

Press release

Bishkek, December 14, 2011 – A roundtable was held for discussion of human rights issues in relation to temporary detention facilities (IVS) in Kyrgyzstan. The roundtable was attended by government representatives including the Attorney General, law enforcement agencies and the Office of the Ombudsman, national and international experts in the field of human rights, including the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The audience presented the results of independent monitoring of the 47 IVS, conducted in all regions during the period from July to November 2011. Monitoring was carried out on the basis of the memorandum of cooperation signed on 7 June 7 2011 by the Ombudsman, the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and eight human rights organisations specialising in the prevention of torture and illtreatment.

Andrew Tesoriere, Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, opened the roundtable and stressed the timeliness and importance of establishing a national human rights protection mechanism to strengthen measures against torture.

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Juan Mendez, reminded participants that freedom from torture is an absolute right which can not be limited under any circumstances. Due to the fact that Kyrgyzstan ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1997 and its Optional Protocol in 2008, the country faced the task of implementation of all commitments, including the early establishment of a national mechanism to prevent torture.

Aziza Abdirasulova, director of the Human Rights Centre *Kylym Shamy*, noted that the use of torture is a tragedy for the entire state; she also called for cooperation between the Prosecutor General's Office, Ministry of Interior and National Security Committee.

"In the Office of the Ombudsman much attention is paid to this problem, and there is even a special department which monitors the situation of torture. I often go to such events, but rarely see the hall so full - the problem is interesting for all", said Ikram Mamedov.

Attorney General of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Aida Salyanova, and

Kashkar Djunushaliev, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, also emphasised the importance of cooperating with human rights organisations, and assured that all recommendations will be taken into account.

The recommendations were addressed directly to the Government, the Supreme Court, the Prosecutor General, and Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration. They are aimed at strengthening the role and influence of government agencies and officials in the prevention of torture and ill-treatment, ensuring the inevitability of punishment for their application, compliance with human rights and freedoms in places of detention and improved conditions of detention in accordance with international obligations by Kyrgyzstan.

At the conclusion of the roundtable it was decided to extend the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding, and a proposal was made to the General Prosecutor's Office and Interior Ministry to join this Memorandum and to provide for the future conduct of preventive visits to places of detention throughout the country with civil society and members of the Ombudsman's Office.

The organisers of the roundtable were the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for Central Asia, European Union, Freedom House, with support from USAID, Office of the Ombudsman, The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Astana, Penal Reform International, Voice of Freedom, Independent Human Rights Group, Kylym Shamy, Justice, and Ray of Solomon.

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