

Physicians for Human Rights

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://phr.org/our-work/resources/physicians-for-human-rights-submits-shadow-report-to-the-un-human-rights-committee/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Zara Day on September 18, 2013

On October 17, 2013, the United States will be under review by the United Nations to examine U.S. compliance with its legal obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) a treaty the United States ratified in 1992. Among other protections, the ICCPR provides for the right not to be enslaved, the right not to be tortured, and the right to due process. Each of the states party to the treaty are bound to comply with its language, and the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) regularly reviews signatory countries to ensure they are doing so.

Last week, PHR submitted a [shadow report](#) to the HRC to assist in their review of U.S. compliance with the ICCPR. As a part of their review process, the HRC poses questions to the United States related to potential violations of the ICCPR. PHRs report provides the HRC with information from our independent reports and analysis, which offer invaluable information about the psychological and physical health effects of indefinite detention and force-feeding. The PHR report will not only serve to supplement the U.S. governments responses to HRC questions, but also provide the HRC with additional information to help inform humane recommendations for domestic U.S. policy changes.

This PHR shadow report addresses questions posed by the HRC specifically related to the indefinite detention of detainees at Guantanamo Bay. PHR outlines the physical and psychological effects of indefinite detention, which include depression, chronic anxiety, and PTSD all of which can have deleterious effects on physical body systems. PHRs shadow report also discusses hunger strikes, which are often a response by detainees to the physical and psychological effects of their indefinite detention and the illegality of the U.S. standard operating procedures on force-feeding. After chronicling facts about indefinite detention, hunger strikes, and force-feeding, the report examines how current U.S. policies fail to fit into the UN framework and its laws, particularly the ICCPR.

PHR also submitted proposed questions and recommendations for the HRC to present to the United States. One such recommendation is for the United States to change its current standard operating procedures at Guantanamo for the inhumane and unlawful force-feeding of detainees on hunger strike, a procedure that PHR has found amounts to torture in some cases.

Shadow reports can help raise the profile of ongoing concerns regarding our national human rights record. To this end, PHR encourages the United States to approach its upcoming review with the aim of making concrete improvements regarding its record on indefinite detention and force-feeding.

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