



GQUAL, IRCT, MENA Rights Group and REDRESS call for gender parity in the next composition of the Committee Against Torture

The GQUAL Campaign, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), MENA Rights Group and REDRESS call on States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) to nominate and elect candidates in the upcoming Committee Against Torture (CAT) election, with a view to achieving gender parity in the composition of the Committee.

Later this year, during the 19th Meeting of States Parties, States will be electing five members to the Committee. The election affects half of the CAT membership and, therefore, it is likely to have a great impact on the body's composition, legitimacy, and effectiveness.

The CAT is composed of 10 independent experts, who need to be persons of high moral character and recognized competence in the field of human rights. Members are elected for a term of four years. Currently, out of the 10 members of the CAT seven are male and three are female. Out of the three female members, two of them have their mandates expiring this year.

Women have been historically under-represented in the CAT. Between 1988-1991, two women served as members out of the 10 members of the Committee. In 1992-1993, the CAT had an all-male composition. While one woman was elected as member in 1994, the representation of women was back to 0% in 1998. Between 2000-2005, only one woman served out of 10 members. In 2006, the number of women increased to three. In 2008, CAT had four women, marking the highest female composition in its history. Since then, the composition has fluctuated with three to four women, currently having only three.

Established in 1988 pursuant to Article 17 of UNCAT, the CAT is the main body monitoring and ensuring compliance by States around the globe to prevent and eradicate torture. The CAT has also clarified the scope of the UNCAT on key issues such as the absolute and non-derogable nature of the prohibition of torture, the right of victims to reparations, or the pervasive nature of violence against women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community as a form of torture, including when it is committed by non-State actors. Women's equal participation in the composition of the CAT is critical to amplify the perspectives considered and improve the depth and impact of the decisions adopted on all these important matters.

The historic underrepresentation of women in the CAT was noted by the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee in its report on "Current levels of representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms: ensuring gender balance" ([A/HRC/47/51](#)) of 21 May 2021. In order to tackle this problem, the Advisory Committee recommended States Parties to take the following measures:

- 1) Ensure more female candidates are nominated by:

- a. Developing and adopting formal, open and transparent national nomination procedures
 - b. Including gender parity as a specific selection criterion and goal in formal nomination procedures
 - c. Considering the actual and historical gender composition of the respective UN body and committing to nominating a candidate of the underrepresented gender
- 2) Ensure that more women are elected or appointed by:
- a. Undertaking firm commitments to guarantee gender parity in the election of candidates to fill vacancies in United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms
 - b. Incorporating gender parity in voting practices
 - c. Adopting policies requiring the nomination of men and women, as well as considering the historic composition of organs to be considered when voting, particularly in relation to bodies that have not achieved gender parity
 - d. Implementing target measures, such as encouraging States to commit to electing members only of the gender that is underrepresented in that body
 - e. Voting for women candidates in consecutive voting rounds if the minimum targets for parity are not achieved in the first round of votes

We strongly call on States Parties of the UNCAT to take into account the recommendations issued by the Advisory Committee, as well as any other measure aimed at ensuring the next composition of the CAT achieves gender parity.