

COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE
Forty-fifth session
1-19 November 2010

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 19 OF THE CONVENTION**

**Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture
(Extracts for follow-up of CAT/C/ECU/CO/4-6)**

ECUADOR

(...)

C. Main subjects of concern and recommendations

(...)

Protection of forensic physicians and other human rights defenders

12. The Committee is appalled at and most vehemently condemns the murder on 6 July 2010 of Dr. Germán Antonio Ramírez Herrera, forensic expert specializing in the investigation of cases of torture and summary executions. According to reports, Dr. Ramírez Herrera received threats after documenting cases of torture and ill-treatment in the Quevedo Social Rehabilitation Centre. The Committee would also request that the State party afford adequate protection to the members of the national network of forensic experts and for all human rights defenders engaged in combating torture and impunity in Ecuador (arts. 2, 12, 13 and 16).

The State party should:

- (a) Inform the Committee of the results of the investigations conducted into the murder of Dr. Ramírez Herrera as soon as the proceedings of the case have been made public;**
- (b) Initiate a programme for the protection of professionals who through their investigations are able to throw light on the facts of alleged cases of torture and ill-treatment.**

(...)

Abuse and refoulement of asylum-seekers and refugees

14. The Committee notes with great concern the deterioration in the situation on the northern border with Colombia stemming from the domestic conflict in that neighbouring country and the presence of groups involved in organized crime, as a result of which the State party has stepped up its military presence in the area. While it appreciates the serious difficulties the State party has to deal with in order to preserve public order in provinces on the border, the Committee is deeply concerned about the reports received of continual abuses and acts of violence against the civilian population, and in particular asylum-seekers and refugees of Colombian nationality,

committed by illegal armed groups and members of the Ecuadorian and Colombian security forces (arts. 1–3, 10 and 16).

The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Adopt the necessary measures to guarantee the physical integrity of the civilian population in the provinces on the border with Colombia, including the refugees and asylum-seekers under its jurisdiction;**
- (b) Ensure that investigations are carried out into the murders and abuses committed in this region and that the perpetrators of such acts are brought before the courts;**
- (c) Continue mandatory in-service training programmes on human rights, asylum and migration for members of the State party's armed and security forces, and give priority to those police and military personnel serving or due to serve in border areas;**
- (d) Conduct a periodic review of the contents of the Guide to Human Rights and Human Mobility for members of the State party's armed and security forces.**

15. The Committee notes with deep concern the wealth of documentation received about acts of abuse and sexual assaults on female refugees and asylum-seekers, allegedly committed by members of the State security forces and the Ecuadorian armed forces. The Committee has received information on women and girls, most of whom are of Colombian nationality, who are sexually assaulted or compelled to have sexual relations under threat of expulsion. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to recent cases in which Colombian asylum-seekers were returned in June 2010 and the summary expulsion of another in October 2010 before a decision had been handed down on his appeal (arts. 1–4 and 16).

The State party should:

- (a) Ensure that thorough investigations are carried out into abuses committed against refugees and asylum-seekers, and in particular women and girls;**
- (b) Ensure that such acts do not go unpunished and that the appropriate criminal, civil and administrative liabilities are determined;**
- (c) Take the measures necessary to ensure that persons under its jurisdiction are fairly treated at all stages of the asylum procedure, and in particular that they receive an effective, impartial and independent review of the decision to expel, return or deport them;**
- (d) Ensure compliance with and proper application by the police commissioner (the provincial police authority) and provincial migration police chiefs of the protocol applicable to deportation procedures and, failing this, hand down the appropriate penalties;**

(e) Take the legislative or other measures necessary to facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers;

(f) Strengthen campaigns to raise awareness of the conflict in Colombia and the situation of persons who come to Ecuador in search of refuge, as well as awareness-raising measures that could help eliminate discriminatory or xenophobic attitudes.

(...)

Violence against children, abuse and sexual violence against minors

18. The Committee expresses its deepest concern about the numerous and consistent reports received describing the scale of the problem of abuse and sexual violence against minors in educational establishments in Ecuador. While it takes note of the existence of a plan to eradicate sexual offences in educational establishments, the Committee considers that there has not yet been an adequate institutional response by the State party, and that this is one reason why victims frequently prefer not to report instances of abuse. The Committee is particularly concerned about the information on cases in which the victims have allegedly identified their aggressor among the teaching staff. In this regard, the Committee is closely following the proceedings of the *Paola Guzmán v. Ecuador* case, which was accepted for consideration by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on 17 October 2008 (Report No. 76/18) after an examination of the complaint lodged by the plaintiffs concerning alleged violations of articles 4, 5, 8, 19, 24 and 25 of the American Convention on Human Rights. The Committee is also concerned that corporal punishment is legal within the home (arts. 1, 2, 4 and 16).

The Committee urges the State party, in view of the seriousness of the acts concerned, to:

(a) Step up its efforts to eradicate abuse and sexual violence against minors in schools;

(b) Take all measures necessary to investigate, bring to trial and punish the perpetrators of such acts;

(c) Make available resources to eliminate the persistent pattern of abuse and sexual violence against minors in educational establishments;

(d) Make complaints mechanisms available to victims and their families in educational establishments and other institutions;

(e) Strengthen awareness-raising and in-service training programmes on the subject for teaching staff;

(f) Guarantee that victims have full access to health services specialized in family planning and the prevention and diagnosis of sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, the State party should redouble its efforts to provide victims with redress, including fair and adequate compensation, and the fullest possible rehabilitation;

(g) Establish a consultative mechanism that involves civil society, including parents' associations;

(h) Expressly prohibit corporal punishment of children in the home.

(...)

22. The Committee takes note of the information provided by the State party on the marked reduction in the numbers of people behind bars and on steps taken to deal with the problem of prison overcrowding, notably the introduction of a new inmate benefit calculation system with the reform of the Sentencing Implementation Code. It notes the reprieves granted in 2008 to 2,228 persons detained for being in possession of small quantities of narcotic or psychotropic drugs, and of 13 detainees in the terminal phases of illness. It also notes that since 2006 additional budgetary allocations have been made for the construction, expansion and outfitting of penitentiaries and remand facilities. The Committee is nevertheless concerned at the high levels of occupancy recorded at most detention facilities, mainly as a result of the slow processing of court cases, and reiterates its concern at persistent reports of poor health and hygiene conditions, a lack of staff, inadequate health-care services and a shortage of drinking water and food (art. 11).

The State party should:

(a) Make greater efforts to alleviate overcrowding in prisons, in particular by resorting to alternatives to custodial sentences, in order to reach its stated objective of resolving the problem of prison overcrowding within 18 months;

(b) Continue to put into effect plans to improve and expand the prison infrastructure;

(c) Take steps to improve staffing levels generally and increase the number of prison officials in particular;

(d) Augment the health-care resources available in penitentiary institutions and ensure that the medical assistance given to detainees is of high quality.

(...)

28. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within one year, information on its response to the Committee's recommendations contained in paragraphs 12, 14, 15, 18 and 22 of the present document.

(...)
