

Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

1. Name:

Abderrazak Rouwane

2. Nationality:

Moroccan

3. Current position:

Expert Advisor in Charge of human rights capacity building program for judges and public prosecutors.

This includes training sessions on international treaties ratified by Morocco including the UN Convention against torture: International obligations and role of judges to implement them.

Individual communications and mandate of treaty bodies including the UN CAT.

Protocol of Istanbul: international norms and national implementation.

4. The CAT and GA resolution 68/268 require experts to possess “recognized competence in the field of human rights” and “in particular in the field covered by the relevant treaty”, including to give consideration to the usefulness of “some persons having legal experience” (article 17). Please explain how you qualify as an expert.

Having experienced imprisonment for 11 years as a political prisoner and as a victim of grave human rights violations of the past, I decided to devote my life to the defense of human rights just after my release in 1994.

Having a legal background, I decided to study international human rights law in Essex university in England to deepen my academic Knowledge in the matter and obtain a Master’s degree in 1997.

My personal commitment combined with a deep knowledge in international human rights norms and mechanisms gained during these studies enabled me to diversify my experience by playing a major role with the three main stakeholders concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights as follows:

1- At the level of civil society.

I became more active in some national NGO’s working in the field of human such as:

- the Moroccan organization of human rights for which I did a voluntary work for six months;
- the Forum for truth and justice about which I was a founding member and participated in developing scientific activities and vision of the NGO (The

Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

forum for truth and justice is an NGO composed of ex- victims of grave violations of human rights).

2- At the level of the National Human Rights Institution

Since December 2002, I joined the National human rights institution of Morocco in which I held several senior positions including the Director of the department of protection and assistance to victims of human rights violations and the Director of international cooperation.

As a Director of the Protection department, I was responsible for developing and implementing the Institution's plan of action in areas which are so much related to the mandate of the committee against torture.

My work in this regard included particularly:

- Receiving victims of human rights violations including torture and ill treatment and providing assistance to them;
- Receiving and examining individual complaints concerning human rights violations including torture and ill treatment;
- Carrying out visits to all places of deprivation of liberty including prisons and preparing draft reports and recommendations to the concerned authorities;
- Preparing thematic and annual reports including parts dealing with violations related to torture and relevant recommendations.
- Giving advice on how international obligations and norms should be respected at the national level.

3- At the level of transitional justice experience

During my work as an Advisor to the President and one of the senior staff of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and reconciliation commission of Morocco) I had the opportunity to contribute to the following:

- Participating to the definition of appropriate transitional justice policies, strategies and programs;
- Giving advice in the subject matter by bringing international standards in human rights in general and in transitional justice in particular;
- Overseeing the development of individual and community reparation programs for victims of grave human rights violations of the past as a Director of the Commission's reparation program;
- Development and analysis of the commission's database related to individual complaints.
- Participating in the elaboration and drafting of the Commission's final report as a member of its drafting committee.
- Contributing to studies and scientific activities of the Commission.

Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

4- At the level of the permanent national coordinating mechanism

In 2011, I was appointed the first secretary general of the Moroccan national coordinating mechanism.

As such I was responsible for initiating and implementing projects and programs within the framework of Morocco's obligations by virtue of the UN human rights system particularly with regard to the preparation and submission of national reports to treaty bodies and UPR mechanism.

I was also responsible for coordinating and facilitating visits to the country to more than 10 special procedures.

I also coordinated and supervised processes related to updating and implementing the National plan of action for human rights and democracy.

5- At the level of the Committee against torture

As a member of the Committee and one of its Vice Chairs, I had the opportunity to contribute to the work of the committee by bringing in its benefit all expertise I have developed during my long experience with the above mentioned stakeholders.

But I have to confess that the practical experience within the committee during my first mandate allowed me learn a great deal.

I intend, if elected for a second mandate, to use all this knowledge to continue my efforts with other members to improve the work and working methods of the committee.

- 5. According to the Addis Ababa Guidelines, "Treaty body members shall not only be independent and impartial, but shall also be seen by a reasonable observer to be so". Do you have any experience or affiliation that could be considered a real or perceived conflict of interest (e.g. holding a position within or on behalf of your country's government)? If so, how do you intend to address it, to ensure full independence and impartiality in the exercise of the functions?**

NO.

I am already a member and Vice Chair of the Committee and I fulfil my duties in a total impartiality and full independence.

- 6. If elected, how will your professional commitments enable you to dedicate the necessary time and attention to perform your duties effectively, both during and between sessions?**

Being already a member of the Committee, I have attended all its sessions and I was able to carry on all duties assigned to me.

Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

I also had time to represent the committee in various activities when I was designated to do so. For example, during this mandate, I represented the committee in more than 6 activities in presence or remotely at the national and international level.

Moreover, in my position as an expert I have a very flexible working time which allows me to dedicate the necessary and sufficient time not only to the work of the committee but also to some voluntary work in the field of human rights.

7. In your view, what is the role of civil society, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), and National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs), in engaging with the Committee in relation to its mandated functions? In your opinion, how can the voices and experiences of survivors of torture and other ill-treatment be meaningfully considered in the Committee's functions and working methods?

Civil society organizations play a major role in the work of the UN CAT. From my experience during this mandate, whenever there is a weak participation of civil society organizations for one reason or another, I feel that something is missing.

As I said before, the best reviews we have had so far are those in which there was a strong interaction of civil society organizations and national human rights institutions as well as national preventive mechanisms.

This interaction can contribute so much to improve the review of states' party's reports and thereby reinforce the control of states obligations when it is performed at the following levels:

- Contribution to pre- review by participating in the process of preparing of the list of issues by submitting, accurate, relevant and good questions to the committee;
- Submitting good alternative reports to the committee on the deadline indicated by the committee;
- Attending private meeting with the committee to give the opportunity to have more possible information and clarifications concerning certain issues.
- Attending sessions of the committee.
- Continue interaction with the committee even after the review to assist the committee on overseeing the follow up and implementation of its final conclusions and recommendations.

I believe that the same applies to National Human Rights Institutions when these institutions are accredited status A by the GHANRI. When they are not accredited, I think they should also seize the opportunity of the review of the report of their state and benefit from it to allow the Committee to know the obstacles and problems they face and make possible recommendations to enable them to reinforce their capacities in full compliance with the Paris principles.

Concerning the NPM's whenever they exist and they are established in full compliance with the Paris principles related to NHRI's, their interaction with the Committee is of great help in providing firsthand information about the situation in all places of deprivation of liberty they

Questionnaire for Candidates to the Committee against Torture (CAT)

are mandated to control. The time I have spent in the Committee has proved that a good interaction before, during and after the review with the committee by these mechanisms contribute a great deal to the quality of the review of states parties.

Finally, concerning the voices of victims and survivors of torture;

In view of the specificity of our convention which is about the crime of torture and ill-treatment which is one of the very few rights which are not derogable which means in other words that its practice should be prohibited and banned in all times even in times of war or emergency or any other circumstances;

Victims occupies a central place in the convention as all its provisions concern them and therefore their interaction with the committee whenever it is possible can be considered a kind of revealing the truth and rehabilitation for them. It also enables the committee to hear real and direct testimonies which definitely help it to assist the situation and make the appropriate recommendations.