



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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IMMEDIATE

ICJ CONFERENCE WARNS THAT MONITORING OF HUMAN RIGHTS URGENTLY NEEDED IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

The international community is failing to do enough to monitor and prevent abuses arising from the fight against terrorism, according to speakers at an international conference sponsored by the International Commission of Jurists on 23-24 October.

Acting UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Bertrand Ramacharan warned the Conference that the fight against terrorism, while essential, carried with it the danger of departures from the rule of law, which had already been seen in many situations around the world. Conference experts pointed to the recent erosion of basic human rights, including freedom from torture, arbitrary detention and racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination. The experts also highlighted the adoption by States of repressive practices of administrative detention without judicial review, the use of military tribunals to try civilians and the transfer or deportation of persons to countries where they face torture or other abuses.

The Conference, entitled *Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism: International Monitoring Systems*, was attended by some 200 persons, including more than 70 Governmental delegations.

The Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Sergei M. Ordzhonikidze, told the Conference that it was important that human rights be monitored in the fight against terrorism.

Representatives from Switzerland and Mexico addressing the Conference supported the creation of an independent United Nations monitoring mechanism on human rights and counter-terrorism. Their statements followed the presentation of a joint Declaration of Non-Governmental Organisations, which called on the UN Human Rights Commission to establish such a mechanism at its next session beginning in March 2004.

The Conference heard from experts charged with supervising States' compliance with UN human rights treaties as well as those appointed by the UN Human Rights Commission to examine the questions of torture and arbitrary detention. Representatives from the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, and the International Committee of the Red Cross addressed the Conference. Presentations were also delivered on the Inter-American, African and Arab systems of human rights protection.

The ICJ will shortly make available a compilation of the Conference papers.
For further information, please contact Ian Seiderman, +41 22 979 3800.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

81A, avenue de Châtelaine, P.O. Box 216, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: +41(0) 22 979 3800 Fax: +41(0) 22 979 3801 Website: <http://www.icj.org> E-mail: info@icj.org

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