

# DOCUMENTING

## Evidence on Torture Cases



### European Union

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**I**nternational law prohibits torture under any circumstances, yet it remains common practice throughout the world. Every year more than 100,000 torture survivors and their families are treated. Yet the perpetrators often go unpunished because torture can be very hard to pin down and prove, especially when victims are either too scared or ashamed to talk about what has been done to them.

An EU project supports the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims initiative “Prevention through Documentation”. It increases the chances of sentencing those who commit torture and ensures justice for their victims by helping forensic examinations to be performed according to internationally endorsed guidelines. This is crucial to establishing valid evidence for use in court cases involving torture.

The ICRT’s project acts in ten countries where doctors and lawyers were trained to establish and use medical evidence of torture. It strengthened

capacity and skills in related documentation of more than 350 health and legal professionals, thus helping promote the legal and ethical obligations of governments, the courts, police and the military.

This led to a further EU-funded project which has helped establish an advisory group of 30 forensic experts from 16 countries to support selected cases being tried in national, regional and international courts.

Having completed training a South American lawyer became involved in a case of a torture by local police. He was able to contact two medical professionals he had met during the training. “Thanks to the training we know how to interrelate and communicate. Our role as legal and health professionals is to work to make the authorities respect human rights. We now know that there are ways to join forces.” He has now established a professional association for independent experts in his home city and is working to establish similar associations in other cities.