



### *Concept Note & Agenda*

## **“Tackling the trade in tools of torture: the path forward”**

Side event at the 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly

**15 October 2025, 15:00 – 16:30, in-person in Room CR 8**

and streamed on UN Web TV

*Organized by Amnesty International, Omega Research Foundation, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, and Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), on behalf of the Torture-Free Trade Network, in partnership with co-Chairs of the Alliance for Torture-Free (Permanent Missions of the EU and Mongolia), and the Permanent Mission of France.*

### **1. Description of event:**

In protests, during arrest, and in detention, state officials in a variety of countries use law enforcement equipment – from batons and handcuffs to electric shock devices and tear gas – in the commission of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. This side event will discuss how international trade restrictions on law enforcement equipment – a Torture-Free Trade agenda – can help prevent torture and other ill-treatment. It will consider the impact of the trade in tools of torture on human rights – including the right to freedom of assembly, and right to public participation, as well as the protection of human rights defenders and journalists – and the rationale for a comprehensive Torture-Free Trade Treaty. The event will be an opportunity to take stock of progress made by the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade, States, regional organisations, UN Special Procedures, and the Torture-Free Trade Network of civil society organisations. It will consider challenges and opportunities facing the international community in advancing this issue at the UN and beyond.

## 2. Agenda

### Opening remarks:

- Permanent Representative of the delegation of the European Union to the UN, H.E. Ambassador Stavros Lambrinidis
- Permanent Representative of the delegation of Mongolia to the UN, H.E. Ambassador Ankhbayar

### Panelists:

- Dr. Alice Edwards – The UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Ms Gina Romero – The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.
- Dr Rebecca Shaw - Senior Researcher, Omega Research Foundation.
- Ms Juliana Miranda - Head of International Team, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)

**Moderator:** Ms Sherine Tadros - Deputy Director of Advocacy and UN Representative – Amnesty International

## 3. Objectives for the event:

- Take stock of progress on Torture-Free Trade and share global and regional updates
- Promote the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade and highlight opportunities for States and other stakeholders to advance Torture-Free Trade
- Mobilise support for the Torture-Free Trade Treaty process at the UN and discuss a plan for actions in 2026 to support the development of a Treaty

The event will focus on key questions, including:

- What is the human rights impact of the trade in tools of torture?
- Why is a treaty on law enforcement equipment important for the prevention of torture and other ill-treatment, and for the protection of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association?
- What actions can States take to adhere to the recommendations from the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture's [thematic study](#) on law enforcement equipment?
- How is the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade working to push forward the torture-free trade agenda?
- What have State and regional bodies done to advance this agenda?
- What is the role of civil society in working towards an international legally-binding instrument?

#### 4. Background:

There is increasing international recognition of the need to tackle the trade in law enforcement equipment used for torture and other ill-treatment. While almost anything can be used to commit acts of torture or other ill-treatment, all around the world people are tortured by State officials using equipment marketed for law enforcement purposes. Addressing the trade in law enforcement equipment used for torture and other ill-treatment is a vital part of States' torture prevention obligations. A comprehensive Torture-Free Trade Treaty is needed to strengthen the existing anti-torture framework.

The formation of the Alliance for Torture-Free Trade in **2017** by Argentina, the European Union, and Mongolia, marked a key milestone in the international process to address the trade in tools of torture. The Alliance now has more than 60 participating States committed to Torture-Free Trade. In **2022**, a Group of Governmental Experts mandated by the UN General Assembly published their report 'Towards torture-free trade: examining the feasibility, scope and parameters for possible common international standards', which presented recommendations for pathways States could take, including a legally binding instrument on torture-free trade.

In **January 2023**, more than 30 civil society organisations launched the Torture-Free Trade Network, a global coalition of non-governmental organisations advocating for tighter national, regional, and global regulations on law enforcement equipment used for torture and other ill-treatment. The Network now comprises of over 85 civil society organisations from all regions of the world, working together to advance a Torture-Free Trade Treaty.

In **October 2023**, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture presented her [thematic study on the global trade in weapons, equipment and devices used by law enforcement and other public authorities](#) that are capable of inflicting torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The Special Rapporteur's thematic study identified a range of weapons and equipment considered to be inherently cruel, inhuman, or degrading, violating the prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment (Annex I). Such weapons and equipment, including electric shock batons and weighted leg cuffs, have been used to inflict severe physical and psychological harm on protesters, human rights defenders, and detainees around the world. The trade in these types of equipment for law enforcement purposes should be absolutely prohibited.

Other types of law enforcement equipment, such as regular batons and standard handcuffs, can have a legitimate law enforcement purpose, when used in accordance with international human rights standards, but are often used in acts of torture or other ill-treatment. Annex II of the Special Rapporteur's thematic study lists types of equipment that should be subject to human rights-based trade controls, involving robust case-by-case risk assessments, to ensure it is not used for torture and other ill-treatment.

In **October 2025**, at the 80<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, the Special Rapporteur on Torture will present her report on *Global Trends and Developments on Torture*, which will include updates and developments on the issue of the global trade in weapons and equipment used by law enforcement and other public authorities that are capable of inflicting torture and other ill-treatment.

As well as moves to address the torture trade at an international level, regional initiatives reflect a growing focus on torture-free trade as torture prevention. These initiatives include, for example, the recently strengthened European Union Anti-Torture Regulation and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)2. The issue has also been repeatedly raised at the African Commission, including in Resolution 472 on the prohibition of the use, production, export and trade of tools used for torture from 2020.