

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI index: IOR 42/004/2009  
8<sup>th</sup> October 2009

### **United Nations: Call to nominate independent and qualified candidates for the election of members to the Committee against Torture**

Amnesty International is calling on all states parties to the United Nations (UN) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) to elect independent and highly qualified candidates to the Committee against Torture.

Elections to this body will take place in Geneva on 13 October 2009, when states parties will have the opportunity to elect five members. The term of service of half of the current members of the Committee expires on 31 December 2009.

The main function of the Committee is to review the application of the CAT by states parties. Yet, sometimes those same states parties nominate and elect individuals who hold a position within the executive of government. "Clearly, this has negative implications for the perception of the Committee as an independent and expert body. We are therefore calling on states parties to elect only candidates who are independent and expert in prevention and repression of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," the organization said.

Amnesty International encourages each state party to review the gender balance, as well as geographical representation, in the committee's composition before every election takes place and bear these considerations in mind when nominating and electing candidates.

Although a limit on members' terms is not prescribed in the text of the CAT, the organization believes that all treaty bodies benefit from renewed membership at regular periods. It is also important that all states parties which do not have a national serving on the treaty body in question put forward a candidate to ensure that there are contested elections.

#### **Background**

#### **The Committee against Torture monitors states parties' implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment).**

According to Article 17 of the Convention, the Committee shall consist of 10 experts:

1. who are persons of high moral standing and recognized competence in the field of human rights (consideration being given to equitable geographical distribution and to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience;
2. and who shall serve in their personal capacity

States parties elect the members of the Committee by secret ballot from a list of persons who possess the above qualifications and who are nominated by states parties as candidates. Each state party may nominate only one candidate from among its nationals. (Article 17, CAT).

In the election of the Committee, states shall further give consideration to equitable geographical distribution of membership and to the representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems.

Elections take place every two years for five seats out of 10 in order to ensure the complete composition is not changed at one occasion. Among the current members whose term of office continues until 31 December 2011 are nationals of Chile, Cyprus, Ecuador, Senegal and the USA.

Candidates for this election come from Algeria, China, Italy, Libya, Madagascar, Morocco, Norway, Russian Federation and Spain.

Two other UN treaty-monitoring bodies will be electing new members in the coming weeks. Nine members of the Committee on Migrant Workers will be elected on 3 December 2009 members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights will be elected in April 2010. Also in these elections Amnesty International is calling for the nomination and election of independent and expert candidates.

The full text of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cat.htm>.

For more information on the Committee against Torture see:  
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/index.htm>

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