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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Union of Northwest Human Rights Organisation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 January 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Systematic Human Rights Violations in Qatar: Acts of Physical and Psychological Torture Committed by the Qatari Authorities Against Mr Tayeb Benabderrahmane

While asserting its growing role on the international stage, particularly in mediating conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Qatar is invited to pay particular attention to respect for fundamental rights on its territory. The case of Tayeb Benabderrahmane, a Franco-Algerian businessman and human rights activist, illustrates the challenges the country faces in bringing its practices into line with its international commitments.

Arrested on 13 January 2020 without a warrant, Tayeb Benabderrahmane was subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, deprived of legal assistance and forced to sign documents written in Arabic. Detained in appalling conditions, he spent 171 days in solitary confinement in Salwa Road prison, where he was subjected to serious abuses that violated his human dignity. After being placed under house arrest, he was finally deported on 1 November 2020. In 2023, he discovered that he had been sentenced to death in absentia following secret proceedings, without ever being informed or given the opportunity to defend himself.

Qatar, as a committed player on the international stage, has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the principles of justice and human rights by ensuring that such allegations are investigated with transparency and by strengthening confidence in its judicial institutions.

Violations of Qatar's International Obligations

The acts perpetrated by the Qatari authorities against Mr Benabderrahmane constitute flagrant violations of the Convention against Torture (CAT) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

a) Violation of Article 1 of the Convention Against Torture: Torture

The following acts fall under the definition of torture:

- Prolonged sleep deprivation due to constant exposure to bright light.
- Extreme physical and psychological violence during simulated interrogations.
- Repeated and humiliating full-body searches.
- Extreme isolation in a 2m² cell with no windows or furniture.
- Physical violence and death threats against him and his family.

These acts were aimed at obtaining a coerced confession from Mr Benabderrahmane, as well as the handing over of sensitive professional documents.

b) Violation of Article 2 of the Convention Against Torture: Failure to Prevent Torture

Qatar has failed to take effective measures to prevent torture, including :

- Lack of access to a lawyer or independent medical care.
- No investigation despite complaints lodged by Mr Benabderrahmane and his representatives.

c) Violation of Article 15 of the Convention Against Torture: Use of Confessions Extracted Under Torture

Mr Benabderrahmane's forced confession formed the basis of his death sentence in absentia on 31 May 2023, which was confirmed by the Qatar Court of Appeal in October 2023.

Methods of Torture Used

a) Isolation and Sensory Deprivation

- Locked in a cramped cell with no windows or furniture.
- Permanently exposed to blinding light, preventing any sleep.
- Deprivation of adequate nutrition

b) Physical Violence

- Physical pressure: prolonged forced postures
- Physical constraints: forced to stand blindfolded for long hours
- Violent jostling, intimidation and simulated breaking of limbs to extract confessions.

c) Psychological Violence

- Death threats against him and his family.
- Forced to call his wife under surveillance to ask her to stop taking any legal action.
- Continuous pressure during interrogations and coercion to sign documents under threat.

These practices were aimed at obtaining the handover of sensitive documents linked to influential figures in Qatar, including Nasser Al-Khelaifi. The consequences for Tayeb Benabderrahmane were serious, both physically and psychologically. His arbitrary detention and the acts of torture to which he was subjected have left deep scars, rigorously documented by medical reports.

Mr Benabderrahmane suffers from severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), confirmed by Dr Sauveur Boukris in January 2021, with an estimated permanent functional deficit of between 5% and 10%. Anxiety-depressive symptoms, sleep disorders, constant hypervigilance and recurrent flashbacks have been documented, notably by Dr Clémence Grignon in October 2023. Physically, he has suffered significant weight loss of almost 15 kg, chronic intestinal problems and persistent joint pain due to the physical constraints imposed during his detention.

On her return to France, intensive drug treatment was required to stabilise her condition. It included antidepressants, anxiolytics and hypnotics, but these drugs produced significant side effects, such as memory and cognitive impairment. The death sentence handed down in May 2023, based on a confession obtained under torture, has aggravated his state of anxiety and increased his psychological vulnerability.

These lasting physical and mental effects reflect the devastating impact of the inhuman and degrading treatment inflicted on Mr Benabderrahmane, profoundly affecting his health and quality of life.

Lack of Effective Remedies and Reprisals

Despite representations to the Qatari authorities, no investigation has been launched. Worse still, Mr Benabderrahmane was sentenced to death in an unfair trial based on confessions extracted under torture.

Continued pressure and threats of reprisals have prevented Mr Benabderrahmane and his family from accessing effective legal or diplomatic remedies.

Recommendations

The NGO urges the Qatari government to immediately overturn the death sentence against Mr Tayeb Benabderrahmane. This decision, made in the context of a trial marred by serious irregularities and based on confessions extracted under torture, represents a flagrant violation of Qatar's international human rights obligations.

It is also imperative to call for an independent investigation into the torture and multiple human rights violations suffered by Mr Benabderrahmane. Such an investigation, conducted by impartial experts, is essential to establish responsibility, guarantee transparency and restore confidence in the Qatari judicial system.

The NGO also calls on the Qatari authorities to return all the property and documents confiscated from Mr Benabderrahmane. These illegal confiscations not only deprive the victim of his fundamental property rights, but also demonstrate the arbitrary use of power by the Qatari state. The restitution of these assets is not only a legal obligation, but also an essential measure to partially repair the damage suffered.

Finally, it is essential that Qatar implements significant legislative reforms to prevent torture and guarantee effective access to judicial remedies for all victims of abuse. These reforms must include strengthened mechanisms to monitor the practices of the security forces, protect the rights of detainees and establish real independence for the judiciary
