



CONVENTION AGAINST TORTURE INITIATIVE
CTI2024.ORG

FAREWELL INTERVIEW:

DEPARTING HEAD OF CTI SECRETARIAT, DR. ALICE EDWARDS,
ANSWERS FIVE QUESTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE'S
MOMENTUM, PROGRESS AND LEGACY



The stark realities of torture and ill-treatment are evident in all corners of the globe, making the mission of the Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI) pressing and purposeful. CTI harnesses international cooperation, offers State-to-State support and expert technical advice to help reduce and prevent risks of excessive force and unlawful treatment.

In a farewell interview with Dr. Alice Edwards, departing Head of the CTI Secretariat, as she steps down after five and a half years from the post (January 2016-July 2021), she takes a retrospective look at her experiences, the Initiative's achievements and priorities, and forecasts ahead at future goals. She also speaks expansively of her role providing strategic and policy advice to the CTI Core States - Chile, Denmark, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco - its expanding network of friends and partners, and as the primary facilitator of the Initiative's annual programme of global and regional activities and technical seminars.

QUESTION 1:

The CTI is quite unique in reach and mandate, why was the Initiative designed this way?

“CTI is indeed a truly unique human rights endeavour, ground-breaking in its approach of States being at the forefront of supporting and encouraging each other to do better. As we know too well, torture, ill-treatment and -punishment remain among the greatest threats to political stability and economic prosperity in many countries as well as standing in the way of the international ideals of peace, dignity and rule of law. CTI is a response to these challenges.

CTI is the only fully funded project of its kind in which a group of States, each drawn from a different strategic region in the world, have come together with shared determination of promoting and encouraging compliance with an international human rights treaty, in this case the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT). Usually this type of human rights campaign is left to non-governmental organisations, but that's what makes CTI original – it is a project that is truly State-led and State-oriented.

There is a lot of chatter in the corridors and e-rooms of the United Nations these days that multilateralism – or the peaceful relations between States - is becoming more and more difficult, some say it is in crisis. Marking the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, stated on 21 September 2020 in New York, that “Today we have a surplus of multilateral challenges and a deficit of multilateral solutions.” He called for more effective multilateralism with “vision, ambition and impact.” Well, I believe that a handful of unlikely governments had already pre-empted that call, and that CTI is a model of a new form of multilateralism and engagement that is producing results.

CTI'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

C Cooperative and constructive engagement that is State-led and -inspired

T Twinning between States, working through regional and global settings to better facilitate peer-to-peer discussions and support

I Inspiring States through sharing of experiences and challenges, rather than proscribing behaviour

? QUESTION 2:

How does CTI's approach of 'No Name, No Shame' foster cooperation and engagement?

“ The “no name, no shame” approach of CTI, alongside the principles of equality and mutual respect between States, really help open doors to dialogue and also level the playing field to allow all governments, no matter their region or stage of development, to speak about the challenges they face in eradicating torture from all our societies.

The credibility of the core States rests on their honesty in being able to talk about their own challenges, and discuss the strengths and limits of different legal systems and traditions. This approach allows for more effective experience-sharing and knowledge transfer than the often top-down methods of some other organisations. It is too easy to simply shame governments, by shouting loudly at their shortcomings. While at times of course public exposure of wrongdoing is a much needed response, and other organisations including the United Nations and NGOs are well placed to undertake that task, the CTI does something different. What CTI adds is being in a position to understand the very real challenges and obstacles many States face as they build their criminal justice systems, and we help guide them on the steps needed to inculcate change. We do not judge. We progress at their own pace. And we encourage even inspire - through peer-to-peer exchanges - between States.

? QUESTION 3:

What are some of the more intractable challenges countries grapple with for which CTI is providing support?

“ The conditions that necessitated the creation of UNCAT in the 1980s – dictatorships using torturous force to oppress their people and the abuse of power by public officials – remain stubbornly entrenched today, making our efforts as necessary and timely as when the Convention was first adopted. There are also new negative trends.

For instance, in recent decades we have seen a rise in the use of torture in response to terrorist and national security threats; many of today's conflicts are characterized by widespread torture and similar war crimes as though lessons from the past have not yet been learned; and we continue to witness heavy-handedness, racism and discrimination by police and law enforcement in many settings. Democratic societies are not immune from these realities either.

Torture pollutes the entire well: it destroys confidence in the delivery of equitable, effective justice and the principles of fair trial, and is another form of corruption. All of us should rethink how we want our societies to be governed and policed, and the ways we can foster a human rights culture at all levels.

That said, there are many positive examples of progress and changes being made everyday. CTI has documented these in our [UNCAT implementation tools](#), in which we have collected more than 180 different ways to prevent and respond to torture and ill-treatment.

MAKING TORTURE A CRIMINAL OFFENCE: Although we have made encouraging – even momentous strides in many areas – many States have not yet fully entrenched the basic call that all offences of torture be prosecutable in domestic law, as per Article 4 of the Convention. Including torture as a specific crime in national penal codes will help address impunity and provide justice and redress for victims. To support States to do so, CTI published a [comprehensive anti-torture legislation guide](#) and has been rolling out workshops on legislative drafting – so far in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific – to enable the criminalization, investigation and prosecution of crimes of torture.

BUILDING PROFESSIONAL POLICE SERVICES: Police and law enforcement authorities are the major State institutions with inherent individual and collective responsibility to protect citizens from unlawful treatment, while simultaneously being the public authorities most likely to be accused of such misbehaviour. Because of this intersection, police are among the most important groups CTI works with. Among our priorities have been changing mindsets by reforming internal police cultures and carrying out training and capacity building on humane yet effective policing and interrogation techniques. We also encourage gender and ethnicity balanced representation within police ranks and appropriate recruitment, remuneration and promotions systems.

Since 2016 CTI has been assisting States to review their national procedures and practices of arrest and interrogation and build national capacities, in line with Articles 10 and 11 of the Convention. CTI's 2016-17 strategy was the first document I worked on in my first six weeks at CTI (!), in which we identified interviewing by police as a specific risk area and it was subsequently made a focus for CTI. The Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, later that year published his [final report](#) on the effectiveness of investigative interviewing, calling for a universal set of standards, both as a crime solving method and as a tool to prevent torture and ill-treatment. This technique has since become a rallying cry in the international fight against torture.

Working together with the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, the Norwegian Police and the Association for the Prevention of Torture, we issued two relevant CTI UNCAT implementation tools in 2017: the first is a training kit on [non-coercive and truth-searching investigative interviewing](#) techniques, and the second is on [safeguards](#) in the first hours of police custody when there is a high volatility of abuse. These two tools – translated now into multiple languages – present a wide range of good State practices in these areas, which can be used as examples to guide change in policing interviewing techniques and have knock-on effects for other areas of law enforcement. I was pleased too to serve on the Advisory Council for the recently launched '[Mendez Principles](#) on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering', a potentially groundbreaking shift in the ways police detectives handle suspects, witnesses and victims.

Racism and prejudice in policing came to the fore in 2020, and will need to remain an important area of focus going forward. Studies had long evidenced that disadvantaged and minority groups are the most exposed to abuse by the authorities. For our part, CTI contributed a submission to the High Commissioner for Human Rights' [report](#) on the same subject; have embarked on a project to produce a police manual on institutional and cultural ways to inculcate a human rights ethos into policing, collaborating with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime; and following CTI's [Global Forum on Innovation in Policing](#) held in Copenhagen in 2019, the Core States called on all UN Member States to [pledge zero tolerance](#) for racism in law enforcement and to review national procedures and rules. These are all areas where continued future focus is needed.

ADDRESSING PRISON OVERCROWDING: Another key area where States ask for our assistance is in the area of prison overcrowding and conditions of detention, which remain immense problems in many countries. With our prison expert consultants, we have reviewed detention systems, advised governments on modest but effective adjustments, parole systems, rehabilitation and skills, and encouraged the creation of independent visiting bodies.

? QUESTION 4:

**CTI is best known for its campaign for universal ratification of the Convention?
How is that campaign progressing?**

“ We've helped many of the newly ratified States to address gaps in policies and laws, technical expertise and professional capacity that ultimately inhibit the decision to ratify. Since CTI started, 17 additional States have ratified UNCAT (see table), bringing the total number to 171. Our results are tracking higher than most other core human rights treaties and UNCAT is now equal to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, a treaty that is ten years older than UNCAT. In 2020, UNCAT ratifications accounted for one-third of all ratifications to the core human rights treaties and the most ratified in that year. When we started it was one of the least ratified of the core nine human rights treaties. These are impressive statistics, and suggest that global ratification of UNCAT is within sight by CTI's deadline of 2024. I have been personally enormously proud of this record.

Although CTI is best known for our work advancing global ratification of UNCAT, the Initiative is most effective because it also invests in States' implementation of the Convention. Ratification of an international treaty is only a first step. The real work starts when implementation begins.

A mixture of diplomacy and practical advice has tended to achieve the fastest results. Having introduced to CTI the concept of diplomatic and technical visits to countries that have not yet ratified the Convention or who are in the early stages of implementation, we have been able to work with governments on a more active and practical basis. These visits – headed by one or more CTI Core States at ministerial or ambassadorial level and accompanied by subject-matter experts – have the advantage of walking hand-in-hand with a country, meeting its officials and other local stakeholders, hearing and sharing challenges and finding solutions and strategies to overcome them, and building long lasting bonds of friendship and trust. They have been followed up by technical seminars tailored to the particular challenges they face or other one-on-one advice, and we have been able to recruit world leading experts and government practitioners to join us. These visits, the results they have generated, and the relationships they have fostered have been some of the most rewarding aspects of the past five years.

QUESTION 5:

What is the legacy you hope CTI will leave behind?

“ I am certain that CTI’s legacy will be immense. I see it continuing on two levels.

First, individual States who take action to join the UNCAT family will reap the benefits of concerted improvements at the national level. These improvements will include delivering justice and reparations for victims and survivors of torture and ill-treatment; institutionalizing police and other government agencies with principles and practices to disincentivise and decrease risks of torture, and which put in place sustainable structures to investigate, prevent and respond to negative behaviour. People everywhere will live in more just societies.

Second, CTI is an important multilateral model that could be replicated for other human rights campaigns. Its legacy is already proving to be a real world example of how States can help and encourage each other on what is often a very sensitive subject, and an approach that generates concrete and lasting results. Many governments are thirsty for advice and assistance in the area of torture prevention and response that is non-judgmental, which allows the authorities to be honest and realistic about the type and scale of their challenges, past mistakes and shortfalls, and to take the step to make important changes to mindsets, institutions and laws. Only by being honest will change be possible.

These are Dr. Edwards’ personal views and do not necessarily reflect those of the CTI Core States. At the invitation of the Core States, Dr. Edwards will continue to advise the Initiative and will serve on the [CTI Group of Friends](#) in an expert capacity.



NEW STATE PARTIES SINCE 2014

AFRICA (7) | 3 states remaining to ratify

- Angola (2 October 2019)
- Central African Republic (11 October 2016)
- Comoros (25 May 2017)
- Eritrea (25 September 2014)
- The Gambia (28 September 2018)
- Sao Tome & Principe (10 January 2017)
- South Sudan (30 April 2015)

ASIA (1) | 8 states remaining to ratify

- Viet Nam (5 February 2015)

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN (3) | 7 states remaining to ratify

- The Bahamas (31 May 2018)
- Grenada (26 September 2019)
- Saint Kitts and Nevis (21 September 2020)

MIDDLE EAST (2) | 0 states remaining to ratify

- State of Palestine (2 April 2014)
- Oman (9 June 2020)

PACIFIC (4) | 6 states remaining to ratify

- Fiji (14 March 2016)
- Kiribati (22 July 2019)
- Marshall Islands (12 March 2018)
- Samoa (28 March 2019)

171 Total UNCAT States parties

17 New States parties since CTI started

24 Remaining States to ratify

3 Years left to ratify before CTI’s 2024 deadline