture during national protests held between 2022 and 2023, contributing to investigations in several cases and a constitutional complaint against senior political leaders. In Nigeria, financial support to a UATC partner, GAVEL, helped secure the release of a protester arbitrarily detained.

> READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT



Members of the Torture-Free Trade Network met in person in London in 2023.
© Amnesty International

FOCUS IN

ACOUSTIC WEAPONS TO DISPERSE PROTESTERS

On 15 March 2025, thousands protested government corruption in Belgrade. Many reported a sudden, intense sonic wave that caused disorientation and pain across a crowd of people.

The UATC responded immediately, analysing video footage and eyewitness testimony, concluding that explanations given by authorities did not appear to match the reality on the ground. Its technical assessment suggested the possible use of an acoustic weapon to disperse the crowd, giving credibility to protesters' accounts and challenging the official version of events. The findings gained rapid international attention, with coverage across major outlets, including Reuters and CBC News. Growing scrutiny led the UN to open an investigation by early April.

This case demonstrates the power of combining technical expertise, survivor testimony, and coordinated advocacy to expose abuse, especially where new technologies obscure accountability. Building on prior work monitoring protest policing, we acted quickly to analyse the incident and amplify survivor voices globally.

We provided expert input on this case to UN Special Procedures, including the Special Rapporteur on torture and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. The impact extended to legal action: the European Court of Human Rights issued an interim measure ordering Serbia to halt the use of sound devices for crowd control.

4.7 AWARENESS RAISING

Through coordinated communications, survivor-centred storytelling, and strategic visibility efforts, the UATC strengthened public engagement and global awareness of the anti-torture movement and fought back the erosion of the absolute prohibition of torture.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The UATC partnered with journalists and media outlets to raise awareness, strengthen public scrutiny, and amplify survivor voices, contributing to broader recognition of the absolute prohibition of torture and the human rights impact of policing practices.

We led several high-impact multilingual campaigns, including on torture-free trade, survivor engagement, rehabilitation, and key legal cases, and issued timely statements to react to crisis situations in Bangladesh, DRC, Iran, Israel/ Palestine, Georgia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Tanzania, Türkiye and the USA, as well as on the need to increase global support for anti-torture efforts.

Our advocacy and awareness-raising contributed to strengthen safeguards against torture and other ill-treatment and supported our strategic litigation.

We also developed specialist e-bulletins, conducted screenings and journalist training, and developed the Global Torture Index, a pioneering data-driven tool designed to annually assess the risk of torture and other ill-treatment worldwide.

AMPLIFYING SURVIVORS' VOICES

We amplified survivor voices through survivor-centred storytelling, sharing more than 100 multilingual videos featuring survivors and activists with global audiences.

We also ensured survivor participation in public discussions, including Kolbassia Haoussou, Head of Survivors Speak Out, taking part in a live podcast marking the 40th anniversary of the UNCAT in Geneva. Another key initiative to mark the anniversary, "Voices for Human Dignity", featured video and written interviews with human rights experts from the EU and UN, civil society representatives, as well as torture survivors who have become advocates.

> READ MORE IN OUR IMPACT



UATC's regional partners' meeting in Banjul, The Gambia, brought together 45 human rights defenders from 16 African countries for strategic discussions and solidarity-building. © IRCT

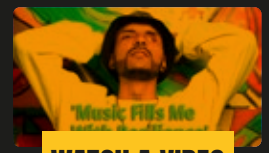
FOCUS IN SURVIVING OCULAR INJURIES

Through the Centre of Psychological Assistance Corporation (CAPS) in Colombia, the UATC partnered with MOCAO, a group of survivors of police-inflicted ocular injuries during social protests in recent years.

Profiling seven members of that group in engaging, youth-oriented short videos, we produced a UATC communications series working with a Colombian filmmaker and in direct collaboration with members of MOCAO, who posted the videos on the group's Instagram page.

Alongside the publication of MOCAO's research in the *Torture Journal*, the series secured UATC a slot on the main stage at ZEG festival in Tbilisi, Georgia, one of Europe's leading international media and culture events.

Four members of MOCAO were supported by CAPS and the UATC to perform a theatre piece at ZEG with audio-visual presentation followed by a Q&A with an audience of internationally renowned journalists and filmmakers, as well as Georgian survivors of torture in protests.



WATCH A VIDEO

Inspired by their increased international exposure and collaborations, the International Center for Research on Ocular Violence (CIIVO), a new survivor-led global centre, which includes MOCAO members, organised the world's first international meeting of survivors of police-inflicted ocular injuries in Bogotá in March 2026. UATC organisations participated in the meeting, which laid the foundations for a survivor-led global advocacy movement that first began in a rehabilitation room at CAPS four years earlier.

5 THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Over its first three years, the UATC has laid a strong foundation for scalable, global impact. It has shown that when expertise is united, survivors lead, and advocacy is sustained, then the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment can be strengthened and defended.

Building on this foundation, UATC will continue its work around several strategic priorities:

- **Deepen support for survivors and strengthen their involvement** within UATC by integrating their voices and experiences across all our work and support their participation in anti-torture efforts and broader debates.
- **Strengthen the anti-torture movement** through continued funding and technical support, expanded peer learning, greater engagement of underrepresented actors, and stronger collaboration with local actors, including by integrating tools such as the *Global Torture Index* and *Mapping Torture Prevention*.
- **Through a survivor-centred approach,** support efforts to advance the prohibition of torture, strengthen prevention, challenge impunity, secure justice, and ensure redress— including reparations and rehabilitation— by mobilising survivors, local organisations, legal professionals, oversight bodies, and other anti-torture actors.
- **Advance ratification and implementation** of the UNCAT, OPCAT and key standards, including the *Méndez Principles*, the *Model Protocol for Law Enforcement Officials*, and the UN Guidance on less-lethal weapons, by supporting preventive mechanisms and other anti-torture actors.
- **Increase emergency first responses** to acute or emerging crisis situations, in which torture and impunity are key characteristics.
- **Strengthen collective action** against torture and other ill-treatment during protests by promoting safeguards and leveraging regional and global initiatives, including the campaign for a Torture-Free Trade Treaty, to drive reforms.

UATC is now poised to scale its impact, transforming the anti-torture movement into a coordinated, unstoppable force for human dignity worldwide.



Girl sitting on her dad's shoulders holding a handwritten sign that reads "HEAR ME ROAR" in the Women's March in New York, US. © Pixabay | Don Emmert for AFP/Getty Images

UNITED AGAINST TORTURE

ABOUT THE UATC MEMBERS

The **Association for the Prevention of Torture** (APT) is an independent NGO founded in Geneva in 1977, working globally to prevent torture and other ill-treatment. Its vision is simple yet powerful: societies without torture or ill-treatment. The APT drives change by influencing laws, standards, policies, and practices; strengthening the capacity of partners worldwide; and fostering constructive dialogue to find practical, sustainable solutions. Headquartered in Geneva, it works in all contexts where people are deprived of their liberty.

The **International Federation of ACATs** (FIACAT) is an international non-governmental organisation for the defence of human rights, set up in 1987. Its aim is the fight against abusive pre-trial detention, prevention of torture in prisons, improvement of the administration of justice, and the abolition of the death penalty. It comprises some 30 national associations, the ACATs, on three continents. FIACAT's strength lies in its network, which links the ACATs to one another. Its local roots are the bedrock of its legitimacy and the relevance of its action.

With 176 members in 80 countries, the **International Rehabilitation Council for Torture** (IRCT) Victims is a global network of civil society organisations and independent experts who support survivors of torture to heal and rebuild their lives through rehabilitation, including medical, psychological, legal and social support, producing forensic evidence, and publishing academic research in the fight for justice.

The **OMCT** empowers a global network of over 200 anti-torture organisations through a holistic approach to torture. It drives change via sustained advocacy circuits, integrating local documentation into advocacy before regional and international mechanisms and back to local implementation. As the coordinator for civil society participation in the work of the UN Committee against Torture since 2014, OMCT bridges global and local efforts. Additionally, it strives to protect human rights defenders at risk and provides direct support to member and partner organisation to ensure continued anti-torture work including in crisis contexts.

Recognising that an increasing amount of torture and ill-treatment today occurs in acts of excessive force against protesters or vulnerable individuals during arrest, **Omega Research Foundation** exposes the use of specialist weapons and equipment to violate human rights. Omega are experts in evidence-based research into the 'tools of torture', and are leading, with partners from around the world, a growing campaign for controls on their trade.

REDRESS seeks justice and reparation for survivors of torture, challenges impunity for perpetrators, and advocates for legal and policy reforms to combat torture. Our cases respond to torture as an individual crime in domestic and international law, as a civil wrong with individual responsibility, and as a human rights violation with state responsibility.

UNITED AGAINST TORTURE 2023-2026

UNITED AGAINST TORTURE

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