



**Convention against Torture
and Other Cruel, Inhuman
or Degrading Treatment
or Punishment**

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Summary record of the 939th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 4 May 2010, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Grossman

Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention
(*continued*)

Initial report of the Syrian Arab Republic (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 19 of the Convention (continued)

Initial report of the Syrian Arab Republic (continued) (CAT/C/SYR/1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the Syrian delegation took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Al-Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Syrian delegation would not have time to reply to all the questions put by Committee members at the 937th meeting. Some of those questions fell within the mandate of other treaty bodies, rather than that of the Committee against Torture. In fact, the specific offence of torture was not defined in Syrian domestic law. The Criminal Code, which had been promulgated in 1949, was based on the French and Italian Criminal Codes, which had not included a definition of torture at that time. In any case, the definition of torture laid down in the Convention formed an integral part of Syrian law, since international instruments took precedence over domestic legislation.

3. Replying to the First Country Rapporteur's observation that the prison terms imposed for acts of torture (3 months to 3 years) were not commensurate with the gravity of the offences concerned, he wished to make it clear that the penalty could be as high as 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour if torture was accompanied by violence — in other words, if it was no longer a case of simple psychological torture — or from 20 years to life imprisonment if the victim died.

4. The state of emergency declared in 1963 had had no effect on implementation of the Convention, and could not be invoked to justify acts of torture of any sort. Moreover, martial law did not give any absolute powers to the security forces. No legal decree absolved members of the security forces from responsibility for acts, including torture, committed in the course of their official duties. Members of the security forces who were involved in incidents of torture must be immediately suspended from duty and prosecuted.

5. Allegations that a number of persons had been placed in preventive detention for long periods were unfounded. The maximum period of police custody was 24 hours, with a possible extension of a further 24 hours. After 48 hours, the person had to be brought before an investigating judge or released. Any accused person had the right to be represented by a lawyer. In the case of the poorest people, a lawyer could be appointed by the court. Penitentiary establishments were supervised by the Ministry of Justice and its inspection department. An inquiry had been conducted into the riots at the Sednaya military prison in July 2008, and the results had been transmitted to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The police had been obliged to resort to force, since prison officers had been taken hostage and their lives threatened. The allegations that some 40 deaths due to torture had been recorded in prisons between 2004 and 2010 were unfounded. If members of the Committee would provide the names of the persons in question, the Syrian delegation could make enquiries about what had happened to them. In any case, if a person died in prison, an autopsy was always carried out. As for the death of Sheik Mohammed Mashouk Al Khaznawi in 2005, the Syrian security forces had not been involved in any way, and an autopsy had not revealed any signs of ill-treatment. It was thought that the Sheik had been poisoned by his relatives.

6. He shared the Rapporteur's view that incommunicado detention made torture easier, and explained that the practice was illegal in the State party. Likewise, there were no secret detention centres. The Syrian Arab Republic had provided all the information requested by Martin Scheinin, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, and Manfred Novak, Special Rapporteur

on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Moreover, it had always collaborated with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, and many disappearances had been cleared up. More than 15 cases were pending, but the delay was due to the way the Working Group worked rather than any lack of cooperation by the Syrian authorities.

7. The Supreme State Security Court was a special court which heard all cases related to crimes against State security. It dealt with a very small number of cases, and its proceedings were held in public. The right to a fair trial was scrupulously respected. As a rule, judges were selected by a transparent procedure, established by legislative decree. There were two main methods of recruitment: a competition for young law graduates and selection from among the best law professors or lawyers. A judge could not be arbitrarily dismissed or transferred to other duties. A judge who had knowingly made a serious error would be dismissed by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary.

8. In 2005, when Syrian troops had withdrawn from Lebanon, many rumours had circulated to the effect that Lebanese nationals had been taken prisoner. A joint Lebanese-Syrian commission of inquiry had been set up to find out the truth. All cases of disappearance had been cleared up, and Lebanon had never contested the commission's results. The Lebanese nationals serving sentences in Syrian prisons had been convicted of ordinary crimes. A draft convention would shortly be signed between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to enable Lebanese detainees to be extradited to their country of origin to serve their sentences there.

9. Regarding the Kurds, they enjoyed the same rights as other citizens and were not subjected to any discrimination. Of course, they had the same obligations as other citizens as well, and those who broke the law were subject to the same legal liabilities. The Syrian Arab Republic had taken in many Kurds who had been turned away by other countries. The information cited by the Committee came from small groups engaging in political manoeuvring. The incidents which had occurred in the Kurdish community of Raka in March 2010 were the work of a few individuals who had sought to disturb public order. Other communities had been able to celebrate the Kurdish national festival in other places without the slightest problem. It was true that many Kurds did not have Syrian nationality, but that issue did not fall within the Committee's mandate. On the subject of the incidents in Al-Qamishli in early 2004, he should point out that the incidents had their roots in a rivalry between football teams and should be seen against a background of major instability in the region, resulting from the invasion of Iraq. The accusations made had been fuelled by political considerations and intended to create tension. In fact, the police officers present had shown great restraint. A number of persons had been arrested and tried under the law in force; they had all been speedily released. The Human Rights Council, which had considered a complaint on the subject in 2008, had likewise believed that the intent had been to use those events for political purposes and that much of the information which had been disseminated was false. The complaint had thus been rejected.

10. As for events in Hama, the true aim of the persons who had provoked them had been to plunge the country into civil war and undermine the foundations of the State. They had occurred before the Syrian Arab Republic's accession to the Convention and did not, therefore, fall within the mandate of the Committee.

11. The amnesty decree adopted in 2010 applied only to misdemeanours, so would be of no benefit to the perpetrators of the serious crimes covered by articles 307 and 308 of the Criminal Code. The authorities had in no way attempted to exclude any population group, particularly the Kurds, from the amnesty.

12. Detainees who claimed that they had been tortured were questioned by a judge, who asked whether they had really been subjected to such treatment. If so, the detainees were

immediately examined by a police doctor and, if it was shown that they had been tortured, any confessions they had made were declared inadmissible as evidence. Moreover, the Public Prosecutor had a duty to prosecute the perpetrators of the acts in question. There were no exceptions to that rule. The Court of Cassation had confirmed on many occasions that confessions obtained by torture could not be submitted as evidence and that statements not corroborated by evidence had no legal value before the courts. He wished to emphasize that, in accordance with the Convention, all the forms of torture which had been mentioned during the examination of the report, such as withholding food, were forbidden by law. He would request statistics on torture cases from the relevant department of the justice system and forward them to the Committee.

13. In reply to a question on statutory limitation, he said that, according to Syrian law, all offences under domestic law were subject to limitation, including torture, in the interests of preserving social and legal stability. However, crimes covered by international law were not subject to limitation.

14. On the subject of refugees, he emphasized that the figures quoted at the previous meeting had not been accurate. The number of Palestinians who had sought refuge in the Syrian Arab Republic after the 1948 war was over 500,000, and the number of persons forcibly displaced from the Golan Heights was 480,000. There were also 1.2 million Iraqi refugees in the country, as well as refugees from other parts of the world. Overall, refugees accounted for 12.5 per cent of the population, making the Syrian Arab Republic one of a kind. All refugees had the same rights as Syrian citizens, including the right to hold public office and, in particular, to receive free medical care and education. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) considered that the State party respected the rights of refugees to a far greater extent than that provided for in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. A technical committee had been established to draw up a comprehensive law on the rights of refugees, in collaboration with UNHCR. The extradition of political asylum-seekers was not allowed under Syrian law, whatever the justification cited.

15. As to the case of Maher Arar, he had been extradited by the United States of America to the Syrian Arab Republic because he had committed serious crimes and was suspected of being a member of Al-Qaida. Mr. Arar had been questioned, without being subjected to undue pressure, in the presence of a representative from the Canadian Embassy, who had been able to visit Mr. Arar every day while he was in detention. Mr. Arar had then been sent back to Canada where, on his arrival, he had claimed to have been tortured, for reasons which were a mystery to the State party, unless perhaps that he wished to obtain compensation. It should be pointed out that recourse to torture, even as part of the fight against terrorism, remained a crime punishable by law in the Syrian Arab Republic.

16. As for Mrs. Fida al-Hourani and the other lady, whose name the Syrian delegation had been unable to hear, he asked the Committee to provide more information so that the State party could obtain the answers requested. Other questions had been raised about the fate of a number of people; in those cases, also, the State party needed all the information in the Committee's possession in order to carry out the necessary investigations. The information obtained would then be submitted to the Committee.

17. The reasons why the State party had lodged a reservation to article 20 of the Convention were based strictly on national sovereignty. The recommendation that it should withdraw that reservation would, nevertheless, be passed on to the relevant authorities. The issue of accession by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Optional Protocol to the Convention was currently undergoing detailed study. The recommendation that the Syrian Arab Republic should ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance would be forwarded to the relevant authorities for examination.

The Syrian Arab Republic had already signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and it was for the country itself to decide whether it should ratify it.

18. Detection of torture was included in the specialist training of medical forensic experts, many of whom were sent by the Directorate of Forensic Medicine to complete additional training in other countries, including training in that subject. Police officers were trained in matters relating to torture at the Officer Training Institute. Four training modules on torture had been prepared in collaboration with the Geneva Institute for Human Rights.

19. On the subject of prison conditions, the Public Prosecutor and the inspection department of the Ministry of Justice monitored the implementation of article 30 of the Syrian Prisons Regulation. He should also point out that a bill on the administration of penitentiary establishments was currently being prepared, taking into account applicable international standards. The State party was home to a great many public and private organizations which dealt with human rights. It was currently setting up a national human rights institution similar to those in other countries.

20. The Syrian delegation pointed out that minors were not detained except in cases of urgent necessity. Act No. 18 of 1974 provided for many measures which avoided prosecuting or imprisoning minors, and even when they did appear before a court they generally received a suspended sentence. The Act stated that a child below the age of 10 years could not be prosecuted. Minors aged over 10 years and below 15 years could not be punished, but might be subjected to educational measures designed to improve their behaviour and ensure their integration into society. The maximum prison sentences could be requested for young people aged between 15 and 18 years, but only for the most serious crimes, such as murder. The question about the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture would be passed on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

21. Several other questions asked by Committee members did not fall within its mandate, including the question about human rights defenders. The Syrian delegation wished to state that many members of civil society, particularly law professors, judges and trade union activists, defended human rights every day, and the only condition imposed on their activities was they should not have committed a crime. He was also surprised that a question should have been asked about Mr. Georg Fischer, a Nazi war criminal, and wished to know how that case concerned the Committee.

22. In reply to a question about the relations between the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon, which he declared to be excellent, the Syrian Government cooperated with the independent international commission set up to investigate the death of Mr. Hariri, the former Lebanese Prime Minister. He emphasized, however, that the issue was a matter for that commission, not for the Committee.

23. It had been suggested that a woman who had been raped could be forced to marry the person who had raped her, and that rape was a common occurrence in the State party. Those allegations were false. Rape was a crime and those who committed it were prosecuted. It was, however, true that Syrian law allowed the victim to marry the rapist if she wished. That provision applied only to adult women. It might seem difficult to understand, but in Oriental societies such a compromise was sometimes considered by the families to be the best solution in a given situation. However, such cases were very rare. In respect of the recommendation to allow a possible visit by the Special Rapporteur on torture, the delegation wished to state that an official action of that type required preparation and preliminary discussions. It would pass the request on to the relevant authorities.

24. The Syrian Arab Republic did not refuse to issue a passport to Syrian nationals living abroad unless the persons concerned renounced their Syrian nationality after acquiring the nationality of the country in which they now lived.

25. In conclusion, Legislative Decree No. 49 did not penalize membership of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, but the serious crimes committed by its members.

26. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for its replies, some of which called for clarification of the scope of the Committee's competence. First of all, he should make it clear that, when considering reports from States parties, the Committee always took care not to stray from the confines of the Convention. However, nothing prevented it from relying on other texts, since article 1 of the Convention stated that the definition of torture in the Convention was without prejudice to any international instrument or national legislation which contained or might contain provisions of wider application. Article 16 likewise authorized the Committee to refer to texts other than the Convention, for example regional instruments, stating as it did that the provisions of the Convention against Torture were without prejudice to the provisions of "any other international instrument or national law" which prohibited cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

27. The Committee could also concern itself with acts which were not directly covered by the Convention, but which came within its competence because they constituted a form of torture or ill-treatment. That was the case, for example, with enforced disappearances, trafficking and rape. Moreover, since article 2 of the Convention stated that each State party should take legal measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction, the Committee was entirely justified in asking questions about the right to a fair trial. Questions about human rights defenders were put to almost all States parties and were justified, since the treatment given to human rights defenders was always a good indicator of general respect for human rights in a given country. He trusted that, with those clarifications, the Syrian Arab Republic would acknowledge that the Committee had refrained from showing any selectivity in considering the country's report.

28. **Mr. Mariño Menéndez** (First Country Rapporteur) thanked the Syrian delegation for the professionalism and frankness with which it had answered the Committee's questions. The Syrian Arab Republic was a sovereign State and completely free to decide upon its own course of action. However, it was also bound to respect its international obligations, in the current case those derived from the Convention against Torture. Let it not be forgotten that discrimination, a subject which the delegation had not covered in its replies, was a major reason for torture. Clearly, people might be subjected to acts of torture or ill-treatment because they belonged to an ethnic or other minority. The Syrian Arab Republic should amend its domestic legislation to reflect those considerations, it being crucial to include a reference to discrimination in the definition of torture. The adoption of a definition of torture was no mere formality, but the means which States parties must adopt to address the core problem, namely the infliction by State officials of physical or psychological pain on others. He would welcome more detailed information about the implementation of the Convention in the State party. For example, it was not clear whether the courts were authorized to cite the articles of the Convention directly, particularly article 1.

29. Examination of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic suggested that security concerns had become so great that the boundaries of the rule of law had been crossed. The Committee had asked questions about the Ministry of the Interior intelligence services, since the work of those services was likely to infringe human rights and freedoms. Moreover, it was well known that, in all countries which had made security a priority — an option not at all in dispute — human rights were liable to suffer. It was entirely natural that, when information reporting acts of torture committed by officials of various intelligence services were brought to the Committee's attention, the latter should ask the State party concerned to confirm or deny the information received and to state whether investigations had been launched, where necessary, and those responsible punished. The Committee had learned that, under Legislative Decree No. 49 amending the Military Criminal Code and

adopted on 30 September 2008, members of the military and police were exempted from all responsibility for acts of torture or violence committed in the course of their duties. Could the delegation confirm that information?

30. It was for legal rather than political reasons that the Committee had wished to know whether there were still Lebanese prisoners in the Syrian Arab Republic. Prolonged detention could amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and thus came within the competence of the Committee. The same was true of the issue of independence of the judiciary; he agreed with Ms. Belmir that there might be some doubts about the independence of the Supreme State Security Court. It would be useful to have the statistics which had been requested on the death penalty. Although sovereign States were free to impose the death penalty — no international instrument expressly prohibited it — it must not be forgotten that the way it was carried out might, in some cases, be tantamount to an act of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. As for the questions related to human rights defenders, the Chairperson had provided an explanation and nothing more needed to be said.

31. In order to prevent torture, which was the prime objective of the Convention, it was essential to guarantee any person deprived of his/her liberty the right of access to a lawyer of his/her choice and the right to inform a relative or friend. The right to be examined by an independent doctor capable of detecting any signs of torture or ill-treatment was equally essential.

32. The Committee's sources of information used were not confidential and could be divulged to the delegation, including those concerning alleged cases of enforced disappearance.

33. While commending the drafting of a new asylum law, he noted that article 34 of the Constitution referred only to "political refugees", although it was not just political reasons that justified the granting of asylum. Under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, asylum must also be granted to any person with "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality [or] membership of a particular social group".

34. Regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's cooperation in the inquiry into the assassination of Rafik Hariri, his intention had not been to enter into political considerations, but to ask what had happened to a key witness in the case, Mr. Ziad Wasef.

35. **Ms. Sveaass** (Second Country Rapporteur) thanked the delegation for its very detailed replies to the Committee's many questions. Women and children were not spared when it came to torture, so it was natural that the Committee should ask about them, referring to information obtained from other treaty bodies such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women or the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Enforced disappearances certainly fell within the Committee's competence, in that they could amount to a form of ill-treatment of the victims' relatives. Fearing that she might have mispronounced the names of the women concerned when she had asked her questions at an earlier meeting, she asked the delegation once again for information on the situation of Fida al-Horani, who had been arrested after signing the Damascus Declaration for National Democratic Change in October 2005, and Tal al-Mallouhi, a 19-year-old blogger arrested at her home in December 2009, and allegedly denied visits from her parents ever since.

36. She would also like to know whether military personnel received training in human rights in general and the prohibition of torture in particular. If so, was the efficacy of the training regularly evaluated? The importance of training could not be overemphasized in view of the various police activities performed by military personnel in the Syrian Arab Republic. She would welcome additional information about the various stages of

consideration of complaints of acts of torture or ill-treatment by police officers or other officials. It would also be useful to have more information about the types of accusation against the alleged perpetrators of those acts and, on the penalties, if any, imposed on them. She would like the delegation to indicate whether the State party intended to authorize fully independent bodies to visit places of detention. As for the 42 persons who, according to Human Rights Watch, had been detained in Sednaya prison when a riot there had been put down on 10 December 2009, she took note of the report submitted by the delegation to the Secretariat and would examine it carefully. Lastly, in respect of rape, an issue which came within the competence of the Committee, in that it could well amount to torture or ill-treatment, she would like to know whether the Syrian Arab Republic had taken any measures to help rape victims to lodge complaints and provide them with psychological support.

37. **Ms. Belmir** commended the delegation's efforts to reply professionally and accurately to the Committee's many questions. For her part, she had not criticized the State party's declaration of a state of emergency; her remarks had merely been intended to confirm whether, in that freely chosen situation, the Syrian Arab Republic was fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. As for the Supreme State Security Court, she still believed that it bore many of the features of a special court: its membership, its competence and denial of appeal against its decisions. That was clearly a problem in terms of the Convention.

38. **Mr. Bruni**, having thanked the delegation for its meticulous responses, asked for additional information on the implementation of article 15 of the Convention. The delegation had explained that defendants appearing before the courts after making a confession were always asked by the judge whether they had been tortured. If so, a medical examination was automatically requested and, if injuries due to torture were found, the confession was declared null and void. It would be interesting to know whether defendants who told the judge that they had been tortured received special protection afterwards. For example, could the judge order a defendant who claimed to have been tortured to be transferred to a different penitentiary facility? If such measures were not taken, it was difficult to see how defendants would be willing to speak out.

39. In fact, it would appear that the Supreme State Security Court regularly used confessions obtained through torture at the hands of members of the intelligence services and did not address cases of alleged torture submitted to it. Nine years before, the Human Rights Committee had drawn the State party's attention to those problems, which thus appeared to be of long standing. It would be interesting to know whether the Supreme State Security Court had since then been seized of any allegations of torture intended to extract a confession and, if so, how many of the allegations had been deemed admissible.

40. **Ms. Gaer** said that, as part of its dialogue with States parties, the Committee usually asked delegations questions not only on domestic legislation, but also on specific facts, in order to obtain a clear idea of the situation in the country whose report it was examining. That was what it had been doing with the State party when it had asked for more information about cases well known to the international community, including the riots in Sednaya prison, the unusually high number of deaths among conscripts of Kurdish origin, or the fate of some 42 detainees about whom Human Rights Watch had expressed concern. The oral replies provided by the Syrian delegation on those various points were highly appreciated.

41. In respect of the detention conditions of Maher Arar, she invited the Syrian delegation to consult the website of Mr. Arar, a Canadian national, whose version of the facts was very different from that of the Syrian authorities, particularly regarding the number of visits he had received from Canadian embassy staff and his family. She would

like to know the membership of the “judicial committee” which had reportedly taken charge of him on his arrival in the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. The Committee had never implied that article 508 of the Criminal Code — which stated that a rapist could escape all penalties if he married his victim — was in current use; it merely wished to know whether the article, which exonerated criminals, was ever actually in practice.

43. Lastly, the Committee had mentioned the case of Georg Fischer, a Nazi war criminal who had allegedly lived in the Syrian Arab Republic and advised the Syrian Government on matters of torture, because articles 5, 7 and 9 of the Convention imposed a number of obligations on States parties, including the obligation to take such measures as might be necessary to establish their jurisdiction over the offences referred to in article 4 of the Convention, the obligation to extradite the alleged perpetrator of an offence covered by that article if he/she was arrested on the State party’s territory, and the obligation to provide the greatest possible assistance in any criminal proceedings relating to the offences mentioned in that article. She would be particularly grateful for more information about Georg Fischer.

44. **Mr. Wang Xuexian** asked whether the State party was considering raising the age of criminal responsibility.

45. **Ms. Kleopas** asked about the laws under which Ahmed Al-Maati and Abdullah Almalki had been arrested, whether they had been tried before being placed in detention and the offences of which they had been accused.

46. **The Chairperson** said that it was only by studying the practice and jurisprudence of a State party that the Committee could gain an idea of the actual situation prevailing there, which was why members had asked so many questions about specific cases. In that connection, the Committee asked the Syrian delegation to state how many persons had submitted claims for compensation for torture, how many of them had been successful and how many cases had been dismissed. It would also be useful if the State party recorded the name, sex and age of all detainees in a register which families could consult.

47. The Committee would like to know whether the death penalty was still used in the Syrian Arab Republic and, if so, how many persons had been sentenced to death in 2009. He would also like more information about the criminal responsibility borne by members of the State security services in respect of offences committed in the course of their duties.

48. Recalling once more that answers to the various questions asked would provide the Committee with better insight into the implementation of the Convention in the country, he emphasized that the issue of enforced disappearances fell squarely within the Committee’s mandate, the risk of torture being highest precisely in cases of disappearance.

49. Following a private discussion he had had with a member of the Syrian delegation, he reiterated that public meetings were, by definition, open to all, including the press, and that anyone was free to attend and even record the meetings. The only obligation incumbent upon the Office of the High Commissioner was to guarantee everyone’s safety. He, as Chairperson, did not have a list of the members of the public in attendance, and was not obliged to ensure that such a list was produced.

50. **Mr. Al-Ahmad** (Syrian Arab Republic), replying to the Committee’s questions, said that international instruments became an integral part of domestic law as soon as they were ratified by the State and that, consequently, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was in force in the Syrian Arab Republic. He would draw the attention of the judicial authorities to the advisability of translating the Convention’s provisions into domestic legislation.

51. The mandate of the security forces — which came under the Ministry of the Interior — was determined by law, and no official enjoyed impunity from prosecution. The Supreme State Security Court had the powers of a judicial rather than an administrative body.

52. The death penalty was very rarely used in the Syrian Arab Republic, except in extremely serious cases, such as a burglary or rape culminating in murder. The death sentence could be pronounced only after legal proceedings, in which the accused person enjoyed all legal guarantees. If a person who had received a death sentence did not appeal, the Court of Cassation automatically took up the case, serving as the court of ultimate appeal.

53. Membership of the Muslim Brotherhood was not, in itself, sufficient to warrant the death penalty, but death sentences had been imposed on members of that military-style movement who had been guilty of acts of violence or serious crimes. It should not be forgotten that the Muslim Brotherhood had claimed thousands of innocent victims throughout the country.

54. Training courses on the prevention of torture were intended exclusively for law enforcement officers, not for military personnel.

55. The Syrian delegation would submit further information to the Committee in due course, along with statistics on reported cases of torture. Statements obtained under torture could not be used as evidence in legal proceedings.

56. Owing to the recent riots in Sednaya prison, visits to the facility had been suspended, but they would be resumed when the situation had returned to normal.

57. The Syrian delegation had no information about Georg Fischer, who was not in the Syrian Arab Republic.

58. Syrian law prohibited the extradition of political refugees. It should be noted that the Iranians who had been sent back to their own country had not been political refugees, but had been wanted by the justice system for offences committed in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

59. In conclusion, the Syrian delegation did not have a defensive attitude towards the Committee, but had merely made sure to point out that some of the questions put by members did not fall within the Committee's mandate. In any case, he was pleased with the fruitful dialogue that had taken place during the consideration of his country's initial report.

60. **The Chairperson** thanked the Syrian delegation for answering the Committee's questions.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.