

Immediate investigations should be launched into allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment

Geneva, 15 April 2009. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) is deeply concerned about reports of torture and other forms of ill-treatment of individuals, including of minors, in police custody, in the aftermath of the protests that took place from 7 to 8 April 2009 in Chisinau.

According to the information received, a wave of arrests and detention, in particular of young people, has unfolded since 7 April 2009 in Chisinau. A group of national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has collected information regarding about 100 individuals, including minors, who reportedly were arrested in blatant violation of national and international law on arrest and detention procedures, including the right to be promptly informed of the reasons of their arrest and the right of access to their lawyers. Several of these individuals are alleged to have suffered severe beatings and other forms of ill-treatment, including with clubs, full plastic water bottles, fists and feet, in police custody. According to a local media, a young man would have died in detention under unclear circumstances.

It is further reported that the conditions of detention, particularly in Penitentiary institution No. 13, which has received some of the arrested individuals, are very poor. According to the information received, some of the detainees have limited access to food, water and basic sanitary facilities. In other places of detention, persons deprived of their liberty have reportedly been denied visits by lawyers and human rights organisations.

While the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova has reportedly published, on 12 April 2009, lists of people arrested, there are fears that these are incomplete and that a number of individuals remain currently disappeared.

OMCT has also been informed that pre-trial hearings are taking place in district police stations with no or limited access to defence lawyers.

Following the results of the parliamentary elections on 6 April 2009 according to which the ruling communist party of Moldova had won, young people took to the streets in Chisinau protesting the fairness of the elections. These protests later resulted in clashes with police, violence and vandalism.

OMCT is gravely concerned with regard to these reports, in particular the allegations of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and calls on the Moldovan authorities to: 1) locate and make public the whereabouts of all persons who remain disappeared; 2) guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all persons deprived of their liberty and 3) guarantee immediate and unconditional access to their lawyers and families as well as prompt and thereafter regular access to independent medical care.

OMCT recalls that the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of ill-treatment is enshrined in all

the major international and regional legal instruments to which Moldova is a State Party. OMCT therefore calls on the competent authorities to carry out prompt, effective, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into the abovementioned allegations, the results of which must be made public, in order to bring those responsible before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal and to apply penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions as provided by law.

OMCT is also gravely concerned about the circumstances of these arrests and particularly the excessive use of force against minors and it calls on the authorities to order the immediate release of all individuals detained in the absence of valid legal charges consistent with international legal standards, or if such charges exist, bring the individuals concerned before an impartial, independent, and competent tribunal that will guarantee their full procedural rights at every stage of the proceedings and a fair and public hearing in the determination of any criminal charge against them.

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