

Appointment process for the next Special Rapporteur on Torture

Joint letter to the President of the Human Rights Council and
the members of the Consultative Group

Sixty-second session of the Human Rights Council

SUBMITTED BY

**GQUAL Campaign and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture
Victims (IRCT)**

2 June 2026

GQUAL



His Excellency, Ambassador Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro

Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations Office at Geneva
President of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Members of the Consultative Group of the UN Human Rights Council

His Excellency Mr. Jamal Jama AL MUSHARAKH (United Arab Emirates)

Her Excellency Ms. Alejandra DE BELLIS BONILLA (Uruguay)

His Excellency Mr. Peter MACDOUGALL (Canada)

His Excellency Mr. Alaa HEGAZY (Egypt)

His Excellency Mr. Marat Kangarlinski (Azerbaijan)

CC

Her Excellency Ms. Nahida SOBHAN, Coordinator of the Asia Pacific Regional Group

His Excellency Mr. Carlos Mario FORADORI, Coordinator of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Group

His Excellency Mr. Christophe PAYOT, Coordinator of the Western European and other States Regional Group

Her Excellency Mrs. Fancy TOO, Coordinator of the African Regional Group

Her Excellency Ms. Zsófia HAVASI, Coordinator of the Eastern European Regional Group

2 June, 2026

Dear Ambassador Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro and Members of the Human Rights Council Consultative Group,

On behalf of the [GQUAL Campaign](#) and the [International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims \(IRCT\)](#), we write to express our concern regarding the shortlist proposed for the mandate of Special Rapporteur on Torture (SRT) in the Human Rights Council (HRC) Consultative Group's (CG) "*Report of the Consultative Group to the President of the Human Rights Council relating to the vacancies of mandate holders to be appointed at the sixty-second session of the Human Rights Council*" dated 27 May 2026¹.

We note with concern that **the shortlist consists exclusively of male candidates from the Western European and Others Group (WEOG)**. While we do not question the recognized qualifications, expertise, or independence of the shortlisted candidates, we are concerned that the list does not adequately reflect the HRC's established commitment to **gender balance and equitable geographical representation** in the appointment of Special Procedures mandate holders. These considerations are not merely procedural. They are fundamental to the legitimacy, credibility, and effectiveness of the Special Procedures system. Their application is particularly important where, as in this case, a diverse pool of qualified candidates was available for consideration and where the mandate's history reveals persistent patterns of underrepresentation of expertise and perspectives from experts from other regional groups than WEOG.

¹ Report available here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/appointments/hrc62/cg-report-hrc62-3-mandates.pdf>

During the upcoming session of the HRC, four Special Procedures mandates will be renewed, including the mandates on Torture, Toxic Waste, and the Right to Health addressed in the CG report. According to the report, the selection process included and considered candidates from different regions and genders². While the eight shortlisted candidates for these mandates include four women and four men overall, representation is not evenly distributed across the shortlists³, and a majority of the shortlisted candidates (six) come from the WEOG regional group, with two shortlists exclusively composed of candidates from that group⁴. Of particular concern is the shortlist for the SRT. Of the seven individuals interviewed for this mandate, three were women and four were men, representing four regional groups: one candidate from Africa, two from Asia-Pacific, one from Latin America and the Caribbean, and three from WEOG. Despite this diversity and the qualifications of all the candidates interviewed, the final shortlist is composed exclusively of men from the WEOG regional group.

The implications of this outcome are particularly significant in relation to the SRT. Since its establishment in 1985, the mandate has played a central role in safeguarding the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, responding to allegations of abuse, conducting country visits, engaging with victims and survivors, and developing international standards for prevention and accountability.

Despite the universal nature of the mandate, its leadership has historically lacked both gender and regional diversity. Of the seven individuals who have served as SRT across 41 years, **only one has been a woman and only one originated from a regional group different from WEOG (GRULAC)**. No expert from Africa, Eastern Europe, or the Asia-Pacific regional group has ever held the mandate. The current selection process therefore presents an important opportunity to address longstanding patterns of exclusion and strengthen the diversity of experience and perspective that contributes to one of the Council's most visible and influential mandates.

This matters not only as a question of representation, but also as a question of effectiveness. The mandate of the SRT is inherently global in both scope and practice, requiring engagement with a wide range of legal systems, detention contexts, institutional realities, and political and cultural contexts.

Since its establishment, **the mandate has conducted 51 country visits to 41 countries⁵, of which 48 (94%) concerned countries in the GRULAC, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific regional groups⁶**. Similarly, despite more than four decades of work addressing violations that often affect women and men differently, only one woman has ever held the role. A mandate whose work is so deeply engaged with diverse regions and contexts is strengthened by leadership that brings a broader range of experiences and perspectives. Such diversity enhances the mandate's ability to engage constructively with all States, understand context-specific challenges, and maintain the confidence of victims, survivors, and civil society.

² According to public information, 89 individuals applied to these roles, 37 women and 52 men, of the following regional groups: 22 from Africa, 16 from Asia Pacific, 16 from Latin America and 35 from WEOG. According to the CG's report, a total of 18 individuals were interviewed, 10 women and 8 men, of the following regional groups: 1 from Africa, 5 from Asia Pacific, 3 from Latin America and 9 from WEOG.

³ With one all women shortlist (2 candidates for the SR on health) and one all men shortlist (3 candidates for SRT)

⁴ Shortlists for the Mandates of Torture and Toxic Waste.

The importance of these considerations is firmly grounded in international legal standards and in the HRC’s own framework. HRC Resolution 5/1⁷, and Presidential Statement OS/14/2 (Methods of work for the CG)⁸ expressly identify equitable geographical representation and gender balance among the key criteria relevant to the selection of mandate holders. This is important for the system as a whole but also for the trajectory of individual mandates, who should benefit from a diversity of expertise and perspectives over time. The HRC’s Advisory Committee has recognized persistent gender imbalances in international human rights mechanisms and the need for the HRC and the CG to adopt measures to promote gender balance⁹. Likewise, CEDAW Article 8, and General Recommendation No. 40 affirm equal and inclusive representation of women, and particularly gender parity, in international decision-making spaces as a requirement of substantive equality and calls for concrete measures to achieve it¹⁰.

In light of the above, **we respectfully encourage the CG to consider including additional candidates for SRT appointment from among those interviewed whose profiles would contribute to a more balanced representation in terms of gender and geographical diversity** while fully meeting the requirements of expertise, experience, independence, and integrity expected of mandate holders. **Such a decision would be in accordance with the established working methods¹¹ and practice¹² and would allow the HRC a choice between a more diverse pool of candidates.** We further encourage the President of the HRC to give due consideration to gender and geographic representation in presenting recommendations to the Council.

More broadly, we respectfully reiterate previous calls for the CG to develop and apply clear guidelines aimed at promoting gender parity and equitable geographical representation in its selection processes. Such measures would provide greater predictability and consistency in the application of these criteria and help ensure that future shortlists more fully reflect the diversity of qualified candidates available across regions and genders.

We submit these observations in the spirit of strengthening the legitimacy, effectiveness, and representativeness of the Special Procedures system and of supporting a selection process that fully reflects the standards and commitments established by the Human Rights Council itself.

Sincerely,

GQUAL Campaign Secretariat

Lisa Henry, Secretary General, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)

⁵ Visits listed on the official website as “Report forthcoming” or “Reported/completed”. See: <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewMandatesVisit.aspx?visitType=all&lang=en&Mandate=79>

⁶ Regional distribution of the 51 country visits: Asia-Pacific Group (16), African Group (14), GRULAC (10), Eastern European Group (7), and Western European and Others Group (WEOG) (4).

⁷ UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/RES/5/1 “Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council”, 2007. Available at: https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=a/hrc/res/5/1

⁸ Presidential Statement PRST OS/14/2. Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g20/349/88/pdf/g2034988.pdf>

⁹ UN Human Rights Council, A/HRC/47/51 “Current levels of representation of women in human rights organs and mechanisms: ensuring gender balance”, Report of the HRC Advisory Committee, 2021. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/47/51>

¹⁰ UN CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No 40. on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, 2024. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-recommendation-no-40-equal-and-inclusive>