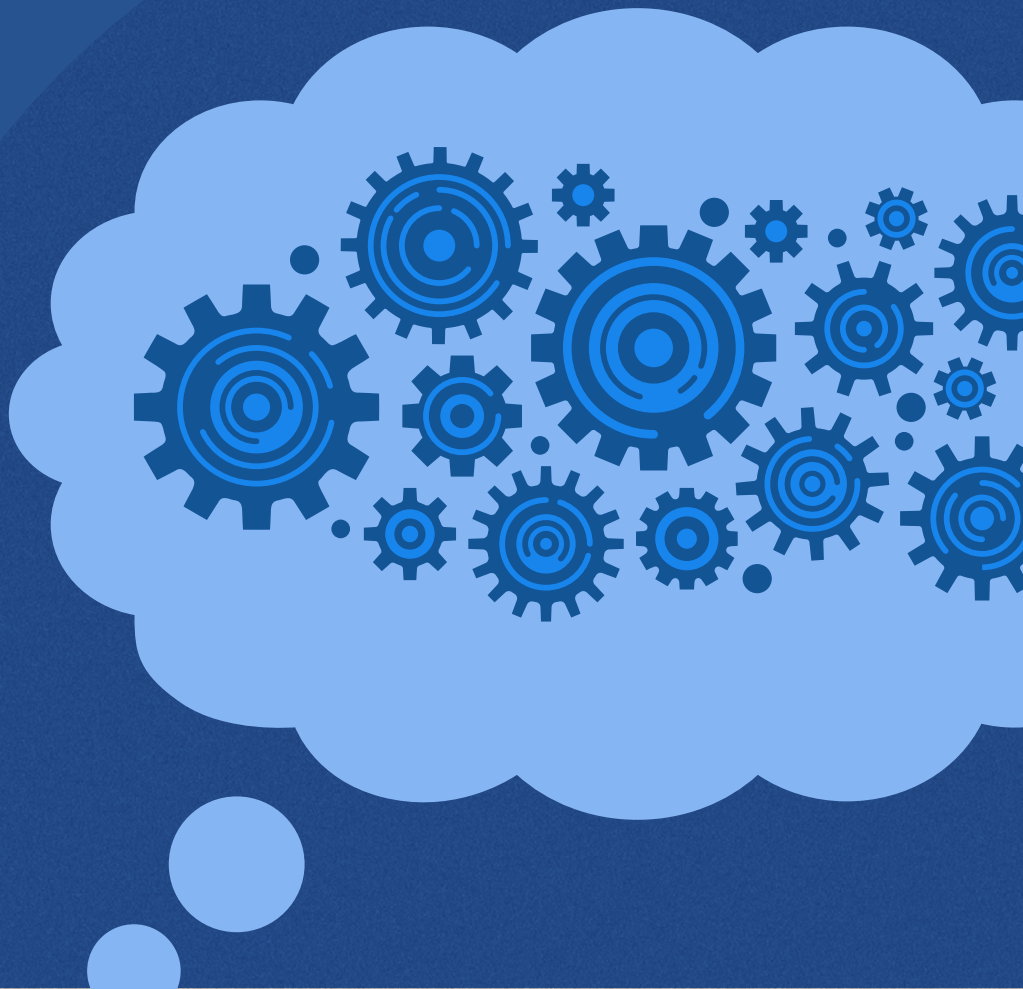




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association for the prevention of torture

# Shifting Mindsets, Transforming Practice: An Implementation Guide for the Méndez Principles

May 2026



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# Foreword

**A**s Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee of Experts who drafted the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, commonly referred to as the Méndez Principles, we welcome APT's publication of this implementation guide.

The guide is conveniently presented in a three-pillar framework: to promote awareness and acceptance, to encourage national ownership and reform and thirdly to foster international cooperation. Within this framework, action steps are proposed, backed up with examples of good practices. In the process, the guide makes the very valid case for a comprehensive approach to implementation, involving all appropriate sectors of government, legislators, law enforcement, intelligence gathering, detaining authorities, oversight bodies, the judiciary, lawyers and prosecutors, the media and civil society.

Furthermore, the guide provides references to further sources of information, research and practical guidance. We encourage readers to make use of those references, including those in the footnotes of the Méndez Principles and the dedicated website [interviewingprinciples.com](https://interviewingprinciples.com), as research and implementation experiences continue to be instructive, dynamic and ongoing.

We expect that this guide will make a very positive contribution to the broad variety of implementation initiatives linked to the Méndez Principles. A cause that deserves priority attention as they provide feasible solutions for a more effective, just and fair administration of justice everywhere.

**Juan E. Méndez and Mark Thomson**

*Co-Chairs, Méndez Principles Steering Committee of Experts*

22 May 2026

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# Table of Abbreviations

<b>APCOF</b>	African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum
<b>APT</b>	Association for the Prevention of Torture
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>EAPCCO</b>	Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institute
<b>NPM</b>	National Preventive Mechanism
<b>OPCAT</b>	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
<b>UNCAT</b>	UN Convention against Torture
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review (of the UN Human Rights Council)
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>SRT</b>	UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

# 1. Background

As the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (SRT), Professor Juan E. Méndez confirmed in 2016, torture and ill-treatment most often occur during the interrogation of suspects.<sup>1</sup> The [Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering](#) (“Méndez Principles” or “Principles”), adopted in May 2021, provide a universal and evidence-based framework for effective interviewing that operationalises the presumption of innocence and helps protect persons from torture, ill-treatment, coercion or threats.<sup>2</sup>

The damaging consequences of coercive interrogation, including false confessions, wrongful convictions and unreliable intelligence, are well documented. The Principles respond to these risks by promoting interviewing practices grounded in science, law and ethics.

The six Principles were developed by a multidisciplinary group of experts, including law enforcement practitioners, human rights specialists, lawyers, psychiatrists, psychologists and medical professionals from all regions. They are designed to be universal, progressive and feasible for States to implement incrementally.

The Principles offer practical guidance for fulfilling States’ existing international obligations, including under the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT).<sup>3</sup> UN and regional bodies, courts and tribunals, bar associations and police associations, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) and NGOs, have all endorsed the Principles and encouraged States to embed them into domestic law, policy and practice.<sup>4</sup> They are increasingly referenced by UN and regional treaty bodies in concluding observations and cited by national courts when considering the admissibility and integrity of evidence.

The breadth of support demonstrates a growing consensus that effective interviewing strengthens law enforcement, enhances the reliability of information and protects human rights. National actors have shown enthusiasm for implementing the reforms outlined in this implementation guide.

1 UN General Assembly, *Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, A/71/298 (5 August 2016) para. 8.

2 Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering Adopted in May 2021 by a Steering Committee of Experts with the support of Anti-Torture Initiative, the Association for the Prevention of Torture and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, available at [www.interviewingprinciples.com](http://www.interviewingprinciples.com).

3 APT, *The Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing: A Tool for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Torture* (Geneva: APT, June 2022; updated April 2024).

4 For instance, the UN General Assembly “takes note with appreciation of the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (the Méndez Principles), and encourages States to use them as appropriate through the implementation of national measures [...]”. See UN General Assembly, *Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, A/RES/77/209 (15 December 2022), para. 16. See also UN General Assembly, *Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, A/RES/80/198 (15 December 2025), para. 17. See also Support to the Méndez Principles | APT; and visit <https://www.apr.ch/our-prioritiesdignity-and-fairness-criminal-justice-system/principles-effective-interviewing> to access APT’s compilation “United Nations, regional and national documents/jurisprudence referring to the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (Méndez Principles)”.

## 2. Introduction

The purpose of this implementation guide is primarily to support States in implementing the Méndez Principles. Yet because implementation depends on a wide range of actors, the guide also offers concrete, role-specific steps to show how the Principles apply to the work of various stakeholders beyond state institutions.<sup>5</sup> The content draws on the expertise and practical experience of experts and research participants who were invited to contribute.

The Principles outline a comprehensive framework for rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing. An integral component of this framework is respect for legal and procedural safeguards. These safeguards include, among others, the right to notification of a relative or third party; the right of access to a lawyer; the right to access medical examination and treatment; registration of detention; full recording of interviews; and the right to prompt presentation before a judicial authority.<sup>6</sup> Their effective implementation reduces the risk of torture and ill-treatment, improves the reliability of information and strengthens the legitimacy of justice outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

The use of coercion during interviewing is ineffective in at least two important ways: it violates human rights and greatly increases the production of unreliable or misleading evidence. Implementing effective interviewing in line with the Principles strengthens prevention, accountability, justice and public security, while respecting the human rights of interviewees.

The Principles are directed to policy/decision makers and national authorities to promote holistic institutional reforms, including planning, training, resourcing and evaluation. These actors include executive authorities, legislators, law enforcement directors, academies, disciplinary boards and others responsible for developing laws, policies, frameworks and practices concerning the interviewing of persons. The Principles are also relevant to professionals and other authorities responsible for investigations or other information gathering processes. They apply to any interview conducted by police and other law enforcement officials, intelligence, military, administrative authorities, or other persons acting in an official capacity. The Principles may further serve as a reference for the accreditation and certification of training programs in these fields.

5 This guide complements other existing resources, such as the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UNPOL), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation* (Vienna: UN, 2024) <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/justice-and-prison-reform/investigative-interviewing.html>. This guide does not purport to be comprehensive; in particular, it does not address specific issues such as the use of digital technology and artificial intelligence in interviews, topics that merit dedicated analysis.

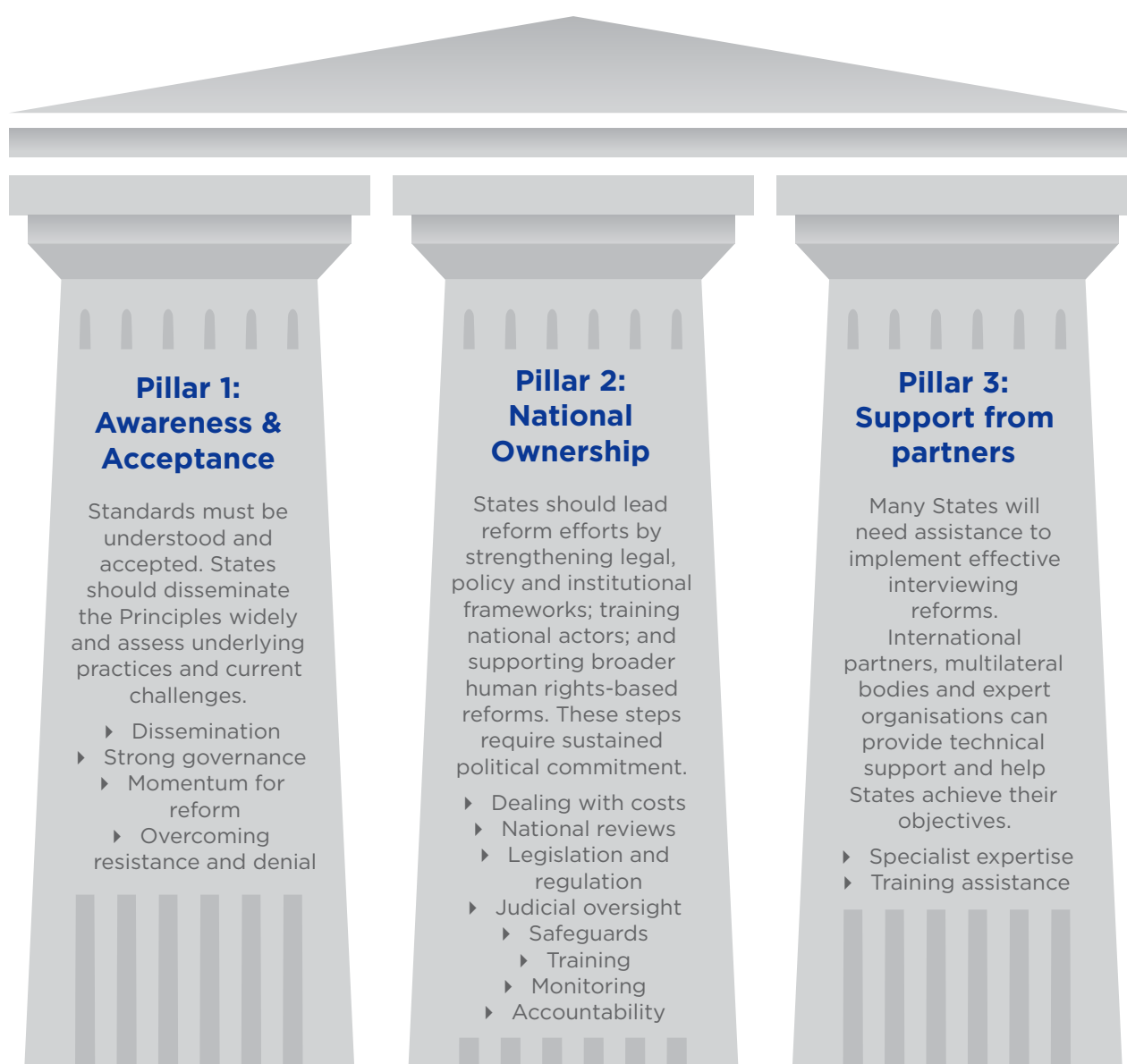
6 Méndez Principles, Principle 2 (on Practice), para. 62. See also section 4.5 of this guide.

7 See, e.g., European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, *28th General Report on the CPT's Activities, 1 January–31 December 2018*, CPT/Inf(2019)9 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, April 2019), para. 66 stating that the “CPT has consistently highlighted the importance of three procedural safeguards, namely: the right of access to a lawyer, the right of access to a doctor and the right to have the fact of one’s detention notified to a relative or another third party of one’s choice. (...) This “trinity of rights” should apply as from the very outset of deprivation of liberty by the police – that is, when the person concerned is obliged to remain with the police. The main reason for this has repeatedly emerged from the CPT’s findings: it is during the first hours of deprivation of liberty by the police that the risk of ill-treatment is at its highest.”

As States bear the obligation to prevent torture and ill-treatment, this implementation guide primarily supports State actors in meeting their human rights duties. However, it is also relevant to judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, training bodies and institutions, NHRIs, NPMs and other oversight bodies, as well as civil society organisations (CSOs) - including those representing victims and survivors<sup>8</sup> - who play essential independent roles in prevention, oversight and accountability. Academic institutions and the media may also find this guide relevant for their work. All relevant stakeholders should contribute to national implementation plans.

## 2.1 Implementation Framework: Three Pillars

Implementation actions can be organised across three pillars. As States are all at different stages of development and represent diverse and unique systems, it is inappropriate to suggest a step-by-step approach. The three pillars acknowledge that implementation is not a linear process: it takes place over time, not in a prescribed order and that some steps will overlap.



<sup>8</sup> Throughout this guide, references to CSOs encompass a broad range of non-governmental actors, including: organisations working on human rights, torture prevention, access to justice and police and criminal justice reform; organisations providing legal, psychosocial or other support to persons in contact with the criminal justice system; and organisations representing or led by victims and survivors of torture, ill-treatment or coercive practices.

## 3. Pillar 1: Awareness and Acceptance

### 3.1. Dissemination of the Principles

National actors should begin by reading and fully understanding the Principles. Accurate translation is therefore essential. Although the Principles have already been translated into many languages,<sup>9</sup> ensuring that all relevant actors can access and understand the Principles in their own language is a foundational step to wider implementation. The appropriate government ministry or institution can take the lead on translations or verifying unofficial existing translations, in coordination with relevant national and international actors. Conversations and debates are essential during the translation process, as equivalent terminology may not always be available in national languages and consensus needs to be reached on a text that most closely reflects the ideas behind the text.

Once translated, materials should be proactively disseminated with key Ministries, relevant investigation and information gathering authorities (including law enforcement, intelligence, military and other administrative authorities), training bodies and institutions, NHRIs, NPMs, Ombuds Institutions and other oversight bodies, judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers and CSOs.

Dissemination should be accompanied by opportunities for discussion and engagement around these materials. These exchanges can prompt questions, identify needs and help shape national implementation strategies. National actors may already be in contact with international partners who should be ready to support such requests (see Pillar Three).

Dissemination can be challenging, especially in large or federal States with multiple law enforcement agencies and complex hierarchies. Even so, ensuring that key actors receive the materials is a critical first step.

Dissemination should reach all stakeholders and evolve over time. While an initial symbolic event may launch the process, ongoing, targeted discussions allow different actors to explore how the Principles add value to their work.

CSOs, media and academic institutions each have a distinct and valuable contribution to make in this regard. CSOs can organise public information campaigns that promote the Principles and discourage coercive practices; media can report accurately and responsibly on interview practices, raising broader public awareness; and academic institutions can embed the Principles in university curricula, ensuring future professionals are educated on effective interviewing.

Collaboration across all stakeholders — institutional and non-institutional alike — can further amplify dissemination efforts and broaden the Principles' reach and impact.

<sup>9</sup> Language versions of the Méndez Principles are available on <https://interviewingprinciples.com/>.

## Specific implementation steps: Dissemination of the Principles



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)

- ▶ Designate a national focal point or coordination unit responsible for overseeing accurate translation, dissemination and follow-up engagement on the Méndez Principles across relevant institutions.
- ▶ Ensure the Méndez Principles are translated into national languages and disseminated widely.
- ▶ Accompany the Principles with explanatory briefings or consultations to identify institutional concerns, clarify expectations and inform national implementation.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Hold public hearings on rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing, legal and procedural safeguards, to raise national awareness and ensure transparency and oversight.
- ▶ Request briefings on how the Méndez Principles have been disseminated, understood and received by relevant institutions, including any identified gaps or concerns requiring legislative attention.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Conduct stakeholder dialogues, professional forums and discussions that raise awareness of effective interviewing and challenge tolerance of abusive practices.



### CSOs

- ▶ Organise public information campaigns that promote the Méndez Principles, highlight the centrality of human rights in interviews and discourage coercive practices.



### Academic institutions

- ▶ Integrate the Méndez Principles into university courses across relevant disciplines, equipping future professionals in legal, law enforcement and related fields with a grounding in effective interviewing.



### Media

- ▶ Report accurately and responsibly on interview practices, raising public awareness of the Méndez Principles and the human rights governing interviews.

## 3.2 Strong governance

Implementation of the Principles must be accompanied by strong governance, understood here as the institutional structures, leadership commitments and accountability mechanisms through which the Principles are embedded into national practice, spanning all levels of the system, and the legal, procedural and cultural conditions necessary for sustainable reform.

Initial discussions should involve key ministries, such as Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs. They should adopt a multidisciplinary approach with inputs from investigation and other information gathering personnel, along with scientific and legal professionals. Psychological research can play a crucial role; as Kassin notes, “If we [psychologists] do not speak up, that void will be filled by others less informed.”<sup>10</sup> The scientific research and evidence should be explained as clearly as possible, as national authorities may be unfamiliar with the science that proves coercive interviewing techniques are ineffective.

In line with the holistic nature of the Principles, discussions should address not only interviewing methodology but also the broader information gathering process and the legal and procedural safeguards that protect individuals from torture, ill-treatment and coercion.<sup>11</sup>

All engagement should begin with the fundamental question: *why is change necessary?* Principle 1 (on foundations) provides the scientific, legal and ethical rationale. State leaders should be encouraged to acknowledge the need for reform; claims that torture ‘is not a problem here’ overlook universal risks of coercion and abuse, as well as documented miscarriages of justice reported in every country.

The need for strong governance recognises that entrenched practices often stem from a lack of accountability and managerial pressures. Lasting changes must therefore be driven from the top, with leaders modelling expectations, enforcing compliance and holding officers accountable.

At the same time, effective implementation requires engagement at all levels of the system, not only at the top and not only from the ground up. In hierarchical institutions, reforms driven solely by senior leadership may not translate into changes in practice if mid-level managers — supervisors, unit chiefs, training officers — remain unconvinced or are not equipped to model and reinforce new approaches. These actors are often the gatekeepers between policy and practice: they oversee daily operations, assess officer performance and shape informal institutional culture. At the same time, bottom-up momentum from practitioners will frequently stall without the active support and accountability structures that middle management can provide. Reforms that neglect this intermediate tier risk producing formal policy commitments that are not reflected in actual interviewing practice.

Identifying local champions and encouraging national studies on compliance with international standards can further stimulate debate. These steps are important to help determine which State actors can advance implementation.

States are at different stages of development and have various capacities for reform, but each should be invited to embrace the intention behind the Principles and express a long-term commit-

10 Saul Kassin, APS James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award Address, Association for Psychological Science, 2021, quoted in “Communicating Psychological Science: Advocacy, Outreach, and Passion for the Profession,” *APS Observer* (28 June 2021) <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/advocacy-outreach-and-passion-for-the-profession>.

11 In a recent statement, the Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee of Experts of the Principles welcomed the work of all actors to promote and integrate the Principles, but expressed concern that early efforts have focused too narrowly on rapport-based interview methods while neglecting the integration of safeguards for human rights protection. See Juan E. Méndez and Mark Thomson, “Upholding the Added Value of the Méndez Principles”, Statement of the Co-Chairs of the Méndez Principles Steering Committee of Experts (1 May 2025) [interviewingprinciples.com](https://www.interviewingprinciples.com).

ment to integrate them into national practice. Such positive governance facilitates further implementation actions and contributes to a shift in the institutional culture with respect to interviewing and other information gathering processes.

## High-level endorsement in Ukraine; Embedding the Méndez Principles in wartime justice

In 2017, through cooperation between Ukrainian human rights organisations, national criminal justice institutions and a national foundation of the Open Society Foundation, Norwegian experts were invited to Ukraine to introduce investigative interviewing<sup>12</sup> to representatives across the criminal justice system.<sup>13</sup> Civil society coordinators subsequently established a diverse national expert group including training academies, academics, practitioners and other regional actors to translate the Principles into operational language and test their relevance in different sectors.<sup>14</sup>

To address the absence of reliable data on national interviewing practices, the coordination team conducted field research using surveys and interviews. The findings confirmed that, despite the adoption of the 2012 Criminal Procedure Code with several safeguards, many investigators still viewed obtaining confessions as the primary purpose of interviewing. This research provided important evidence to advocate for change and identify appropriate entry points for reform.<sup>15</sup>

A key breakthrough came in 2019 when the newly established National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU), which had no entrenched interviewing traditions, agreed to become the first authority to integrate investigative interviewing aligned with the Méndez Principles. More than 70 detectives and managers completed an intensive five-day programme, followed by structured mentoring to support practical implementation. Investigative interviewing now forms part of their investigative practice and part of these trained officers later formed the nucleus of a national instructor cadre, helping to ensure long-term domestic capacity.

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine unexpectedly accelerated reform. As war crimes investigations became a national priority, senior leaders including the Prosecutor General recognised the need to ensure the credibility of future trials. Implementation of the Méndez Principles was therefore adopted as a national policy objective and integrated into the national anti-torture strategy, endorsed at the highest levels.

War-crimes investigators were subsequently trained by a national instructors team which consists of NABU detectives, prosecutors and representatives of the academic community. These actors co-delivered training and jointly contributed to the development, institutional-

12 The term "investigative interviewing" refers to a non-coercive and non-accusatory process of eliciting an accurate and complete narrative account from victims, witnesses and suspects in a fair and respectful manner. It emphasises a non-adversarial, rapport-based approach that seeks to make the presumption of innocence operational and to prevent any form of coercion, while also improving the effectiveness of criminal investigations. See, e.g., United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UNPOL), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation* (Vienna: UN, 2024), p. 48.

13 See Vasylyna Yavorska, Anna Petrovska, Viktoriia Rohalska, "Interrogation & Investigative Interviewing: How Much Is the Approach Changing?" JustTalk discussion paper, translated from Ukrainian, February 2026, [Допит & Процесуальне інтерв'ю: наскільки змінюється підхід? Discussion Paper](#).

14 Throughout the entire process, the civil society organisation JustGroup played a critical role in promoting the Principles, sustaining the national instructor team, and supporting policy-level changes and national standards. See Just Group, [Standards of Procedural Interview](#), and [Investigative interview: changing the mindset of investigators and prosecutors – Just Group](#).

15 International Renaissance Foundation, *Tell Me What Happened: Investigative Interview Study* translated from Ukrainian (Kyiv: International Renaissance Foundation, 2020), <https://justtalk.com.ua/post/rozkazhi--scho-stalosalosyatell-me-what-happenedinvestigative-interview-study-anglijska-versiya>.

isation and scaling of investigative interviewing practices, providing strong momentum for system-wide reform. Ukraine has since developed “Standards for Investigative Interviewing”, a practical manual outlining step-by-step procedures and institutional responsibilities, including monitoring and evaluation requirements.<sup>16</sup> Training programmes have also rapidly expanded. To assist, in 2024-2025, the UNPOL, OHCHR and UNODC *Manual on Investigative Interviewing in Criminal Investigations* has been translated into Ukrainian and is being incorporated into training programmes for investigators and prosecutors. In 2025, the Méndez Principles were also officially translated into Ukrainian. Furthermore, Ukrainian law faculties have incorporated investigative interviewing courses into their curricula.<sup>17</sup>

A further important milestone was the inclusion of investigative interviewing in state policies. In 2024, an interdepartmental order approved the implementation of a pilot project for child protection centres based on the Barnhaus model, which includes, among other aspects, the use of rapport-based interviewing techniques.<sup>18</sup> The 2024 amended Strategy for Combating Torture explicitly mentions the application of the Méndez Principles.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the Méndez Principles have been implemented in the codes of ethics of the Security Bureau of Ukraine, the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine and the State Bureau of Investigation.<sup>20</sup> The National Strategy for the Protection of Children’s Rights in the Field of Justice until 2028 provides for the creation of a national methodology for interviewing children in accordance with international standards.<sup>21</sup> These developments represent additional important steps towards sustainability and generational change within the justice system.

Despite this progress, authorities recognise the need for further regulation, infrastructure investment and research to examine practice gaps.

Important lessons from Ukraine’s experience include that progress has been made possible through a strong national commitment, coupled with systematic and long-term partnership with international experts that significantly strengthened both methodological quality and institutional credibility. The experience also demonstrates the importance of long-term investment in mid-level practitioners and emerging leaders, who often become key agents of change across the justice system.

16 See JustGroup, at <https://justgroup.com.ua/en/investigative-interview/investigative-interview-changing-the-mindset-of-investigators-and-prosecutors/>.

17 See note 13 above.

18 Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, Office of the Prosecutor General, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and Ministry of Health of Ukraine, Joint Order No. 2218/5/180/523/352-N/1306, Procedure for Implementing a Pilot Project to Establish Child Protection Centres (Based on the Barnhaus Model) (26 July 2024) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1151-24#Text> In Ukrainian.

19 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Order No. 1344-r, Strategy for Combating Torture in the Criminal Justice System and Action Plan for Its Implementation (28 October 2021) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1344-2021-%D1%80#Text> . In Ukrainian.

20 See: Security Service of Ukraine, Order No. 474, Rules of Professional Ethics and Integrity of Military Personnel of the Security Service of Ukraine (27 November 2023) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z2150-23#Text>. In Ukrainian; Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine, Order No. 129, Rules of Professional Ethics for Employees of the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine (30 June 2022) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0943-22#Text>. In Ukrainian; State Bureau of Investigation, Order No. 535, Amendments to the Rules of Professional Ethics for Employees of the State Bureau of Investigation Order (31 December 2024) <https://dbr.gov.ua/assets/files/diyalnist/pravovi-zasadi/2024/12/nakaz-535.pdf>. In Ukrainian.

21 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Order No. 708-r, National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Field of Justice for the Period up to 2028 and Operational Plan of Measures for Its Implementation in 2025–2028 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/708-2025-%D1%80#Text>. In Ukrainian.

Engaging cross-party parliamentarians is also important, acknowledging that policing and justice are inherently political issues that relate to how State power is exercised. Parliamentary oversight strengthens accountability and enhances public protection.

Discussions can be supported by documents, such as resolutions and reports by UN and regional bodies, including from the UN General Assembly, to help elevate the issue. Instrumental in that sense is also the role played by bodies such as the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee against Torture, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the SRT, the African Commission of Human and People's Rights, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, among others, whose findings and recommendations contribute to promoting effective interviewing practices in line with human rights.

## Specific implementation steps: Strong governance



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)

- ▶ Convene high-level expert briefings or roundtables with national and international specialists to introduce the Méndez Principles and clarify their legal and operational implications.
- ▶ Give clear direction in support of the Méndez Principles and signal executive commitment to their implementation.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Request regular reporting from Ministries of Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs, Directors of law enforcement agencies and other authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering as well as the NPM/NHRI on compliance with the Méndez Principles.
- ▶ Monitor implementation progress through parliamentary questions, inquiries, and follow-up on government commitments.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Organise expert-led dialogues with authorities and practitioners to explain the Principles, highlight systemic risks identified through monitoring, and reinforce governance expectations regarding safeguards and accountability.



### CSOs

- ▶ Support exchanges and coordination among diverse national expert stakeholders to promote implementation of the Méndez Principles.
- ▶ Advocate for their adoption in laws, policies, training and institutional practice.

### 3.3 Momentum for reform

To complement discussions with political leaders, policy/decision makers and other national actors, engagement should be broadened to include leaders across institutions tasked with conducting investigations and information gathering and the wider justice system.<sup>22</sup> Key actors can be invited to form a multidisciplinary body to support national coordination. Even without high-level support, national actors can establish working groups to facilitate discussions, provide advice and develop steps towards national reform. Bringing together diverse actors allows them to identify challenges, share experience and develop practical, institution-specific recommendations tailored to their national contexts.

These deeper discussions should acknowledge that each actor has distinct but interconnected interests and responsibilities in implementing the Principles. They should also provide space to recognise existing good practices and avoid actors becoming defensive about anticipated reforms.

Experts report that when the Principles are presented, participants are consistently engaged and supportive. Law enforcement and other investigators, in particular, value how the Principles strengthen professionalism and improve effectiveness during investigations and other information gathering processes.

*“Once communicated, law enforcement can see right away why the Méndez Principles can help with their job to protect citizens and protect rights and for their officers to do a better job. They like that and they welcome it.”*

*(Mark Thomson, Co-Chair of Méndez Principles Steering Committee of Experts)*

Given that many people in contact with the justice system experience inherent vulnerabilities during interviews - and that some may experience heightened vulnerability due to factors such as age, disability, language, gender or other risk factors - early reform efforts must address these needs in relation to both deprivation of liberty and interviewing, in line with Principle 3 (on vulnerabilities). National working groups should be tasked with examining this issue in depth and drawing on external expertise as necessary.

Media coverage can also play a vital role in building momentum for reform. Investigative journalism, opinion pieces by senior legal figures, and public interest reporting can expose abusive practices, inform public debate and create pressure for institutional change that political and legal processes alone may not generate. Advocates and national actors should therefore consider engaging journalists and media institutions as part of a broader dissemination and reform strategy, while being mindful of the sensitivity of ongoing cases and the need to protect individuals involved.

<sup>22</sup> The sequence described here reflects one possible pathway, but reform does not always follow this chronology. In some contexts, the impetus for change may originate from within law enforcement, or from prosecutors, judges or other justice system actors, rather than from political leadership. The steps outlined should therefore be understood as flexible and adaptable to national circumstances.

## Specific implementation steps: Momentum for reform



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g. Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)

- ▶ Mandate participation of senior leadership from law enforcement and other investigative and information gathering authorities, prosecution, judiciary, training academies and oversight bodies in expert-led discussions to identify challenges, promote shared understanding and coordinated cross-sector reform.
- ▶ Publicly commit and prioritise the need to protect persons in situations of heightened vulnerability, both to respect their human rights and ensure more effective outcomes from interviews.
- ▶ Encourage and ensure inter-agency coordination across authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering.
- ▶ Develop a national implementation plan and publish progress reports.
- ▶ Share their reform experiences with other countries, where possible.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Support the professionalisation of authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering, by advocating for mandatory training in rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing and legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Highlight risks faced by persons in situations of heightened vulnerability during interviewing through facilitating parliamentary debates, hearings, and inquiries to generate public and political support for reform.
- ▶ Emphasise the practical benefits of effective interviewing practices.
- ▶ Promote ratification of UNCAT, OPCAT, ICCPR, and regional human rights instruments.



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Identify and support personnel willing to act as early adopters or champions of effective interviewing practices.
- ▶ Mandate all investigators and professional interviewers to follow rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing methods and implement legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Coordinate with prosecutors and judges to ensure feedback and assessment of evidentiary reliability and legality.



### Judicial bodies (e.g., judicial councils)

- ▶ Reinforce momentum by scrutinising cases involving confessions and signalling that failures to apply rapport-based, non-coercive methods and legal and procedural safeguards will undermine admissibility and case outcomes.
- ▶ Issue guidance or public statements to emphasise the heightened duty of care owed to particularly vulnerable persons during interviews in the context of investigation and other information gathering.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Monitor implementation of reforms promoting rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing in association with legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Issue public reports on information gathering practices, with concrete recommendations.



### CSOs

- ▶ Support reform by convening experts and advocating for effective interviewing in line with the Méndez Principles.
- ▶ Raise awareness on situations of heightened vulnerability and share good practices to sustain momentum and guide implementation.



### Media

- ▶ Expose abusive practices where coercive or unlawful methods have been used, inform public debate and create pressure for institutional change.
- ▶ Promote and publicise reforms process and explain correlated benefits to the public.
- ▶ Avoid reproducing or amplifying narratives that normalise coercive interviewing or present it as necessary or effective for law enforcement purposes.

## 3.4 Common challenges

### 3.4.1. Institutional resistance

In many countries, criminal investigations frequently depend on confessions and there is little awareness of false-confession risks and limited exposure to interview training. Although laws prohibit coerced confessions and require legal and procedural safeguards, studies show they are often disregarded and allegations of torture, ill-treatment and other coercive practices remain widespread. Resistance is also shaped by perceptions; for example, some experts report the misconception that the Méndez Principles apply only to “Western” policing, reflecting a broader hesitation to adopt practices seen as foreign or unfamiliar within established institutional cultures. Others might consider that a certain rate of false confessions is acceptable and minimise the harm caused by them.

Resistance should therefore be anticipated and addressed through informed discussions with experts in non-coercive interviewing. Principles 1 (on Foundations) and 2 (on Practice) provide strong arguments grounded in science, ethics, practice and law. Together they demonstrate that rapport-based, non-coercive, methods supported by practices that respect human rights that are relevant across diverse legal systems - produce more reliable and actionable information.

Highlighting the operational advantages of effective interviewing is a practical way to shift institutional perceptions. It is also particularly useful to emphasise benefits such as reducing contested hearings, limiting complaints against law enforcement and decreasing the likelihood of unsafe convictions – which often result in the actual perpetrator remaining free to commit further crimes.

Specific, evidence-based training is essential to overcome resistance, but sustained progress requires deeper changes in attitudes and organisational identity. Some officers believe suspects “deserve” coercion or deception; others believe ill-treatment is the only way to get “the truth”. The Principles demand a fundamental mindset shift, requiring practitioners to unlearn long-held beliefs. Strong condemnation of coercive practices by institutional leaders and embedding the Principles in training curricula help drive organisational change and have long-term impact.

*“The ‘unlearning’ is very important, because [law enforcement in many States] are looking at torture as an investigative tool and unlearning that would take some time, or it would take more trainings.”*

*(Ruth Ssekindi, Member of the Steering Committee of Experts and Contributor to the Drafting Group for the Méndez Principles)*

Lawyers, prosecutors, judges and oversight bodies also have a pivotal role in addressing resistance. Defence lawyers can challenge the admissibility of evidence obtained through coercion or procedural violations, ensuring unlawful interviewing practices are exposed and contested at every stage of proceedings. Prosecutors can reinforce non-coercive standards by refusing to rely on improperly obtained evidence and by engaging with investigators to promote effective interviewing. By rigorously applying exclusionary rules to evidence obtained through coercion or procedural violations and issuing reasoned judgments that articulate the legal and scientific basis for doing so, courts can build a body of domestic jurisprudence that reinforces non-coercive standards. Oversight bodies, meanwhile, can monitor compliance, identify systemic failures and recommend corrective measures where interviewing practices are non-compliant or coercive.

## Specific implementation steps: Addressing institutional resistance



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Promote a culture grounded in effective interviewing that rejects coercion and deception and rewards professionalism.
- ▶ Establish supervision structures to oversee investigations and other information gathering processes and address non-compliance.
- ▶ Formally adopt the Méndez Principles framework, encompassing rapport-based, non-coercive, interviewing and legal and procedural safeguards.



### Judges

- ▶ Insist on non-coercive methods of obtaining evidence and rigorously exclude evidence obtained through coercion or in violation of legal and procedural safeguards. Explain those decisions with reasoned judgments that can serve to build domestic jurisprudence.
- ▶ Refer credible allegations of torture or ill-treatment that emerge during court proceedings to the relevant oversight body or prosecutor for investigation.



### Prosecutors

- ▶ Support institutional reforms promoting effective interviewing.
- ▶ Require investigators and other information gathering professionals to provide planning notes, recordings and vulnerability assessments.



### Defence lawyers

- ▶ Monitor clients' treatment conditions of deprivation of liberty and access to legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Challenge unlawfully obtained evidence and procedural violations.
- ▶ Promote and ensure the use of legal and procedural safeguards throughout the entire interview process.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Conduct regular, unannounced visits to police stations and other interview settings and report on findings.
- ▶ Engage with authorities responsible for investigations and information gathering, and CSOs, including those representing victims and survivors, to address systemic risks.

### 3.4.2. Denial

A further obstacle is institutional denial. Unlike resistance, where actors recognise challenges but struggle to change, denial involves refusing to acknowledge that torture, ill-treatment, or coercion are occurring in interviews at all. Many authorities refuse to acknowledge that torture and ill-treatment and impunity persist because complaints are not – or only partially – investigated or prosecuted. Confessions are routinely treated as voluntary despite clear indicators of coercion.

The Principles apply universally to any interviews for investigative or information gathering purposes. Experts emphasise that the central issue is whether the goal is to seek the truth or to extract a confession; the Principles are designed for the former. State actors will also recognise the benefits of observing international obligations of the State and avoiding the embarrassment of being shown to be an entity that practices torture, ill-treatment or other forms of abuses.

Where the lack of data creates an obstacle to reform, local research led by academics and monitoring bodies, including NHRIs and independent complaint authorities, can build a national evidence base and support reform. Translating scientific material on effective interviewing can also deepen understanding and reflection. Partnerships among regional and experience-based institutions further strengthen credibility and create shared momentum.

Appealing to professional pride can help break this cycle of denial. Investigators, information gathering officials and training academies often accept the need for better working methods that are proven in science, ethics and law and aligning professionalism with international obligations creates openings for reform.

#### **Scaling investigative interviewing in Brazil: Bottom-up training and judicial leadership**

Studies show that police in Brazil receive little formal training in interviewing, typically learning informally from senior officers and relying on closed questioning. Given the country's size and its three-tier policing structure (military, civil and federal), reform requires broad engagement.

Early meetings with Federal and Civil Police generated interest in rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing and led to workshops supported by international partners. CSOs such as CogJus adopted a multiplying, bottom-up approach, partnering with state police academies to train trainers in investigative interviewing based on the Méndez Principles. Training was practical, science-based, and focused on new recruits who were most receptive to change. As capacity expanded, state authorities increasingly funded these programmes themselves.

A parallel top-down path has also emerged. Since 2019, the National Council of Justice has issued regulations improving the treatment of children, indigenous peoples, and LGBTIQ+ persons, that have improved safeguards for persons at heightened risk.<sup>23</sup> Decisions from the

<sup>23</sup> See National Council of Justice (Brazil), Resolution No. 348, establishing guidelines and procedures to be observed by the Judiciary, in the criminal scope, regarding the treatment of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transvestite, or intersex population that is in custody, accused, defendant, convicted, or deprived of liberty (13 October 2010) <https://www.cnj.jus.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/resolucao-348-2020-ingles.pdf>; Resolution No. 454, establishing guidelines and procedures to ensure the right of access to the Judiciary for Indigenous peoples and individuals (22 April 2022), <https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/original174053202205036271692534e99.pdf>; Resolution No. 369, establishing procedures and guidelines for the substitution of deprivation of liberty for pregnant women, mothers, fathers, and caregivers of children or persons with disabilities (19 January 2021), <https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/original0529372021020960221dc15941f.pdf>; Resolution No. 252, establishing principles and guidelines for assisting incarcerated mothers and pregnant women, and setting forth other provisions (4 September 2018), [https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/resolucao\\_252\\_04092018\\_05092018141213.pdf](https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/resolucao_252_04092018_05092018141213.pdf); Resolution No. 405, establishing procedures for the treatment of migrants who are in custody, charged, defendants, convicted, or deprived of liberty and providing for guidelines to ensure the rights of this population within the judiciary (6 July 2021) <https://atos.cnj.jus.br/files/original1352192021070960e85493ec010.pdf>.

Superior Court of Justice have referenced the Méndez Principles in finding that investigative processes were deficient, and a major 2025 decision urges the National Council of Justice to develop protocols to bring greater rationality to investigative procedures and reduce miscarriages of justice.<sup>24</sup>

Some states in Brazil are now institutionalising these reforms. In São Paulo, following positive training experiences, the state issued regulations on investigative interviewing and required interviews to be video-recorded. Other States have also begun introducing audio or video recording and initial police resistance has given way to support, with officers recognising that recordings protect both interviewees and investigators and reduce the burden of verbatim note-taking.

These developments reflect growing national momentum toward rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing and improved legal and procedural safeguards for persons in custody. The progressive uptake of the Méndez Principles is helping to strengthen professionalism, transparency and public trust across Brazil's diverse criminal justice landscape.

## Specific implementation steps: Addressing denial

The specific implementation steps suggested above to counter resistance are equally applicable to denial. The following, additional steps may be applicable to denial:



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Use committee powers to request data, question authorities responsible for investigation and other information gathering and ensure government acknowledges systemic issues.



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Provide access to complaint mechanisms and support the independence of oversight bodies.
- ▶ Address non-compliance with rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing methods and implementation of legal and procedural safeguards in performance reviews and promotion application.

<sup>24</sup> Superior Tribunal de Justiça (Brazil), Recurso Especial No 2.232.036-DF (2025/0337918-1), Vote of Minister Rogério Schiatti Cruz, 29 October 2025.



### CSOs

- ▶ Keep records of concerns and report systemic issues to relevant authorities.
- ▶ Systematically document instances where authorities dismiss coercive interviewing or deny risks of ill-treatment or torture during interviews and raise these concerns with oversight bodies to advocate for improved use of legal and procedural safeguards and accountability.



### Academic institutions

- ▶ Conduct and publish research to build a national evidence base on interviewing practices, including data on the prevalence and consequences of coercive methods and the respect for legal and procedural safeguards in practice, to counter denial and support reform efforts.
- ▶ Translate and disseminate scientific material on effective interviewing to deepen understanding among practitioners, policymakers and the public.



### Media

- ▶ Investigate and report on coercive interviewing practices, including cases where authorities deny or dismiss risks of ill-treatment, bringing these to public attention and creating pressure for reform.
- ▶ Critically examine and contextualise high-profile cases involving confessions, challenging narratives that present coerced confessions as legitimate investigative successes and helping shift public understanding of the value of effective interviewing.

## 4. Pillar 2: National ownership

The Méndez Principles call for robust national measures to shift interview practice away from confession-driven approaches. This requires explicit legal and institutional reforms, including clear legislative prohibition and criminalisation of torture. Sustainable change depends on institutional and cultural transformation, supported by experts, to prevent the risk of regression and to ensure meaningful and sustainable reforms. This reform process must be designed and driven by national actors.

Implementation is intended to be iterative. States may not be able to take all the steps recommended by this implementation guide immediately, but they are encouraged to at least take steps towards their fulfilment, consistent with their existing obligations under international law and standards, including the UNCAT, to take all necessary measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment.<sup>25</sup> Documenting the actions taken and reporting them to treaty bodies or through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) demonstrates good faith and strengthens accountability.

While nationwide coordination of reform is ideal, it is often difficult to achieve. However, in some contexts, such as in Brazil, judicial councils or similar bodies have taken the lead in assessing how the Méndez Principles apply nationally. Establishing a multidisciplinary working group can help develop a national strategy, draft policies and provide coherent direction.

Change requires ongoing guidance and support, including dedicated personnel to assist State actors, promote human rights and provide practitioners with practical guidance for effective interviewing. Although investigators and other information gathering personnel are generally receptive to training on interviewing, legislative and policy reforms should follow. This is an area where sustained support from international partners, NHRIs, NPMs and parliamentarians, for instance, is particularly valuable.

Reform also demands appropriate resourcing. However, reform to interviewing and information gathering practices can be planned across the short, medium and long term, with capacity reinforced through partnerships with other authorities, CSOs, academic institutions and experienced practitioners.

### 4.1. How to deal with costs

Implementing the Méndez Principles is not without cost and this must be acknowledged. However, the overall costs need not be high. The Principles were designed to be adaptable so that States at all levels of development can make meaningful progress, recognizing that human rights and combating crime are both essential State functions that require investment.

For instance, training on effective interviewing can be incorporated into existing training schedules. Several practices and safeguards, such as effective note-taking, notification of rights, deten-

<sup>25</sup> UNCAT Articles 2(1) and 16(1).

tion registers, family notification, and pre-interview screening to identify and respond to situations of heightened vulnerability, carry little or no financial costs, yet are essential for the protection of all persons in custody.

*“Many safeguards against coercive and abusive questioning techniques can be implemented with limited financial expenditure, in a cost-effective and sustainable manner.”*

*(Juan E. Méndez, Co-Chair of Méndez Principles Steering Committee of Experts)<sup>26</sup>*

Cost concerns should be kept in perspective while acknowledging the hidden cost of maintaining problematic practices. Indeed, budget officials rarely account for costly errors associated with coercive practices that can lead to unreliable evidence, ineffective investigations, wrongful convictions and public mistrust. Domestically and internationally, headlines about abusive practices harm institutional morale and national reputation. Moreover, coercive practices frequently generate additional costs through failed prosecutions, repeated investigations, judicial challenges to evidence and civil litigation or compensation claims arising from violations.

Many police stations lack even basic space or equipment, meaning implementation will require investment in facilities and buildings. However, the Principles emphasize long-term development, allowing States to implement reforms gradually. Where dedicated interview rooms or modern facilities are lacking, improvements can be incorporated into existing plans for redevelopment or made incrementally, one station or one interview room at a time.

Additional financial support for reforms may also be available through cooperation with national authorities, regional organisations and international partners. Practical guidance and training materials already exist to help States strengthen interviewing practice and safeguards.

<sup>26</sup> UN General Assembly, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*, A/71/298 (5 August 2016) para. 29.

## Specific implementation steps: Addressing costs related concerns



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)

- ▶ Allocate resources for training, monitoring, and infrastructure upgrades (e.g., interview rooms).
- ▶ Pilot targeted reforms, such as adapted interview practices for specific vulnerable groups and share lessons learned across units and agencies.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Ensure budget allocations for training, monitoring bodies, oversight mechanisms, and appropriate interview facilities.
- ▶ Commission studies and reports on the costs of failed investigation and information gathering processes, including miscarriages of justice, to inform legislative and budgetary oversight.



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Adopt low-cost tools including planning templates, interview-evaluation forms, and recording protocols.

## 4.2. National reviews

Mapping the existing national system of interview practices and safeguards is an essential step in implementing the Méndez Principles and should be prioritized by States. Ownership of the review by national actors (including legislators and parliamentarians) is essential to ensure access, credibility and accountability throughout the review process. This assessment should form part of regular human rights reporting to treaty bodies, the UPR processes and parliamentary oversight.

A meaningful review requires both legal analysis (identifying gaps in laws and procedures) and practical insight from practitioners who understand how the system functions in reality. Their experiences help identify obstacles and bridge the gap between law and practice (see example from Southern Africa below, section 5 below).

In many countries, weak or absent data collection obscures the true situation. While some information must remain confidential, States should balance privacy with the need for transparency to enable greater understanding.<sup>27</sup>

Researchers can also contribute with further analyses. For example, experts suggest that vulnerabilities during deprivation of liberty are among the areas warranting further research, to help determine appropriate protective safeguards. Miscarriages of justice have resulted from the failure to acknowledge and address these vulnerabilities.

*“well-established research findings accumulated in the West [show that] younger children typically have poorer language abilities than older children, [they] can have difficulties distinguishing between fantasy and reality, often struggle with monitoring the source of their memories and are typically viewed as more suggestible than older children and adults. However, these issues can be circumvented by adjusting interviewing practices to accommodate dispositional vulnerabilities and this has been confirmed by both experimental and field research.”<sup>28</sup>*

In many countries, juveniles are treated differently by the criminal justice system taking particular account of their age and inherent vulnerability. States might consider whether such lessons can apply to persons in other situations of heightened vulnerability and in the application of differentiated levels of protection.

27 The Helsinki Committee recommends establishing systematic, comprehensive, and publicly accessible state-run data collection to clarify the extent of torture and ill-treatment. See Hungarian Helsinki Committee, *Investigation of Ill-treatment by the Police in Europe: Comparative Study of Seven EU Countries* (Budapest: Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2017), 142, [https://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC\\_investigation\\_ill-treatment\\_comp\\_EN.pdf](https://helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/HHC_investigation_ill-treatment_comp_EN.pdf).

28 Ching-Yu Huang and Chih-Hung Shih, “Interviewing Vulnerable Witnesses and Suspects in Criminal Justice Proceedings: Evidence-Based Developments in Taiwan,” in *Routledge International Handbook of Investigative Interviewing and Interrogation*, ed. David Walsh, Ray Bull, and Igor Areh (London: Routledge, 2025), 93.

States have a legal obligation to conduct reviews of interviewing practices.<sup>29</sup> Successive UN resolutions have affirmed the importance of keeping interrogation rules, methods and custodial arrangements under systematic review, explicitly referencing the Méndez Principles.<sup>30</sup>

## Specific implementation steps: Promoting national reviews



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)

- ▶ Mandate a national review of interview practices and safeguards, combining legal analysis with operational data from all interviewing authorities.
- ▶ Coordinate access across institutions and publish summary findings with timelines for reform.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Endorse or initiate a parliamentary national review to ensure access, credibility, and accountability.
- ▶ Use findings for oversight, including hearings, budget scrutiny, and reporting to UN treaty bodies and the UPR.



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Provide operational data and practitioner input on interview practices and associated legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Identify gaps between law and practice, including for children and other persons in situations of heightened vulnerability.



### CSOs

- ▶ Advocate for the development and regular implementation of national reviews assessing interview practices and the effectiveness of safeguards against ill-treatment and torture.
- ▶ Support the design, dissemination and analysis of such reviews by contributing expertise, facilitating the participation of relevant stakeholders and promoting the use of findings to strengthen safeguards and accountability.

<sup>29</sup> UNCAT Article 11 also requires a systematic review of interrogation procedures applying to all places of deprivation of liberty.

<sup>30</sup> See most recently UN General Assembly, *Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*, A/RES/80/198 (15 December 2025). See also UN General Assembly, *Human rights in the administration of justice*, A/RES/79/172 (17 December 2024).

### 4.3. Legislation and regulation

In systems where investigations and prosecutions rely heavily on confessions, coercion and ill-treatment are incentivised. Legal and policy reforms must weaken confession-based frameworks and support effective, rights-based investigations and information gathering processes grounded in the presumption of innocence.

Legislative or regulatory reform may be required to integrate the Méndez Principles, but as each State is unique, State actors must determine the approach that is most appropriate to their systems. In many contexts, regulations may be more effective than legislation because they speak directly to institutions responsible for day-to-day practice. Legislative reform may not be immediately necessary for changes to investigation and information gathering practices, and regulatory reform may be achieved more quickly and at lower cost. Nevertheless, drafting regulations requires precise language and coordinated work with training academies, prosecutors, judges and lawmakers.

Regulations should facilitate the implementation of existing legal standards by providing effective guidance to investigators and other information gathering officials. Detailed operational guidance also helps ensure investigators understand what compliance with applicable legal standards requires in practice. It may also assist judges in evaluating whether those standards have been met.

Policies, practice directions and disciplinary rules are also useful in providing guidance on challenging areas of practice, including adaptations to interviewing practices for persons in situations of heightened vulnerability. State actors may also identify safeguards that are guaranteed in law but not observed in practice and provide additional guidance to help remedy this situation.

Regional bodies can also support reform by developing model regulations that take account of regional specificity and can be adopted by States at low cost. For instance, in 2019, the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (EAPCCO) developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for interviews, providing ‘detailed procedure on human rights compliant interviewing that enhances the professionalism and effectiveness of law enforcement officials and aims to ensure that all interviews are conducted without resort to torture, ill-treatment or coercion.’<sup>31</sup> EAPCCO member States are encouraged to incorporate the SOP into their national laws, regulations and procedures to ensure the procedural safeguards and standards of conduct necessary to prevent improper interviewing practices in investigative contexts.

In all cases, political leadership and national champions are essential for ensuring new guidance, rules and regulations are respected and applied.

Criminal prohibitions against torture are an essential foundation to support accountability for abuse in investigations. Clear criminal penalties strengthen judicial enforcement and remove ambiguity for practitioners.

Broader legislative reforms to criminal procedure may strengthen rights for persons deprived of liberty and help to reduce risks of abuse. Such reforms can include the requirement for a risk and vulnerabilities assessment on admission to custody, the requirement for suspects to be presented before a judge, the exclusion of evidence obtained through torture or ill-treatment, the establishment of an effective investigation mechanism, or independent custody monitoring.

31 Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (EAPCCO, *Standard Operating Procedure: Interviews and Questioning of Suspects and Persons of Interest by Police Officers* (Nairobi: EAPCCO, 19 September 2019).

## Specific implementation steps: Legislation and regulation



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal affairs)

- ▶ Review and reform laws, regulations, and policies to embed legal and procedural safeguards relating to non-coercive interviewing.
- ▶ Promote strict adherence to law and regulations.
- ▶ Mandate adoption of SOPs, recording policies and exclusionary-rule procedures.
- ▶ Share SOPs for interviews between law enforcement organisations.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Review and amend legislation to prohibit torture and ill-treatment, embed legal and procedural safeguards, mandate non-coercive, rapport-based interviewing and enforce exclusion of evidence obtained through coercion.



### Judicial bodies (e.g., judicial councils)

- ▶ Issue judicial guidance, bench books, or practice notes on evaluating confessions and other interview-derived evidence.



### Training bodies and institutions

- ▶ Set certification standards for interviewing and information gathering competencies.
- ▶ Develop assessment tools to evaluate adherence to legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Mandate continuing professional development on effective interviewing and human rights.

## 4.4. Judicial oversight

Judicial authorities play a critical role in overseeing interview practices and ensuring the lawfulness of treatment during deprivation of liberty. They must exclude any evidence obtained through torture, coercion, or other unlawful methods and hold responsible authorities to account.

Judges are central to applying the exclusionary rule. They must assess whether an interview complied with national and international obligations; where standards are not met, the resulting evidence should not be admitted. Clear regulations and judicial guidance help authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering understand the requirements for lawful interviews and associated conduct.

The Méndez Principles offer a framework for assessing the integrity of interview processes, the information collected and the legality of police actions. Courts, such as those in Brazil (see case study in section 3.4.2), have referred to the Principles when ruling that confessions obtained under duress do not meet minimum validity standards. However, in some jurisdictions, evidence is only excluded once torture is *proven*, placing an undue burden on victims and survivors as well as undermining the importance of legal and procedural safeguards.

Judicial practice must shift toward routinely questioning how evidence was obtained, pressing police and prosecutors to meet interviewing standards and excluding evidence where appropriate. This reinforces accountability and drives improvements in investigative practice.

Strengthening judicial capacity is essential. National authorities should encourage specialised judicial training, bench books and judges' rules to help guide judges in evaluating interview integrity. While judicial guidance does not address investigative behaviour directly (save in legal systems where judges play an investigative function), it keeps key safeguards at the forefront when judges assess admissibility and remind police of their duties.

Judicial guidance tools are relatively low-cost and can be achieved by consolidating existing judicial instructions. They connect directly to accountability mechanisms and can generate meaningful improvements in law enforcement behaviour.

Judicial councils or other judicial bodies can issue regulations directing judges on how to evaluate confessions, which in turn can shape the behaviour of investigators and other information gathering officials. Prosecutors and defence lawyers also need guidance for evaluating interview practices and identifying violated safeguards.

## Specific implementation steps: Judicial oversight



### Judicial bodies (e.g. judicial councils)

- ▶ Supervise implementation of legal and procedural safeguards through judicial review mechanisms.
- ▶ Provide training for judges and prosecutors on effective interviewing, false confessions and vulnerabilities.



### Judges

- ▶ Scrutinise interview processes and require proof that safeguards were applied.
- ▶ Mandate inquiries into allegations of torture, ill-treatment or procedural violations.
- ▶ Apply exclusionary rules where interviewing or detention standards have been breached.

## 4.5. Safeguards

Research shows that safeguards are among the most effective measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment.<sup>32</sup> However, experts recognize that “there is a huge gap between safeguards guaranteed in law and their implementation in practice.”<sup>33</sup> For instance, in some countries, the limited availability of defence lawyers and reluctance to represent suspects leave many persons deprived of liberty without counsel during the crucial first hours of custody, thus creating risks of coercive practices and abuse.

To limit opportunities for abuse, and maximise the effectiveness of investigation and information gathering, safeguards need to be fully integrated into practice. Detailed procedures must regulate how they are applied and they must also be integrated into training, demonstrating how they protect detainees, strengthen the reliability of evidence and enhance public trust.

Principle 2 (on practice) describes a number of fundamental safeguards that States must observe vis-à-vis suspects in criminal justice proceedings. These include the right to information about one’s rights and the reasons for arrest; the right to remain silent; access to interpretation; the right to notify a relative or third party; access to a lawyer and a doctor; contact with the outside world; registration of detention; full recording of the interview; the right to review and sign the interview record; the right to be brought promptly before a judge and access to effective complaints mechanisms and oversight.<sup>34</sup>

32 Carver, Richard, and Lisa Handley. *Does Torture Prevention Work?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1gpcbdt>.

33 Mark Thomson and Barbara Bernath, “Preventing Torture: What Works?” in *Interrogation and Torture: Integrating Efficiency with Law and Morality*, ed. Steven J. Barela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 471–492.

34 Méndez Principles, Principle 2 (on Practice), para. 62. See also UN Human Rights Council, *Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman*

National actors should consider how safeguards should be strengthened to ensure the respect and fulfilment of human rights. Principle 3 (on vulnerabilities) further recommends that safeguards be adapted for persons in heightened vulnerability, including children, women, LGBTIQ+ persons, minorities and persons with disabilities.

### **Strengthening safeguards for children and vulnerable adults in Taiwan**

Due to the inherent imbalance of power, everyone who encounters the criminal justice system is vulnerable, but heightened vulnerability is common among particular groups. Research highlights the needs of persons in situations of heightened vulnerability, including those with neurodiversity, who may have memory or communication difficulties affecting their ability to give reliable accounts. As a result, Taiwan, like many other countries, has introduced legal and procedural safeguards especially for children and vulnerable adults. Interviews are fully audio and video recorded, and the interview follows an approved structure. Vulnerable witnesses and victims are eligible to have a support person present during the police interview who may be a legal guardian, parent or other trusted adult. Social workers are also engaged to accompany victims of sexual assault. Suspects with multiple vulnerabilities may be eligible for further special measures, whereby they can forego the police interview and proceed directly to the prosecutor's interview, thereby relieving them from the anxiety of giving repeated statements.<sup>35</sup>

Some safeguards require minimal investment, while others can be incorporated into broader institutional reforms over time. Their effectiveness must be regularly reviewed through monitoring mechanisms to assess whether they reduce risk in detention. Safeguards also require supervision and accountability: managers must enforce compliance, provide feedback and sanction violations.

### **Detainee registers in Madagascar; Strengthening safeguards via improved documentation**

Madagascar's national police have taken important steps toward implementing the Méndez Principles by developing a standardised detainee register that records essential information and tracks compliance with safeguards. Systematically confirming whether each safeguard has been applied, such as access to a lawyer or the ability to contact family, has increased officers' awareness of detainees' rights and made it more likely these rights are respected in practice.

Following a pilot programme, the register has now been approved for nationwide use and is being distributed to all police stations. Civil society partners have supported this effort by developing an online training programme and practical guidance for officers.

*or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: Safeguards to Prevent Torture during Police Custody and Pretrial Detention*, A/HRC/RES/31/31 (24 March 2016); Human Rights Council, *Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: The Roles and Responsibilities of Police and Other Law Enforcement Officials*, A/HRC/RES/46/15 (1 April 2021).

35 Adapted from Ching-Yu Huang and Chih-Hung Shih, "Interviewing Vulnerable Witnesses and Suspects in Criminal Justice Proceedings: Evidence-Based Developments in Taiwan," in *Routledge International Handbook of Investigative Interviewing and Interrogation*, ed. David Walsh, Ray Bull, and Igor Areh (London: Routledge, 2025), chap. 7.

This reform coincides with national consideration of a new Bill, demonstrating a broader political commitment to strengthening safeguards. Authorities have expressed clear interest in implementing the Méndez Principles, recognising the added value they bring to improving investigative practice and preventing abuse.

## Specific implementation steps: Safeguards



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Identify any legal and procedural safeguards missing from current practice.
- ▶ Consider how safeguards should be implemented or strengthened to ensure the respect and fulfilment of human rights.
- ▶ Integrate vulnerability assessments in all early detention procedures.
- ▶ Ensure strict compliance with mandated safeguards and rights.



### Defence lawyers

- ▶ Promote the proper use of legal and procedural safeguards during interviews.
- ▶ Challenge unlawfully obtained evidence and procedural violations.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Collect data from investigators, recordings and detainee interviews to monitor for consistency of practice with required safeguards.
- ▶ Make recommendations as to how safeguards should be strengthened to ensure the respect and fulfilment of human rights.



### CSOs

- ▶ Advocate for legal and procedural safeguards to be strictly observed from the outset of deprivation of liberty.
- ▶ Take note of allegations of violations of safeguards and refer to complaints' mechanisms.

### 4.5.1. Full recording of interviews

The Méndez Principles provide that an accurate record must be made of all interviews.<sup>36</sup> They recognise that recording can take multiple forms — including written records<sup>37</sup> and audio-visual recording,<sup>38</sup> while indicating a preference for the latter, which ‘[w]hen done correctly [...] provides a complete and authentic record of the interview.’<sup>39</sup> Introducing audio-visual recording may have to occur progressively and requires not only equipment but also legal and procedural adjustments for law enforcement, prosecutors and the courts. Nevertheless, the introduction of audio-visual recording should be encouraged where possible.

*“Audio visual recording creates an incentive to be trained because police want to appear professional. It also saves time and creates opportunity for a more effective interview, as you can stop taking detailed notes and focus on what the person is saying.”*

*(Gisle Kvanvig, Norwegian Center for Human Rights)*

Where audio-visual recording is not yet feasible, written records and audio recordings can provide meaningful interim protection, provided they are subject to appropriate legal frameworks, institutional oversight and data protection safeguards.

#### Introducing video-recorded interviews in Mongolia

Following a 2024 recommendation from the NPM and strong leadership by the Office of the Prosecutor-General, the Mongolian Ministry of Justice committed to financing and installing video-recording systems in dedicated interview suites, supported by AI-based transcription tools to reduce operational costs. By October 2025, these facilities had been installed in police stations across almost the entire country.

While it is still too early to assess the full impact on investigative practice, police officers have expressed strong support for the reform. The new systems professionalise the interview process and eliminate the need for lengthy handwritten transcripts, significantly reducing administrative burdens.

In parallel, discussions are underway to further integrate rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing training more broadly across law enforcement agencies nationwide.

36 Méndez Principles, Principle 5 (on Accountability), para. 176. Also see Principle 2 (on Practice), para. 62(j).

37 Méndez Principles, Principle 2 (on Practice) para. 129.

38 Ibid., para. 99. Also see Principle 5 (on Accountability), paras. 176-177.

39 Ibid.

## Specific implementation steps: Recording of interviews



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal affairs)

- ▶ Support the full recording of interviews as a safeguard for rights and evidentiary integrity, including through targeted resource allocation.
- ▶ Mandate pilot recording trials in selected locations to identify legal, technical, and operational barriers before wider implementation.



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Review/adopt SOPs governing the use of interview recording.
- ▶ Provide training in the use of recorded interviews and the safeguarding of evidence.
- ▶ Where facilities exist, mandate the recording of all interviews in accordance with established safeguards.



### Judicial bodies (e.g., judicial councils)

- ▶ Review and revise judicial rules, evidence laws and practice notes to allow for the admission of audio/video recordings, including for determining voluntariness and compliance with safeguards.



### Judges

- ▶ Where appropriate, request and review interview recordings and related documentation when assessing the legality, reliability and admissibility of evidence.

## 4.6. Training

In many countries, investigators receive no formal training in rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing. Practices are instead transmitted informally through institutional culture and mentorship. In some contexts, this perpetuates methods that rely on intimidation, confrontation or purported “lie detection” techniques that lack scientific validity and increase the risk of false information, wrongful convictions and miscarriages of justice.

Specific and comprehensive training should, therefore, be a priority for implementation of the Méndez Principles. Training can and should begin immediately, even if legislative or policy reforms are not yet completed. Introductory training on effective interviewing frameworks can encourage critical reflection on current practices, while building institutional readiness for wider reform.

Where systematic training is not yet feasible, training academies can adopt pilot or *ad hoc* programmes. Such initiatives can stimulate interest, build institutional support and – ideally – spread practice until wider reforms take hold. To be effective, however, training must form part of a broader institutional strategy rather than stand-alone interventions. It should be integrated into national training curricula, grounded in evidence-based interviewing methods, and supported by practical exercises, supervision and continuous professional development. Training programmes should also incorporate multiple professional perspectives, including those of investigators, prosecutors, judges, defence lawyers, psychologists and medical professionals where appropriate.

Successful implementation will typically require sustained support from institutional leadership, training academies and relevant ministries to approve curricula, allocate resources and enable personnel to participate. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation are essential to assess whether training changes interviewing in practice, improves the quality and reliability of evidence and contributes to the prevention of torture and other ill-treatment. The extent to which different professional groups can be trained jointly will depend on the national context and institutional arrangements.

### **Embedding non-coercive interviewing in Thailand: Multi-agency training and legal reform**

In 2021 the APT held webinars with the Ministry of Justice and international experts to introduce the Méndez Principles to the Royal Thai Police (RTP). These sessions laid the foundation for understanding Principle 1 (on foundations) and the broader shift toward non-coercive interviewing.

In 2022, the APT then held in-person seminars for police and investigatory agencies, targeting mid-level practitioners and partnering with NGOs to provide expert trainers. Training covered safeguards, effective interviewing techniques and international examples. In March 2023, trainers at the Police Academy formally adopted key elements of the Méndez Principles for Thai policing.

In the same year, a Thai Working Group made up of representatives from the police, public prosecutors and the NHRI conducted joint research to identify gaps between current practice and the Principles. The research confirmed that interviewing skills were largely learned on the job, and officers expressed strong interest in learning effective interviewing methods.

In 2024, police officers, prosecutors and special-investigations trainers participated in advanced interviewing training, which significantly shifted their understanding of professional interviewing. This momentum inspired senior prosecutors to champion a move toward non-coercive interviewing for all investigations and to lead new training initiatives. The Office of the Attorney-General has also supported reforms from the top, inviting international experts and incorporating elements of the Principles into a revised prosecutorial code of conduct.

The Méndez Principles were translated into Thai to support wider dissemination. While many aspects of interviewing are familiar to RTP, the Principles introduce key innovations, including audio-video recording, rapport-building techniques and reduced reliance on note-taking. Video-recorded interviews are already used in juvenile cases, but legal changes are needed for broader use in adult investigations.

The NHRI has since promoted the Principles in its recommendations and collaborated with police headquarters to adapt training curricula. Starting in 2026, two police stations have

been selected to pilot interview practices fully aligned with the Méndez Principles for specific offences, involving selected investigators and prosecutors.

Thai law already provides several safeguards, including access to a lawyer, and the new reforms aim to reinforce these safeguards while reducing reliance on confessions. Prosecutors now emphasise the need to corroborate confessions and recognise that they may be coerced or unreliable. They are promoting an interview framework consistent with the Principles to ensure compliance with the Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act 2022.<sup>40</sup>

These reforms are expected to strengthen investigative quality, reduce miscarriages of justice, improve public trust and help Thailand meet international standards. As one senior practitioner noted:

*“With these gradual changes to implement the Principles, Thailand will build public trust, build international standards, and build professional police officers.”*

*(Kiattisak Chanjana, lecturer at the Thai Royal Police Cadet Academy)*

Experts emphasise that supervisors and senior personnel should be trained at an early stage so they are able to model, reinforce and evaluate good interviewing practice. Training should be practical and skills-based, drawing on scientific research, realistic scenarios and case studies. It should also address the recognition of vulnerabilities, the impact of trauma and the risks of bias in decision-making and interviewing processes.

Although implementation involves costs, including trainers, facilities, travel and staff time, these are generally manageable and can be reduced by integrating effective interviewing modules into existing professional training frameworks and making use of available institutional resources. As mentioned above, investment in effective interviewing is likely to reduce costs associated with unreliable evidence, failed prosecutions, complaints and miscarriages of justice.

<sup>40</sup> Thailand’s Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act B.E. 2565 (2022) is the country’s first comprehensive anti-torture law. It criminalises torture and enforced disappearance and introduces safeguards during arrest and detention.

## Specific implementation steps: Training



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Support professionalisation of investigations and information gathering by advocating for mandatory training in rapport-based non-coercive, interviewing and legal and procedural safeguards in line with the Méndez Principles.



### Training bodies and institutions

- ▶ Integrate the Méndez Principles and effective interviewing training – including identification of situations of heightened vulnerability, unconscious bias and applicable legal requirements – into basic and advanced national training curricula.

- ▶ Establish train-the-trainer programmes to build and sustain national training capacity.
- ▶ Provide practical, skills-based training using real-world scenarios.
- ▶ Ensure appropriate assessment and accreditation processes are in place, as well as inspect training quality and institutional compliance.

### 4.6.1. Training on vulnerabilities

Training should mainstream the identification of vulnerabilities and adapt interviewing frameworks accordingly.<sup>41</sup> One-off training is insufficient and may even serve as window-dressing; sustainable institutional change requires ongoing programmes embedded in national systems.

All justice actors - police, prosecutors, judges and defence lawyers should receive training on rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing and safeguards, especially for persons in situations of heightened vulnerability. Training should reinforce how safeguards protect individuals, strengthen evidence integrity and improve cooperation.

### 4.6.2. Characteristics of effective training

At a basic level, effective training on interviewing should show what works and what does not, and explain the science behind these approaches. It should also reinforce the benefits of respecting human rights, combining expert-led classroom sessions with mentoring, peer feedback and realistic exercises. Replaying video-recorded interviews (with appropriate redaction or masking to protect the interviewee identities), and using local examples where available, helps participants recognise good and poor practice. Feedback to participants should be detailed yet delivered sensitively, taking account of cultural norms.

Training should also cover investigative practices and interview planning, and develop structured interview plans using anonymised real cases. Role-plays strengthen skills, while accreditation systems can recognise competence and advanced capability.

The role of institutional leaders is essential. They must promote a training environment where acknowledging problems feels safe, reducing hesitation among participants to discuss real challenges. Experts describe having witnessed the benefits of skills-based training when officers observe real recorded interviews conducted by senior officers in their own jurisdictions that model the new approach.

### 4.6.3. Training for judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers

Prosecutors and judges also require training to know how to assess the legality and quality of evidence, evaluate whether investigators have addressed alternative hypotheses and recognise signs of coercion. Equally important is training for defence lawyers to advise clients on their rights during interviewing, recognise signs of coercion and take appropriate measures, and effectively

<sup>41</sup> Many jurisdictions already apply differentiated protections for children; this experience can inform protections for other groups in situations of heightened vulnerability. See, e.g., Chile, Law 21057 on video-recorded interviews for child victims of sexual and violent offences, which aims to prevent secondary victimisation by substituting a single recorded interview (conducted in specially designed rooms) for repeated statements before police, prosecutors or judges.

challenge the admissibility of evidence obtained through improper or unlawful means. This helps prevent weak cases from moving forward, saving resources and reducing miscarriages of justice.

*“It has to go hand in hand; the whole criminal justice system has to be trained on the Méndez Principles to make a difference in the processes and the interviewing. If one piece of the chain is broken (i.e. if judges or prosecutors are not trained) then we can’t sustain any progress with law enforcement. The judge or prosecutor must be able to recognise if evidence was obtained out of coercion and to rule on its admissibility [and] should also be able to go after the perpetrator who collected the evidence and hold them criminally accountable.”*

*(Ruth Ssekindi, Member of the Steering Committee and Contributor to the Drafting Group for the Méndez Principles)*

## Specific implementation steps: Training for judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers



### Judicial bodies (e.g., judicial councils)

- ▶ Provide briefings and seminars for judges and prosecutors on interviewing science, including the risks of false confessions, the impact of coercive practices and factors that increase vulnerability during questioning.
- ▶ Promote continuous professional development on the use of legal and procedural safeguards during interviews and on the judicial role in preventing, identifying and responding to allegations of ill-treatment or torture.



### Bar associations and defence lawyer bodies

- ▶ In professional development programmes, integrate training on the science of effective interviewing, legal and procedural safeguards and the identification of coercion.

## 4.7. Monitoring

Effective monitoring is essential to verify whether the Méndez Principles are being implemented in practice rather than remaining aspirational. Oversight bodies (including NHRIs, NPMs, Ombuds Institutions and internal police oversight units)<sup>42</sup> as well as CSOs play a central role. Once trained in the Principles, they can incorporate them into their visits to police stations and other places of deprivation of liberty meetings with detainees (and former detainees) and follow-up discussions with the responsible authorities. Their findings provide evidence-based feedback, supported by the strong scientific foundation underlying the Principles.

<sup>42</sup> The role of judicial actors in oversight and monitoring is addressed in section 4.5 of this guide.

Monitoring aims to identify gaps between law, policy and practice. Standards may appear adequate on paper, yet monitoring may reveal that interviews are not, in fact, conducted in line with those standards.

To enable monitors to effectively do their jobs, States should authorise oversight bodies to systematically review interviewing processes, review custody registers and interview records (including audio-visual recordings where available) and speak directly with detainees.

Support measures may be required to prevent regression after implementation steps have been taken. Effective monitoring should be complemented by strong management oversight, clear lines of responsibility and ongoing training, particularly for senior practitioners who shape institutional practice. States should also ensure that monitoring bodies receive appropriate training and access to specialised expertise so they can effectively assess interviewing practices. Continuous professional development should ensure that monitoring bodies remain familiar with evolving evidence-based interviewing methods, the latest research findings and emerging good practices.

Monitoring should begin at the earliest stages of reform and continue throughout all phases of implementation to ensure progress is sustained and lessons are integrated.

Finally, States should welcome monitoring by UN and regional human rights bodies and mechanisms, whose findings can help identify persistent gaps, support national reform and enhance international credibility.

## Specific implementation steps: Monitoring



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Establish supervision structures to oversee interviews and address non-compliance.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Conduct regular, unannounced visits to interview settings where persons may be detained, including police stations.
- ▶ Review facilities, procedures, recordings, documents and complaint systems.
- ▶ Monitor implementation of safeguards and interview-related processes.
- ▶ Provide advice on reforming detention practices and policies.



### CSOs

- ▶ Report on interview practices and the implementation of legal and procedural safeguards by gathering evidence of systemic issues and sharing findings with oversight bodies.
- ▶ Support and collaborate with oversight bodies by providing expertise, facilitating access to stakeholders, and helping to ensure transparency, accountability and follow-up on identified risks or violations.

## 4.8. Accountability

There must be a clear commitment to accountability and oversight expressed at the highest levels, alongside clear standards for investigations and reviews (see Principle 5 on accountability). Rigorous accountability ensures an appropriate balance between effective law enforcement and the protection of the rule of law and democracy.

Effective accountability requires robust complaint mechanisms accessible to all persons who have been through interview and information gathering processes. Information on how to lodge complaints must be clearly communicated and complaints must trigger impartial investigation, preferably by independent bodies. Research shows that impunity for law enforcement violence remains widespread in many countries.<sup>43</sup> Accountability systems must therefore ensure that sanctions are proportionate and meaningful.

Governance actors also enforce compliance with national standards, including disciplinary or criminal consequences for breaches. Judicial oversight is key: judges should apply exclusionary rules rigorously, question how evidence was obtained and insist that interviewing and information gathering respects safeguards. Judges' rules or guidance should be developed jointly with justice ministries to provide a practical basis for judicial scrutiny.

<sup>43</sup> See for example, UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, A/80/214 (2025); OHCHR, "UN Expert Urges States to Ensure 'Zero Tolerance' for Murders by Police," press release, 22 October 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/un-expert-urges-states-ensure-zero-tolerance-murders-police>; Amnesty International, "Police Violence," last modified January 2026, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/police-brutality/>; Human Rights Watch, World Report 2025 (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2025), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025>.

### Specific implementation steps: Accountability



#### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Monitor implementation progress through parliamentary questions, inquiries and follow-up on government commitments.



#### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Refer misconduct or rights-violations to relevant bodies.



#### Judges

- ▶ Actively question how evidence was obtained.
- ▶ Refuse to admit evidence obtained through torture, coercion, or improper interviewing practices.
- ▶ Ensure that interviewing complies with legal and procedural safeguards.

- ▶ Order investigations into alleged torture, ill-treatment, coercion, or improper questioning.
- ▶ Ensure appropriate remedies for instances where torture, ill-treatment and other violations are proved.



### Defence lawyers

- ▶ Challenge unlawfully obtained evidence and procedural violations.
- ▶ Appeal convictions or sentences where due process was not observed.
- ▶ Bring civil claims on behalf of clients subjected to unlawful treatment.
- ▶ Provide feedback to oversight bodies on recurring patterns.



### CSOs

- ▶ Document patterns of misconduct, ill-treatment, or improper interviewing and report to relevant oversight bodies, contributing to investigations and policy reform.
- ▶ Advocate for accountability by raising public awareness, supporting victims' access to remedies, and engaging with legislators, judicial authorities and oversight bodies to ensure follow-up on violations.

## 5. Pillar 3: Support from partners

Many States lack the specialised skills, experience, or personnel required to shift from confession-based to non-coercive interviewing processes. Human rights actors and non-coercive interviewing experts therefore have an important role in supporting States in their reform actions. The Méndez Principles were developed through contributions from international and multidisciplinary partners and their implementation similarly benefits from collaboration.

While States must ultimately lead and sustain the knowledge, skills and reforms, early support from development partners can accelerate progress; particularly through the sharing of resources and expertise. Assistance from partners can help State actors to build national capacity so that responsibility for implementation, including training and reform, can gradually be fully assumed at the national level. However, experience shows that initial reforms can regress without sustained commitment. Effective partnerships are therefore a long-term, iterative process, grounded in respect for national ownership and aimed at achieving durable institutional change.

National actors should therefore seek partnerships that prioritise collaboration rather than instruction, helping institutions to build networks that support each other and disseminate good practice and lessons learned.

### Strengthening interview practices and safeguards through regional partnerships in Southern Africa

Following a 2022 resolution of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights encouraging African States to support the use of the Méndez Principles,<sup>44</sup> the Committee on the Prevention of Torture in Africa initiated a cooperation with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to examine police interview practices across the region. This effort was further supported by the Southern African Police Commissioner Cooperation Organisation and SADC Police Chiefs, ensuring high-level engagement from regional law enforcement leaders.

As part of the initiative, a self-assessment survey on interviewing practices and safeguards was developed in cooperation with African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) and APT. Police institutions across SADC countries were invited to complete the assessment in 2024 and 2025. To support the process and strengthen regional understanding of the Méndez Principles, a regional conference was also held, bringing together representatives of police organisations to discuss challenges, share experiences and encourage participation.

<sup>44</sup> African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Resolution on the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information-Gathering (Méndez Principles), ACHPR/Res.545 (LXXIII) (9 November 2022).

The completed surveys provide the first systematic picture of interviewing practices in the region, helping to identify structural gaps, document areas where safeguards require strengthening and highlight opportunities to advance reforms in line with the Méndez Principles.

Where resources are limited, early reform efforts should remain realistic; small, well-supported initiatives often have greater long-term impact than large, under-resourced programmes.

Governance challenges can also obstruct reform. In some jurisdictions, political leaders pressure police to deliver rapid results, undermining professional, rights-respecting investigations. Trusted partners can help mitigate these pressures by promoting shared standards and providing neutral technical advice.

Partnerships may involve other States, intergovernmental bodies, regional actors and experienced NGOs. Each partnership may have particular focus and ongoing assistance will likely depend on the extent to which the State demonstrates the sustained political will necessary to ensure meaningful reform and implementation of the Principles. Partnerships should therefore be grounded in demonstrated political will and a shared understanding of the reforms required.

States should also cooperate to support capacity-building and reform through multilateral institutions such as OHCHR, UNODC and UNPOL as well as other UN bodies and mechanisms. CSOs are also invaluable partners, bringing expertise on oversight, vulnerability and the lived experience of justice system users. Their participation strengthens legitimacy, transparency and trust in the reform process.

## Specific implementation steps: Support from partners



### Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)

- ▶ Establish formal partnerships with international organisations, regional bodies, and technical experts where external expertise is needed to support capacity-building and reform.
- ▶ Ensure that partner support is aligned with national implementation plans and progressively transferred to national institutions.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Convene meetings with NHRI, NPM and UN and regional experts to discuss systematic issues and implementation priorities.
- ▶ Invite UN Special Procedures, treaty-bodies and regional mechanisms to provide technical input to reform processes and relevant parliamentary committees.



### Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities

- ▶ Engage with external experts to pilot effective interviewing frameworks and adapt them to national practice.
- ▶ Participate in peer-to-peer exchanges and regional networks to share operational experience and lessons learned.
- ▶ Work with partners to develop internal trainers and supervisors capable of sustaining reforms independently.



### Judicial bodies (e.g., judicial councils)

- ▶ Engage with international and regional judicial networks to exchange good practices on evaluating interviews and confessions.
- ▶ Invite expert contributions to judicial training programmes and guidance materials.
- ▶ Promote sustained cooperation that supports judicial independence and national legal standards.



### CSOs

- ▶ Contribute expertise to law and policy reform processes, including on safeguards and non-coercive, rapport-based interviewing.
- ▶ Raise awareness and build public understanding of the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, and effective interviewing.
- ▶ Promote good practices in line with the Méndez Principles to State institutions.

## 6. Conclusion

The Méndez Principles provide a clear framework for transforming interviewing practices globally so that they are both effective and fully respectful of human rights. This implementation guide has sought to translate those principles into practical steps for the wide range of actors responsible for ensuring that investigation and information gathering are conducted lawfully, professionally and without coercion. By setting out role-specific steps, the guide aims to support States, practitioners, and civil society in understanding how the Principles can be integrated into everyday institutional practice.

Implementation will depend on sustained commitment across three mutually reinforcing pillars: (i) awareness raising and acceptance, (ii) national ownership and (iii) support from partners. Progress will not occur in a single, linear process. States operate within diverse legal, cultural and institutional contexts, and reforms often advance through gradual and overlapping stages. Building national leadership, empowering institutional champions, and fostering cooperation across justice-sector institutions are therefore essential to sustaining momentum. The specific implementation steps outlined for ministries, legislators, investigators and other information gathering professionals, judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, training institutions, oversight bodies, academic institutions, the media and CSOs illustrate how responsibility for reform is shared across the entire eco-system.

Ultimately, implementing the Méndez Principles is a collective endeavour. When each actor fulfils its role - strengthening legal and procedural safeguards, promoting rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing and ensuring accountability - investigation and information gathering practices become more reliable, more professional and more consistent with international human rights standards. Through coordinated action, national leadership and continued international cooperation, the Principles can be translated into lasting changes that protect the rights of all persons and improve the quality and integrity of interviews for investigations and information gathering worldwide.

## The Méndez Principles at a glance

# Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering

1



### On Foundations

Effective interviewing is instructed by science, law and ethics.

2



### On Practice

Effective interviewing is a comprehensive process for gathering accurate and reliable information while implementing associated legal safeguards.

3



### On Vulnerability

Effective interviewing requires identifying and addressing the needs of interviewees in situations of vulnerability.

4



### On Training

Effective interviewing is a professional undertaking that requires specific training.

5



### On Accountability

Effective interviewing requires transparent and accountable institutions.

6



### On Implementation

The implementation of effective interviewing requires robust national measures.

# Annexes

## Key Resources

1. *Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (Méndez Principles)* (May 2021) <https://interviewingprinciples.com>.
2. Juan Méndez and Mark Thomson, *Upholding the Added Value of the Méndez Principles*, Statement of the Co-Chairs of the Méndez Principles Steering Committee of Experts (1 May 2025).
3. Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), *United Nations, Regional and National Documents and Jurisprudence Referring to the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering (Méndez Principles)* (updated June 2026).
4. Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), *The Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing: A Tool for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Torture* (June 2022, updated April 2024) <https://www.apr.ch>.
5. Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT), 'How Can NHRIs and NPMs Support the Implementation of the Méndez Principles?' in *The Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing: A Torture Prevention Tool for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs)* (2 November 2023) <https://www.apr.ch>.
6. United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UNPOL), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation* (Vienna: UN, 2024) <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/justice-and-prison-reform/investigative-interviewing.html>.
7. United Nations General Assembly, *Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, A/71/298* (5 August 2016) <https://docs.un.org/A/71/298>.
8. European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, *28th General Report on the CPT's Activities, 1 January-31 December 2018*, CPT/Inf(2019)9 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, April 2019).
9. COST, European Cooperation in Science & technology, Cost Action 22128, *Establishing Networks to Implement the Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations -IMPLEMENTEZ*, (2023-2027) [Action CA22128 - COST](#) & [Home2 - ImpleMendez](#)

## Specific Implementation Steps for Implementing the Méndez Principles

### Consolidated list organised by key actor



#### **Key Executive Ministries (e.g., Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs)**

- ▶ Designate a national focal point or coordination unit responsible for overseeing accurate translation, dissemination and follow-up engagement on the Méndez Principles across relevant institutions.
  - ▶ Ensure the Méndez Principles are translated into national languages and disseminated widely.
  - ▶ Accompany the Principles with explanatory briefings or consultations to identify institutional concerns, clarify expectations and inform national implementation.
- 
- ▶ Convene high-level expert briefings or roundtables with national and international specialists to introduce the Méndez Principles and clarify their legal and operational implications.
  - ▶ Give clear direction in support of the Méndez Principles and signal executive commitment to their implementation.
  - ▶ Mandate participation of senior leadership from law enforcement and other investigative and information gathering authorities, prosecution, judiciary, training academies and oversight bodies in expert-led discussions to identify challenges, promote shared understanding and coordinated cross-sector reform.
  - ▶ Publicly commit and prioritise the need to protect persons in situations of heightened vulnerability, both to respect their human rights and ensure more effective outcomes from interviews.
  - ▶ Encourage and ensure inter-agency coordination across authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering.
  - ▶ Develop a national implementation plan and publish progress reports.
  - ▶ Share their reform experiences with other countries, where possible.
  - ▶ Allocate resources for training, monitoring, and infrastructure upgrades (e.g., interview rooms).
  - ▶ Pilot targeted reforms, such as adapted interview practices for specific vulnerable groups and share lessons learned across units and agencies.
  - ▶ Mandate a national review of interview practices and safeguards, combining legal analysis with operational data from all interviewing authorities.
  - ▶ Coordinate access across institutions and publish summary findings with timelines for reform.
  - ▶ Review and reform laws, regulations and policies to embed legal and procedural safeguards relating to non-coercive interviewing.

- ▶ Promote strict adherence to law and regulations.
- ▶ Mandate adoption of SOPs, recording policies and exclusionary-rule procedures.
- ▶ Share SOPs for interviews between law enforcement organisations.
- ▶ Support the full recording of interviews as a safeguard for rights and evidentiary integrity, including through targeted resource allocation.
- ▶ Mandate pilot recording trials in selected locations to identify legal, technical and operational barriers before wider implementation.
- ▶ Establish formal partnerships with international organisations, regional bodies and technical experts where external expertise is needed to support capacity-building and reform.
- ▶ Ensure that partner support is aligned with national implementation plans and progressively transferred to national institutions.



### Legislators/parliamentarians

- ▶ Hold public hearings on rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing, legal and procedural safeguards, to raise national awareness and ensure transparency and oversight.
- ▶ Request briefings on how the Méndez Principles have been disseminated, understood and received by relevant institutions, including any identified gaps or concerns requiring legislative attention.
- ▶ Request regular reporting from Ministries of Justice, Home/Internal Affairs, Defence, Prosecutor/Attorney General and Legal Affairs, Directors of law enforcement agencies and other authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering as well as the NPM/NHRI on compliance with the Méndez Principles.
- ▶ Monitor implementation progress through parliamentary questions, inquiries and follow-up on government commitments.
- ▶ Support the professionalisation of authorities responsible for investigation and information gathering, by advocating for mandatory training in rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing and legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Highlight risks faced by persons in situations of heightened vulnerability during interviewing through facilitating parliamentary debates, hearings and inquiries to generate public and political support for reform.
- ▶ Emphasise the practical benefits of effective interviewing practices.
- ▶ Promote ratification of UNCAT, OPCAT, ICCPR and regional human rights instruments.
- ▶ Use committee powers to request data, question authorities responsible for investigation and other information gathering and ensure government acknowledges systemic issues.
- ▶ Ensure budget allocations for training, monitoring bodies, oversight mechanisms and appropriate interview facilities.
- ▶ Commission studies and reports on the costs of failed investigation and information gathering processes, including miscarriages of justice, to inform legislative and budgetary oversight.

- ▶ Endorse or initiate a parliamentary national review to ensure access, credibility and accountability.
- ▶ Use findings for oversight, including hearings, budget scrutiny and reporting to UN treaty bodies and the UPR.
- ▶ Review and amend legislation to prohibit torture and ill-treatment, embed legal and procedural safeguards, mandate non-coercive, rapport-based interviewing and enforce exclusion of evidence obtained through coercion.
- ▶ Support professionalisation of investigations and information gathering by advocating for mandatory training in rapport-based non-coercive, interviewing and legal and procedural safeguards in line with the Méndez Principles.
- ▶ Monitor implementation progress through parliamentary questions, inquiries and follow-up on government commitments.
- ▶ Convene meetings with NHRI, NPM and UN and regional experts to discuss systematic issues and implementation priorities.
- ▶ Invite UN Special Procedures, treaty-bodies, and regional mechanisms to provide technical input to reform processes and relevant parliamentary committees.



### **Law enforcement, intelligence, military, and other administrative authorities**

- ▶ Identify and support personnel willing to act as early adopters or champions of effective interviewing practices.
- ▶ Mandate all investigators and professional interviewers to follow rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing methods and implement legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Coordinate with prosecutors and judges to ensure feedback and assessment of evidentiary reliability and legality.
- ▶ Promote a culture grounded in effective interviewing that rejects coercion and deception and rewards professionalism.
- ▶ Establish supervision structures to oversee investigations and other information gathering processes and address non-compliance.
- ▶ Formally adopt the Méndez Principles framework, encompassing rapport-based, non-coercive, interviewing and legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Provide access to complaint mechanisms and support the independence of oversight bodies.
- ▶ Address non-compliance with rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing methods and implementation of legal and procedural safeguards in performance reviews and promotion application.
- ▶ Adopt low-cost tools including planning templates, interview-evaluation forms and recording protocols.
- ▶ Provide operational data and practitioner input on interview practices and associated legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Identify gaps between law and practice, including for children and other persons in situations of heightened vulnerability.

- ▶ Identify any legal and procedural safeguards missing from current practice.
- ▶ Consider how safeguards should be implemented or strengthened to ensure the respect and fulfilment of human rights.
- ▶ Integrate vulnerability assessments in all early detention procedures.
- ▶ Ensure strict compliance with mandated safeguards and rights.
- ▶ Review/adopt SOPs governing the use of interview recording.
- ▶ Provide training in the use of recorded interviews and the safeguarding of evidence.
- ▶ Where facilities exist, mandate the recording of all interviews in accordance with established safeguards.
- ▶ Establish supervision structures to oversee interviews and address non-compliance.
- ▶ Refer misconduct or rights-violations to relevant bodies.
- ▶ Engage with external experts to pilot effective interviewing frameworks and adapt them to national practice.
- ▶ Participate in peer-to-peer exchanges and regional networks to share operational experience and lessons learned.
- ▶ Work with partners to develop internal trainers and supervisors capable of sustaining reforms independently.



### **Judicial bodies (e.g., judicial councils)**

- ▶ Reinforce momentum by scrutinising cases involving confessions and signalling that failures to apply rapport-based, non-coercive methods and legal and procedural safeguards will undermine admissibility and case outcomes.
- ▶ Issue guidance or public statements to emphasise the heightened duty of care owed to particularly vulnerable persons during interviews in the context of investigation and other information gathering.
- ▶ Issue judicial guidance, bench books, or practice notes on evaluating confessions and other interview-derived evidence.
- ▶ Supervise implementation of legal and procedural safeguards through judicial review mechanisms.
- ▶ Provide training for judges and prosecutors on effective interviewing, false confessions and vulnerabilities.
- ▶ Review and revise judicial rules, evidence laws and practice notes to allow for the admission of audio/video recordings, including for determining voluntariness and compliance with safeguards.
- ▶ Provide briefings and seminars for judges and prosecutors on interviewing science, including the risks of false confessions, the impact of coercive practices and factors that increase vulnerability during questioning.
- ▶ Promote continuous professional development on the use of legal and procedural safeguards during interviews and on the judicial role in preventing, identifying and responding to allegations of ill-treatment or torture.

- ▶ Engage with international and regional judicial networks to exchange good practices on evaluating interviews and confessions.
- ▶ Invite expert contributions to judicial training programmes and guidance materials.
- ▶ Promote sustained cooperation that supports judicial independence and national legal standards.



### Judges

- ▶ Insist on non-coercive methods of obtaining evidence and rigorously exclude evidence obtained through coercion or in violation of legal and procedural safeguards. Explain those decisions with reasoned judgments that can serve to build domestic jurisprudence.
- ▶ Refer credible allegations of torture or ill-treatment that emerge during court proceedings to the relevant oversight body or prosecutor for investigation.
- ▶ Scrutinise interview processes and require proof that safeguards were applied.
- ▶ Mandate inquiries into allegations of torture, ill-treatment or procedural violations.
- ▶ Apply exclusionary rules where interviewing or detention standards have been breached.
- ▶ Where appropriate, request and review interview recordings and related documentation when assessing the legality, reliability and admissibility of evidence.
- ▶ Actively question how evidence was obtained.
- ▶ Refuse to admit evidence obtained through torture, coercion, or improper interviewing practices.
- ▶ Ensure that interviewing complies with legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Order investigations into alleged torture, ill-treatment, coercion, or improper questioning.
- ▶ Ensure appropriate remedies for instances where torture, ill-treatment and other violations are proved.



### Prosecutors

- ▶ Support institutional reforms promoting effective interviewing.
- ▶ Require investigators and other information gathering professionals to provide planning notes, recordings and vulnerability assessments.



### Defence lawyers

- ▶ Monitor clients' treatment conditions of deprivation of liberty and access to legal and procedural safeguards.
- ▶ Promote the proper use of legal and procedural safeguards during interviews.
- ▶ Challenge unlawfully obtained evidence and procedural violations.

- ▶ Appeal convictions or sentences where due process was not observed.
- ▶ Bring civil claims on behalf of clients subjected to unlawful treatment.
- ▶ Provide feedback to oversight bodies on recurring patterns.



### Bar associations and defence lawyer bodies

- ▶ In professional development programmes, integrate training on the science of effective interviewing, legal and procedural safeguards, and the identification of coercion.



### Training bodies and institutions

- ▶ Set certification standards for interviewing and information gathering competencies.
  - ▶ Develop assessment tools to evaluate adherence to legal and procedural safeguards.
  - ▶ Mandate continuing professional development on effective interviewing and human rights.
- ▶ Integrate the Méndez Principles and effective interviewing training — including identification of situations of heightened vulnerability, unconscious bias, and applicable legal requirements — into basic and advanced national training curricula.
  - ▶ Establish train-the-trainer programmes to build and sustain national training capacity.
  - ▶ Provide practical, skills-based training using real-world scenarios.
  - ▶ Ensure appropriate assessment and accreditation processes are in place, as well as inspect training quality and institutional compliance.



### Oversight bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Ombuds Institutions)

- ▶ Conduct stakeholder dialogues, professional forums and discussions that raise awareness of effective interviewing and challenge tolerance of abusive practices.
  - ▶ Organise expert-led dialogues with authorities and practitioners to explain the Principles, highlight systemic risks identified through monitoring and reinforce governance expectations regarding safeguards and accountability.
- ▶ Monitor implementation of reforms promoting rapport-based, non-coercive interviewing in association with legal and procedural safeguards.
  - ▶ Issue public reports on information gathering practices, with concrete recommendations.
  - ▶ Conduct regular, unannounced visits to police stations and other interview settings and report on findings.
  - ▶ Engage with authorities responsible for investigations and information gathering, and CSOs, including those representing victims and survivors, to address systemic risks.
  - ▶ Collect data from investigators, recordings and detainee interviews to monitor for consistency of practice with required safeguards.

- ▶ Make recommendations as to how safeguards should be strengthened to ensure the respect and fulfilment of human rights.
- ▶ Conduct regular, unannounced visits to interview settings where persons may be detained, including police stations.
- ▶ Review facilities, procedures, recordings, documents and complaint systems.
- ▶ Monitor implementation of safeguards and interview-related processes.
- ▶ Provide advice on reforming detention practices and policies.

### CSOs



- ▶ Organise public information campaigns that promote the Méndez Principles, highlight the centrality of human rights in interviews and discourage coercive practices.
  - ▶ Support exchanges and coordination among diverse national expert stakeholders to promote implementation of the Méndez Principles.
  - ▶ Advocate for their adoption in laws, policies, training and institutional practice.
  - ▶ Support reform by convening experts and advocating for effective interviewing in line with the Méndez Principles.
- ▶ Raise awareness on situations of heightened vulnerability and share good practices to sustain momentum and guide implementation.
  - ▶ Keep records of concerns and report systemic issues to relevant authorities.
  - ▶ Systematically document instances where authorities dismiss coercive interviewing or deny risks of ill-treatment or torture during interviews and raise these concerns with oversight bodies to advocate for improved use of legal and procedural safeguards and accountability.
  - ▶ Advocate for the development and regular implementation of national reviews assessing interview practices and the effectiveness of safeguards against ill-treatment and torture.
  - ▶ Support the design, dissemination and analysis of such reviews by contributing expertise, facilitating the participation of relevant stakeholders and promoting the use of findings to strengthen safeguards and accountability.
  - ▶ Advocate for legal and procedural safeguards to be strictly observed from the outset of deprivation of liberty.
  - ▶ Take note of allegations of violations of safeguards and refer to complaints' mechanisms.
  - ▶ Report on interview practices and the implementation of legal and procedural safeguards by gathering evidence of systemic issues and sharing findings with oversight bodies.
  - ▶ Support and collaborate with oversight bodies by providing expertise, facilitating access to stakeholders, and helping to ensure transparency, accountability and follow-up on identified risks or violations.
  - ▶ Document patterns of misconduct, ill-treatment, or improper interviewing and report to relevant oversight bodies, contributing to investigations and policy reform.

- ▶ Advocate for accountability by raising public awareness, supporting victims' access to remedies, and engaging with legislators, judicial authorities and oversight bodies to ensure follow-up on violations.
- ▶ Contribute expertise to law and policy reform processes, including on safeguards and non-coercive, rapport-based interviewing.
- ▶ Raise awareness and build public understanding of the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, and effective interviewing.
- ▶ Promote good practices in line with the Méndez Principles to State institutions.



### Academic institutions

- ▶ Integrate the Méndez Principles into university courses across relevant disciplines, equipping future professionals in legal, law enforcement and related fields with a grounding in effective interviewing.
- ▶ Conduct and publish research to build a national evidence base on interviewing practices, including data on the prevalence and consequences of coercive methods and the respect for legal and procedural safeguards in practice, to counter denial and support reform efforts.
- ▶ Translate and disseminate scientific material on effective interviewing to deepen understanding among practitioners, policymakers and the public.



### Media

- ▶ Report accurately and responsibly on interview practices, raising public awareness of the Méndez Principles and the human rights governing interviews.
- ▶ Expose abusive practices where coercive or unlawful methods have been used, inform public debate and create pressure for institutional change.
- ▶ Promote and publicise reforms process and explain correlated benefits to the public.
- ▶ Avoid reproducing or amplifying narratives that normalise coercive interviewing or present it as necessary or effective for law enforcement purposes.
- ▶ Investigate and report on coercive interviewing practices, including cases where authorities deny or dismiss risks of ill-treatment, bringing these to public attention and creating pressure for reform.
- ▶ Critically examine and contextualise high-profile cases involving confessions, challenging narratives that present coerced confessions as legitimate investigative successes and helping shift public understanding of the value of effective interviewing.



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