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ICJ deplores deferral of discussion of secret detention study by Human Rights Council

The ICJ today expressed its disappointment at the decision by the UN Human Rights Council to defer on flawed procedural grounds the discussion of a global study documenting secret detention, torture and enforced disappearances in the name of counter-terrorism in some 80 countries around the world.

"The study is a lurid account of gross human rights violations and crimes, which have served to erode the rule of law in countries around the world. It provides compelling evidence of the crisis in human rights and accountability in counter-terrorism demanding urgent attention." said the International Commission of Jurists.

The report was ready for discussion at the 13th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. It raised high expectations of victims around the world and the global human rights community that the preeminent human rights body of the United Nations would take robust action to stop secret detention and to ensure their right of victims to remedy and reparation.

Instead the Human Rights Council engaged in a debate about mandates and procedures following which it deferred the report for a later discussion. The ICJ considers that there is no question but that this report falls flatly and fully within the mandates of the four Special Procedure mechanisms that elaborated it.

Those mechanisms – the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Special Rapporteur on Counterterrorism and Human Rights, the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention – have been able to address secret detention effectively and in a comprehensive and integrated way.

The ICJ is concerned, moreover, that this deferral constitutes another in a line of continuous attempts by states at the UN Human Rights Council to limit and undermine the independence of its special procedures and independent mandates. These mechanisms are among the most important elements of the universal protection system. They need strong support, not be weakened by political bickering.

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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

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