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Subject: Alliance Against Torture in Psychiatry  
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Dear friends,

A week ago a remarkable step was taken by the Special Rapporteur on Torture of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, Juan E Méndez. In a speech in the 22nd session of the "Human Rights Council" on March 4, 2013 explaining his report, he qualified forced treatment in psychiatry as torture and/or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This is a remarkable step because if forced treatment is torture, there must be an absolute ban on it. That means that we now have the blessing of the highest authority in human rights questions that our old struggle against forced treatment is finally a legitimate claim for any civil society, a mandatory duty for all member states of the United Nations.

But we do have a deficit in making this paradigm shift known. We therefore suggest initiating campaigns for a national *Alliance Against Torture in Psychiatry* in as many countries as possible. To give you an idea how you could formulate it, here is a draft:

### **Alliance Against Torture in Psychiatry**

*"The prohibition of torture is one of the few absolute and non-derogable human rights,  
a matter of jus cogens, a peremptory norm of customary international law." \**

The undersigned organizations, in support of this statement made by Special Rapporteur on Torture of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, call on all states and federal legislators to immediately declare void all special laws that legalize forced psychiatric treatment

as we have noted that the Special Rapporteur on Torture of the UN High Commission for Human Rights has declared forced treatment in psychiatry as torture and/or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

as we support the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur that *"States should impose an absolute ban on all forced and non-consensual medical interventions against persons with disabilities, including the non-consensual administration of psychosurgery, electroshock and mind-altering drugs, for both long- and short- term application. The obligation to end forced psychiatric interventions based on grounds of disability is of immediate application and scarce financial resources cannot justify postponement of its implementation."\*\**

We therefore call on all state and federal legislators to immediately declare void all special laws that legalize forced psychiatric treatment. Only a prompt reaction can fulfill the demand for an absolute ban on torture: *"The prohibition of torture is*

*one of the few absolute and non-derogable human rights, a matter of jus cogens, a peremptory norm of customary international law."*\*-----

\* See article 82 of the "Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture [...], Juan E. Méndez; A/HRC/22/53" [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A.HRC.22.53\\_English.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A.HRC.22.53_English.pdf)\*\* See page 5 of the "Statement by Mr. Juan E Méndez; Special Rapporteur on torture [...] 22nd session of the Human Rights Council, Agenda Item 3, 4 March 2013, Geneva" [http://mdac.info/sites/mdac.info/files/march\\_4\\_torture.pdf](http://mdac.info/sites/mdac.info/files/march_4_torture.pdf)

We can report that we have heard about initiatives for such national campaigns in Germany, Poland and Israel with texts specifically adapted for the legal situation in these countries. Of course we would be glad to get notice about other national campaigns which we suggest publishing on the internet and cross-linked to each other. In this way we can easily demonstrate that there is an international obligation.

Our consideration is that also human rights activist organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc. who up till now never cared about psychiatric torture in countries without a tyrannical regime are in need of following the paradigmatic shift of the UN.

We think that to launch such a national campaign it might be reasonable to first get a number of known intellectuals, lawyers and judges etc. who you know to have been, or might be, supportive (in the USA e.g. Kate Millett, Judith Butler) as initial signatories. The second step would be the publication of the alliance and calling for organizations to sign in the alliance too. We assume that then any approach to these mentioned human rights activist as well as progressive disability organizations should be successful in persuading them to sign in. (At least this is how it is being proceeded in Germany.)

For those who are interested in further information about why coercive psychiatry is directly linked to torture, we elaborated on that in our magazine [Zwang No. 2](#) of 2004 with the following articles in English:

**[Editorial:Coercive psychiatry and the torture debate in the western world](#)**  
**[Coercive psychiatry a torture system: A plea for considering coercive psychiatry as tortu](#)**  
**[The position of Amnesty International on torture in psychiatry](#)**

Best regards,  
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(Secretary of [IAAPA](#))