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Philippines: UN torture review must spur reforms

The Philippines authorities must use its review at the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) in Geneva from 27-28 April as an opportunity to break with its dark history of police torture in custody, Amnesty International said.

“The Philippines government cannot waste any more time ignoring appeals for it to bring police torture to an end,” said Josef Benedict, Amnesty International’s Director of Campaigns for South-East Asia.

“The Committee on Torture’s review is a moment to break once and for all with beatings, cigarette burns, electric shocks, torture roulette, and other horrific practices.”

Amnesty International’s research team on the Philippines will present a statement during the UN body’s review, and the organization will have spokespeople available in Geneva and London.

Talking points include:

- Amnesty International has documented at least 50 cases of torture and other ill-treatment during arrest and detention from 2010 to 2014.
- The police in the Philippines have subjected detainees to systematic beating, punching and kicking; burning with cigarettes; waterboarding; electric shocks and various forms of “sexualized” torture.
- In 2014, one police facility was discovered to have a ‘torture roulette’ table. Different torture methods were chosen by spinning the wheel. A ‘30 second bat position’, for instance,, meant that the detainee would be hung upside down like a bat for 30 seconds.
- Despite adopting the Anti-Torture Act in 2009, the first conviction under the law only took place this month.
- There has been little progress towards the implementation of a National Preventative Mechanism, an obligation under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), a supplementary treaty that the Philippines has ratified.
- The Oversight Committee, tasked with reviewing the implementation of the Anti-Torture Act took years to establish and even then, has only met twice.
- The need to streamline investigation and accountability mechanisms making it easier for victims of torture to access justice.

Public Document

For more information, to request embargoed materials, or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International’s press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

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