



Press Release

## **Seminar on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) in Lebanon**

**Beirut, 2 February 2010 (United Nations Information Centre)** – The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East (OHCHR-ME) is organizing a two-days seminar entitled “Seminar on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) in Lebanon” to prevent torture on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2010 at the UN-House, Riad El-Solh-Beirut at 9 am.**

The seminar, sponsored by Lebanese Minister of Justice Ibrahim Najjar, features opening statements by Najjar, MP Michel Moussa, Head of the Human Rights Parliamentary Committee and Fateh Azzam, Regional Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East. **The seminar ends on Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2010 at 5:00 pm.**

Despite passage of the one-year deadline, the process of NPM establishment has progressed well in Lebanon in 2009, thanks to collaborative effort of Lebanese civil society organizations, UN organizations and Ministry Justice. Following a workshop on OPCAT implementation in Lebanon organized by OHCHR-Beirut in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice on 14 May 2008, the Minister of Justice issued on 20.06.2009 decision 2036 to form a committee for drafting a NPM establishment law. As requested by the Minister, the Committee submitted such a draft law to him on 30.09.2009. The drafting committee drew on preparatory work done by a group of civil society activists during and following an earlier workshop on the OPCAT, organized by the Working Group against Torture and the Association for the Prevention of Torture in March 2009.

It is worth mentioning that Lebanon ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 4 November 2000 and the Optional Protocol on 22 December 2008.

The entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on 22 June 2006 following its ratification by 22 states, marked, back then, the culmination of the international community's efforts towards prevention and protection against torture.

The OPCAT envisages the creation of a developed global system to prevent acts of torture from occurring in places of detention worldwide through the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and national bodies in its State Parties. The idea of creating an effective instrument by conducting unannounced visits to places of detention by a body

or bodies of independent experts, goes back to the very beginning of negotiations on the Convention against Torture in the 1970s. The adoption of OPCAT culminated efforts, which lasted for more than 30 years from the initial negotiations and until transforming this system into a reality.

The UN Information Centre in Beirut (UNIC-Beirut) kindly requests reporters to grant this seminar the highlight it deserves.

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