OMCT GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX 2025: METHODOLOGY NOTE

1. RELEVANCE

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (hereinafter, CIDTP or "other ill-treatment) represent some of the most severe violations of human integrity and dignity. Yet, torture and other ill-treatment remain widespread in many countries across the world and impunity for these crimes is pervasive, constituting one of the primary obstacles to progress in their prevention and eradication. The lack of transparent, victim, survivor-centred and responsive mechanisms to process and sanction claims of torture and other ill-treatment leads to a global underreporting of such acts.

The Global Torture Index ('the Torture Index') aims to shed light on this crime by **assessing the risk of being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in any given country**. A thorough analysis based on comprehensive data, measuring the different dimensions of the eradication of torture, is crucial to identify trends, track progress and setbacks within countries and regions over time. The data has been collected and validated by OMCT members and partners, with longstanding experience and local expertise in anti-torture and human rights.

The **universal anti-torture framework** establishes a comprehensive set of rights and state obligations aimed at the absolute prohibition of torture. These are set out in the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, its General Comments and other core human rights frameworks that address prevention, accountability and victims' rights. Torture and other ill-treatment take place in detention settings, but also in extra-custodial settings, such as during protests, evictions, and day to day police operations. This crime is often perpetrated against individuals or communities who have been historically marginalised and discriminated against. States need to put in place specific structures and safeguards to protect the rights of those who are more exposed to violence. It is equally crucial to promote and protect the role of individuals, institutions and, civil society organisations, that defend the right to be free from torture and other ill-treatment.

The Torture Index's methodology has been developed in **collaboration with members of the SOS-Torture Network** and leading global anti-torture experts. It is grounded in a bottom-up approach, relying on detailed, first-hand information provided by local civil society organisations—primarily OMCT members and partners. With nearly 200 members working on the front lines in the fight against torture in diverse contexts worldwide, the SOS-Torture Network brings unique credibility and insight to the analysis. This local expertise is complemented by a rigorous verification and rating methodology to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The Index evaluates national legal systems, public policies, and their real-world effects, measuring them against international human rights standards. It aims to inform governments, international organisations, and the public through an interactive and accessible online platform. The Index not only quantifies risk but also provides qualitative insights gathered from local civil society organisations, and human rights defenders—highlighting the systemic issues of this global underreported problem, emerging trends, and testimonies from survivors. With its comprehensive analysis, it identifies concerning country practices, underlying causes, and priority areas for advocacy. By highlighting both challenges and examples of positive change, the Index serves as a platform to support evidence-based action and foster greater compliance with human rights standards.

The Torture Index captures and assesses State progress (or regression) in various dimensions and obligations regulated by international human rights law set forth in[1]:

- The UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its General Comments (Nº 2, 3,4)
- The UN Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other Core International and Regional Human Rights Treaties
- The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.
- The UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.
- Other crucial international and regional human rights instruments, standards, rules and guidelines.

[1] *Note: for more information on the standards and references used to develop the Index, see the document 'Legal framework of the Global Torture Index'.*

To measure the above standards, the Torture Index is structured in **seven thematic pillars**:

1. *Political commitment against torture*: Evaluation of the State's legal obligations, treaty ratifications, and implementation of basic anti-torture commitments and public policies in line with the UN Convention Against Torture, international and regional frameworks at the national level.

2. *Ending police brutality and institutional violence*: Assessment of safeguards and mechanisms to prevent torture and other ill-treatment in the context of law enforcement operations and during arrest, police custody, and interrogation, as well as during public assemblies and border control. Related institutional human rights violations such as the death penalty, life sentence and enforced disappearances are also measured.
3. *Freedom from torture while deprived of liberty*: Evaluation of safeguards in detention facilities, ensuring decent conditions, legal protections, and humane treatment, with attention to specific groups, as well as oversight mechanisms for accountability and monitoring.
4. *Ending impunity:* Examination of mechanisms to ensure accountability for torture and other ill-treatment, including investigative and judicial mechanisms, effective remedies for victims and trained forensic services.
5. *Victims' rights*: Analysis of the State's responsibility to provide holistic redress to torture victims, along with comprehensive rehabilitation, protection measures, and specialised services.
6. *Protection for all*: Assessment of the State's positive obligations to ensure the enjoyment of human rights and the right not to be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment for specific groups and individuals facing a higher risk—such as children, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and ethnic minorities—and the implementation of effective legal and institutional measures against violations by state and non-state actors, including in national security contexts.
7. *Right to defend and civic space:* Evaluation of the legal framework, institutional practices and risks faced by human rights defenders and civil society organisations due to their human rights work, focusing on the ability to monitor human rights, operate freely and document abuses without restrictions.

The Torture Index will be launched in **June 2025** as part of the OMCT's Global Week Against Torture. In its first year, it will be implemented in **26 countries** across all regions—Africa, the Americas, Europe and Central Asia, Asia, and the MENA region—with the aim of expanding to additional countries and partners as the initiative scales up. From 2025, the Index will be updated annually with information and analysis gathered from the previous year reflecting a portrait on the enjoyment of human rights in a country on a regular basis.

The **countries selected** for Index implementation were chosen based on a range of strategic criteria to ensure relevance, impact, and effectiveness. These factors include the prevalence of torture and other ill-treatment, the presence of active civil society partners, regional balance, and opportunities to influence national and international legal and policy reform processes. Priority was given to countries where the OMCT has established members and close partners, ensuring strong local engagement and a substantial base of relevant data, analysis, and reports, providing a solid foundation for evidence-based monitoring and advocacy. Lastly, we have selected countries that have undergone a review by the Committee Against Torture (CAT) in recent years or during the Index implementation year, aligning the information with international human rights mechanisms.

2. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The Index questionnaire is grounded in a human rights-based approach, aiming to identify both high-risk contexts and the individuals or groups most vulnerable to torture and other ill-treatment, such as women, children, LGBTQIA+ individuals, migrants and asylum seekers, and ethnic or racial minorities.

2.1. Indicators to measure human rights commitments, efforts and results

The Index questionnaire takes the OHCHR guide on human rights indicators as the main methodological reference for human rights measurement. It is designed to collect information about compliance with international standards, its implementation and impact on rights holders, and thus includes the following three types of indicators:

- Structural- reflecting the legal and policy framework of a country in line with human rights international treaties, instruments, and standards.
- Process- measuring the State's efforts to implement human rights commitments through public policies, regulations, programmes, budgets and, protocols, among others.
- Outcome- capturing the actual and/or perceived enjoyment of human rights by groups and reflects the impacts of the two indicators above.

These three levels of measuring human rights are articulated through:

Fact-based indicators

- Quantitative - indicator phrased in a quantitative form, based on information on objects, facts or events that are observable and verifiable, e.g. number of complaints of torture and/or CIDTP cases received by the prosecution office.
- Qualitative - indicator phrased in a narrative form and based on information on objects, facts or events that are observable and verifiable. For example: a narrative description of an act of torture.

Judgment-based indicators

- Qualitative - indicator phrased in a qualitative form, based on information that is a perception, opinion, assessment, or judgement. For example: is the right to freedom of assembly fully guaranteed in law and in practice in a given country?

2.2. Assumptions

The Torture Index adopts a positive approach in formulating its hypothesis. The first and foremost premise is that the right to freedom from torture and CIDTP will be a more realistic scenario –and therefore the risk will be lower— in a country in which:

- There is a legal and institutional structure that criminalises and punishes torture and other ill-treatment.
- There are specific policies that ensure freedom from torture and other ill-treatment in the riskiest contexts including detention, protests, national security operations, migration, armed conflict.
- There is a strong and independent rule of law system and judiciary that ensures that there are efficient and prompt investigations, leading to the prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators for acts of torture and other ill-treatment.
- Torture survivors are properly accompanied, protected, and rehabilitated.
- There are specific policies protecting individuals and groups such as children, women, ethnic and racial minorities, and persons on the move.
- There is recognition of the right to defend human rights enabling human rights defenders and civil society organisations to freely and openly advocate for the implementation of anti-torture policies, and play a watchdog role.

2.3. Survey Design and Implementation

Three types of survey questions based on the methodology and indicators, measure the level of compliance with the above-mentioned hypothesis. These are as follows:

a) Multiple choice- the respondent can select one or more options from a given list of answers.
b) Rating scales- the question displays a scale of answer options from any range and the respondent selects the figure or option that most accurately represents their response.
c) Open-ended questions- partners are required to type their answer and there are no pre-set answer options. These items are not directly included in the index but provide crucial qualitative data to better understand the local realities and contextualise responses.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In recognising the inherent challenges in measuring the likelihood and risk of torture and CIDTP in a given country, the Torture Index is guided by a set of core principles. These guiding principles provide a clear framework and offer direction on key substantive and methodological aspects of the Index.

a) The Torture Index reflects the level of compliance, both in law and practice, with international anti-torture and human rights standards as reflected in legislation and, public policies as well as its implementation and impacts on rights-holders. Thus, the Index covers the three human rights dimensions of respect, protect and fulfil.

b) At all times the OMCT gives priority to the principles of confidentiality, non-disclosure and do-no-harm of the partners on the basis of informed consent of partners or victims who participate in the Index.

c) The questionnaire considers statistical and publicly available official data, bearing in mind that if the information lacks transparency, this will negatively affect the Index score. Similarly, if a lack of information hampers the completion of

the questionnaire, this will be reflected on the Index webpage in the '*Transparency and Access to information*' scale. By combining these two indicators, users will be able to assess the reliability and completeness of the corresponding Torture Index analysis.

d) In federal states, we understand that if a specific state or region fails to comply with international standards, the national government is ultimately held accountable.

e) Participating organisations at the national level are publicly recognised as the sources of information and counterparts of the Global Index (except in cases where security concerns have been expressed by local partners).

4. PARTICIPARTORY SURVEY AND VALIDATION PROCEDURE

a) Firstly, the OMCT Secretariat has drafted the Index methodology and questionnaires, in line with international human rights standards, following multiple rounds of internal review within the staff and key partners, renowned anti-torture experts and organisations that have developed other indexes. The objective was to provide an initial validation process of the methodology, identifying gaps in the questionnaire and in the implementation process.

b) At a second instance, in 2023, the Secretariat organised a Global Torture Index expert meeting in Geneva, involving a broader audience of partners working in torture advocacy, research, statistics, and decision-making bodies to discuss the Index in depth. The meeting involved the participation of experts and practitioners from across the globe to ensure that diverse views, human rights concerns and systems were considered. The aim was to present and discuss the drafted methodology, questionnaire, thematic pillars, as well as to identify ways to overcome implementation challenges and how the Index can be used. Following the meeting, the questionnaire underwent a comprehensive review through seven thematic workshops, involving the same participants from the Geneva discussion.

c) Thirdly, following the thematic workshops and methodological adjustments, the Index was tested in seven countries across all regions in 2023. After this initial phase, the OMCT Secretariat conducted follow-up meetings with implementation partners to refine the questionnaire and improve data collection processes where needed. In 2024, the Index was piloted in an additional 14 countries, followed by 5 more in 2025. By the official launch on 25 June 2025, a total of 26 countries had been assessed through the Index.

5. SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. First Phase: Data Collection

The Torture Index questionnaire was initially drafted in 2023 and—after undergoing multiple rounds of qualitative reviews and consultations was, piloted in 2024 and 2025. Table 1 provides an overview of the questionnaire structure. The OMCT Secretariat strategically selected approximately 30 partners to participate in the pilot phase of the Index. With support from the OMCT team, around 80 partners in 26 countries completed the questionnaire in 2025, using existing sources such as internal databases, reports, shadow submissions to UN mechanisms, and documented victim cases. To ensure comprehensive and accurate responses, additional research and consultations were carried out with independent local actors, including researchers, specialised human rights NGOs, legal and medical professionals.

A variety of tailored data collection methods were used to reflect the diverse contexts of each country. These included working sessions and consultations with local anti-torture networks, distributing thematic responsibilities among different organisations, identifying dedicated research units within partner institutions, and—in countries with limited capacity—engaging expert consultants to pre-fill the data, which was then reviewed and validated by local partners.

In countries where multiple organisations were involved, validation meetings were held to build consensus on the collected data and to agree on good practices and country-specific recommendations. Throughout this process, the Index team actively gathered feedback and insights from participants, using their input to refine the methodology and improve its effectiveness for subsequent years.

Tab. 1: Global Torture Index Survey: Variable Overview

FULL DATASET	
TOTAL RECORDS	24,882
UNIQUE COUNTRIES	26
UNIQUE ITEMS (PER COUNTRY)	957

	GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX ITEMS
NUMBER OF UNIQUE ITEMS	440
ITEMS PER TYPE	Multiple Choice: 289 Matrix: 121 Checkboxes: 30
ITEMS BY WEIGHT	Weight 1: 175 Weight 5: 191 Weight 10: 74
ITEMS BY PARENT TOPIC	Political Commitment: 42 Ending Police Brutality and Institutional Violence: 93 Freedom from Torture While Deprived of Liberty: 37 Ending Impunity: 108 Victims' Rights: 25 Protection for All: 88 Right to Defend and Civic Space: 47

5.2. Second Phase: Index Construction

For **each country** measured in the Torture Index, the following key quantitative indicators were calculated:

- 1 aggregate torture and ill-treatment country-score,
- 7 thematic sub-scores per country for each thematic pillar of torture and ill-treatment:
  - *Political commitment against torture*
  - *Ending police brutality and institutional violence*
  - *Freedom from torture while deprived of liberty*
  - *Ending impunity*
  - *Victims' rights*
  - *Protection for all*
  - *Right to defend and civic space.*
- 1 data transparency score, assessing local data landscapes and core access to information safeguards. This is meant to help contextualise country and thematic index scores in view of data transparency.

The calculation of thematic and country scores is based on a scale from 0 to 100. Based on the numeric scores, countries are classified into five distinct risk categories, as follows:

- **Low Risk:** Reflects a strong adherence to international human rights and anti-torture standards, with effective mechanisms in place to prevent and protect individuals from torture and other ill-treatment.
- **Moderate Risk:** Demonstrates progress toward aligning with international human rights standards, however implementation remains inconsistent.

- **Considerable Risk:** While there may be a legal and institutional framework in place, gaps in enforcement and protection measures indicate ongoing problems in preventing and erradicating torture and other ill-treatment.
- **High Risk:** Marked by serious shortcomings in upholding human rights and implementing anti-torture safeguards, suggesting significant challenges.
- **Very High Risk:** Characterised by systematic violations of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, with very weak safeguards to prevent and protect from instances of torture and ill-treatment.

These categories form the basis of the interactive online map on the Global Torture Index platform. Where countries will be categorised into risk levels—from very high to low—and visualised using a colour-coded heat map. This approach allows users to easily compare countries, identify emerging trends, and highlight systemic challenges in preventing torture and ill-treatment, especially considering data transparency. The following provides additional details on the calculation of each score.

a) Country and Thematic Scores

The Index methodology employs a penalised weighted-average scoring approach (0–100) to assess the risk of torture at both country and thematic levels. Expert-based question weights (1, 5, 10), identified by several OMCT staff consultations, reflect the Index scoring scheme. This approach ensures that each response is weighted according to its designated importance and levels of strategic significance, so that the index does not only reflect legal landscapes, but the lived realities of rights-holders:

- *High Priority* (10): These questions are of utmost importance, focusing on the legal and policy framework, adequate institutions, and reported instances of human rights violations.
- *Medium Priority* (5): These questions are important but not as pressing, addressing legislative safeguards and implementation processes.
- *Regular Priority* (1): This category includes questions relevant to preventing and mitigating the risk of torture and other ill-treatment but considered less critical.

For each country and thematic pillar, the score is calculated as follows:

$$Score = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i v_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} w_i} \times 100 \; - \; 0.5 \times \frac{M}{N}$$

Where the weighted-average component reflects expert-assigned question weights (1, 5, 10) to ensure the index captures both legal frameworks and lived experiences as reported by OMCT partners. *M* is the number of missing or no-data responses, *N* is the total number of questions, and the term 0.5 × (*M/N*) imposes a proportional penalty capped at 0.5 on the 0–100 scale.

We substract:

$$Penalty = 0.5 \; \times \frac{M}{N},$$

Where *0.5* indicates the maximum deduction on the 0–100 composite score that can be applied due to missing responses, *M* represents the number of missing or no-data answers, and *N* the total number of questions in the group. The fraction *M/N* thus captures the proportion of unanswered items, and by multiplying 0.5 by *M/N* we scale the penalty in direct proportion to data incompleteness—so that higher non-response rates incur larger deductions, up to the 0.5 cap. In this way, the Index scoring methodology accounts for the lack of access to information, to reflect the State's absence of transparency.

b) Transparency score

Throughout the process of developing and testing the Index methodology, we have confirmed the existence of challenges in accessing information on torture and ill-treatment across all 26 measured countries. In many countries, opacity surrounds crucial data such as deaths in custody, excessive use of force, number of torture cases and sanctions against law enforcement officials. The Index, by design, serves as a tool for identifying data gaps by highlighting the (un)availability of information across specific countries, both in the absence of specific legislation and in the lack of availability, in practice, of data regarding the number of cases of torture and investigations, protocols used by law enforcement, type of weapons used and, oversight mechanisms in public offices, among others. In addition, data transparency matters for the interpretation of index values.

To facilitate the contextualisation of the country and thematic scores, each country is furthermore rated in terms of the availability and transparency of survey data with regard to various dimensions. The score is calculated as follows:

$$Transparency_Score = \frac{N - M}{N} \times 100$$

Where *N* is the total number of transparency indicators and *M* is the count of questions answered with "no data" or left unanswered. The fraction *N - M/N* thus captures the proportion of available data, which is next scaled to 0–100 by multiplication by 100. No question weighting is applied here, as we consider it irrelevant whether data is available for questions deemed more important. Scores are classified into five categories to reflect data openness, and it captures obstacles such as government-imposed restrictions, the availability of relevant data, and the ability of civil society to access and use that information. The categories range from the worst to the best scenario in State compliance with transparency and data accessibility standards:

- **Transparent**
- **Accessible**
- **Circumscribed**
- **Suppressive**
- **Concealed**

c) Robustness Checks

Recoded-weight score. When we swap to the alternate weight schema (all non-10 weights set to 1), the country-level risk distribution remains essentially unchanged. This close parallel to our primary index confirms that the precise scaling of question weights has minimal effect on final country classifications.

No-penalty calculation. Omitting the missing-data penalty altogether produces an identical risk categorisation to the penalised baseline. The fact that every country retains its original band underscores that our chosen 0.5-point maximum penalty is small relative to the 0–100 score range and thus does not materially alter aggregate outcomes.

Optimised-penalty calculation. Even when we increase the penalty factor to the value that maximises score dispersion ($P \approx 2.00$), the overall distribution of countries by risk category remains the same. This demonstrates that, while a larger penalty broadens the spread of raw scores, it does not change the fundamental hierarchy of country risk groups.

In conclusion, across all checks, the penalised weighted-average score proves exceptionally robust. Neither alternative weighting, nor the removal of the small penalty, or even a substantially increased penalty factor alters the primary country rankings. Only adjustments to the risk band thresholds produce noticeable reclassifications, which underscores the importance of clearly defining category cut-offs—but also confirms that our chosen methodology reliably captures the relative risk of torture based on both legal frameworks and lived experiences. Moreover, qualitative country assessments were incorporated into the analysis using a standard deviation-based indicator.

The Index platform features a dedicated country page which includes a country-risk analysis and seven thematic risk analysis, as well as narrative information that highlights root causes, key concerns within each pillar, advocacy recommendations, examples of good practices, and stories from victims and survivors. This approach offers a deeper, context-based and qualitative understanding of the local reality. Similarly, each analysed country receives a transparency scale and recognition to OMCT member and partners involved in the Index implementation process.

5.3. Third Phase: External Review of the Methodology

It is important to highlight that during the first three years, the Index methodology has been validated continuously. This means the questionnaire and scoring are adjusting and evolving as we are integrating learnings to simplify data collection and refine the scoring methodology. This process is being done with the expertise and support of the Index Steering Committee, OMCT staff, members and partners, anti-torture experts and academia.

The **Steering Committee of the Global Torture Index** plays a central advisory role in guiding the development, methodology and implementation of the Index. Comprising of eight human rights and anti-torture experts from across the five regions, the Committee ensures transparency, strategic oversight and regional representation in the Index's design and evolution. Its responsibilities include reviewing and refining the methodology, addressing discrepancies in country scoring, participating in high-level strategic discussions and serving as regional ambassadors to promote the Index. The Committee meets regularly to review progress, shape advocacy strategies, and explore opportunities for collaboration and fundraising with Index partners.

6. NEXT STEPS

The Torture Index relies primarily on OMCT members and partner responses, which provide locally gathered, context-specific information considered most accurate and close to rights-holders. In 2026, for the second edition of the Index, the OMCT Secretariat plans to implement an internal qualitative review process that cross-checks partner data with reliable third-party sources such as UN bodies, regional human rights mechanisms academia and international NGOs to identify and resolve any discrepancies. This process will prioritise partner consultation to maintain the integrity of their assessments, especially on local perceptions. To enhance accuracy and efficiency, this upcoming review will be supported by machine learning and/or AI technologies, with guidance from academic experts, strengthening data validation and methodological consistency.

In addition, the OMCT intends to achieve the following objectives in future data collection cycles:

a) Increase the OMCT partner network and number of surveyed countries with the final aim to reach worldwide coverage over the years.
b) With larger samples or longitudinal data, the statistical power increases and increases our confidence in publishing numerical scores as opposed to categorised index scores or dynamic analyses of country changes of torture and ill-treatment over time.
c) Organise annual Global Torture Index launches and provide the opportunity for mutual learning and sharing experiences among OMCT member and partners.

FURTHER RESOURCES

For further information, the complete 2025 Torture Index—including detailed data visualisations, FAQs, the methodology, and more—can be accessed on our website: https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at tortureindex@omct.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SUPPORT

This project is made possible through the generous support of our donors.

For a full list of contributors and partners, please visit:

https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We invite you to explore the data and share your thoughts on social media using #GlobalTortureIndex. Join us in spreading awareness by engaging with the data and sharing your country's standing to drive meaningful conversation. Your participation is essential in raising awareness and fostering positive change.

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA: