

## **Joint Declaration from Torture Survivors in Support of a Torture-Free Trade Treaty**

**We, survivors of torture from across the world, together with organizations that provide direct care to survivors, stand united in our demand that the international community take immediate action to stop the globally unregulated production, sale, trade, and use of the tools of torture. We unequivocally support a torture-free trade treaty. We also support any and all bilateral efforts to reduce the practice of torture, and respect human rights more broadly, in the context of military aid and security cooperation among countries.**

Even taken together, the current international human rights architecture, regional human rights mechanisms, and individual state's controls have not proven sufficient to address the production, sale, and trade of equipment that public officials and others use to commit torture. In the absence of clear, binding, and enforceable rules that specifically deal with trade in the tools of torture, such equipment too easily finds its way into the hands of would-be perpetrators. We, and people like us, are the ones who suffer the consequences. This is why a torture-free trade treaty is so important.

**To all governments, private actors, and other relevant stakeholders: Please advocate for a torture-free trade treaty, including mechanisms for monitoring, enforcement, and accountability for those involved in this heinous practice.**

Torture is designed to break bodies, minds, and the human spirit – we bear the long-lasting physical and psychological scars of that cruelty – and the tools used to inflict it must no longer be freely produced, sold, or traded with impunity. Nobody should have to suffer the pain that we have endured. What was done to us has also affected our families and communities, including because the perpetrators who tortured us often also target them. Fearing for the safety of our families is one of torture's hidden harms that is so traumatic to live with. The trauma that torture inflicts passes through generations.

Some of us were tortured with the very equipment that a torture-free trade treaty would prohibit or regulate. All of us were tortured because too many people have turned a blind eye to these barbaric acts. The international community must do more to prevent torture in practice.

**A torture-free trade treaty is one way to reduce the prevalence of torture around the world. The international community must take immediate, concerted action to ensure the safety and protection of all those vulnerable to torture.**

Healing from torture is a long and very hard journey. Having hope can make the difference, especially in the most difficult times, but hope is also easy to lose. Knowing that powerful people around the world are fighting to stop torture gives us hope.

We acknowledge that the path to a torture-free world is arduous, but it is not impossible. It will require the global community, especially those in power, to act decisively with political will, courage, and moral responsibility. It will also require an increase in advocacy efforts – incorporating testimony and other information from survivors – to educate the public, especially those vulnerable to torture, and policymakers about the connection between torture and the globally unregulated trade in the tools of torture.

We urge all stakeholders who face challenges when deciding whether to support a torture-free trade treaty to remember that you are making decisions about people's lives, about us, and people like us with inalienable rights. Good people must not be silent in the face of torture.

**If a torture-free trade treaty would spare even one person the horrors that we have experienced, it is worth any effort that doing so would require. World leaders can achieve this goal if they commit to it, and lives can be saved.**

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