

Marcin Kusy
Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights
Poland

Good afternoon, I am a member of the polish National Preventive Mechanism Against Torture. The Polish NMP has been operating for 11 years so far and we have conducted more than a thousand preventive visits to all kind of places of detention, both public and private ones. The mandate of the NPM in Poland is carried out by the Ombudsman.

Our activity shows, that the torture and mistreatment still happens in Poland. The analyzed final judgements shows that in the period 2008-2016 courts delivered final judgements convicting in total 42 police officers in 28 cases and it should be emphasized that the scale of use of torture by the police is still increasing. In 2018, 6 more sentences become final.

According to the already binding court judgments, the convicted officers have been found guilty of crimes such as beating detainees on the heels with a baton, strangling, squeezing the testicles, undressing and exposing to public in a window, using a spray gun, or conducting a strip body-search without any need. Some of them intimidated detainees with a gun, a dog, with rape or with framing by planting drugs on them and making them criminally accountable. In most cases, the victims of violence were perpetrators of minor offences (including women and very young people).

The most drastic example of police brutality towards a detainee was the case of Igor Stachowiak who died at a police station in 2016, after being detained, handcuffed and tortured by the police officers with an electroshock weapon.

In another case, three young men (aged 19 to 29), suspected of stealing jewelry from a jewelry shop, were tortured at the city police station in Siedlce. Among others, they were beaten on the feet with a baton, water was poured over them, electroshock weapons were used on their genitals, and they were pressed against the floor with a foot when lying down. They were also intimidated with sealing their mouths, hitting on the testicles, being transported to a forest and chased with their hands and legs

cuffed), with beating their brother or sister, or with disseminating false information on their cooperation with law enforcement agencies.

Also during the preventive visits we frequently encountered situations having the potential to result in inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Even last year during our unannounced visit to the Police we met a detainee who had been beaten by the deputy head of visited unit.

However the crime of torture is not provided for in the Penal Code even though the acts committed against the detained persons by the police officers can be classified as the torture in the meaning of Article 1 of the Convention. That is why, last year the polish Ombudsman sent to the ODIHR a request to review polish legislation in relation to the definition of torture. The ODIHR's opinion on definition of torture and its absolute prohibition in polish legislation has been presented as the argument in the Ombudsman's general letter to the Minister of Justice. yet the reply has not been received.

Responding to social expectations, the polish NPM decided to launch a public campaign with a slogan "Torture-free State". Partners in this action are: Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), National Bar Council, National Chambers of Attorneys, Kantar Millward Brown Agency, the Council of Europe, ODIHR/OSCE. The main goal of said campaign is to increase public awareness on what are torture and who can become their victim. From various case files of court proceedings, it can be concluded that the most frequent victims of torture are people with low social awareness, very often juveniles, and also people with disabilities. As part of this campaign, educational meetings are held by representatives of the Mechanism with university students (at faculties such as law, re-socialisation, psychology) who are likely, when they graduate, to work with persons taken into custody. Training activities under the Mechanism covered also Police officers as well as pedagogical and managerial staff of youth education centres.

THANK YOU