



## PRESS RELEASE

# Discrimination and abuse against LGBT persons in detention: First ever hearing at Inter-American Commission

**19 October 2015.** When in detention, everybody is vulnerable. But lesbians, gays, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people are particularly exposed to abuses and discrimination in the hands of the police or when incarcerated. On 23 October, their concerns will be voiced before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington DC. This will be the first ever hearing before the Commission dedicated to the human rights of LGBT persons in detention.

The rate of violence in Latin American prisons is infamously high. Among the individuals most exposed to such violence are LGBT persons, who face not only the risk of being verbally, physically and psychologically abused by fellow inmates, but also by penitentiary staff. Despising language, harassment, punches or sexual assaults - all motivated by discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity - are common in all countries of the continent.

In addition to this intolerable and targeted violence, LGBT persons deprived of liberty are exposed to a whole range of discriminatory actions and measures. LGBT detainees are sometimes subjected to prolonged solitary confinement (which can in itself amount to torture) for the sake of their "protection", they are often prevented from joining activities with fellow inmates, and they can be denied access to long-term family visits because they are in same-sex relationship.

Trans women in prisons are particularly discriminated against. In most instances they are placed in male detention centers on the basis of their biological sex, which does not correspond to their self-perceived gender. This situation exposes them to physical and sexual violence by fellow inmates. Trans inmates are also generally denied access to the treatment they need to pursue their gender reassignment.

The hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on 23 October 2015 is the first ever to be dedicated to the situation of LGBT persons deprived of liberty in Latin America. It is therefore a unique opportunity to bring the attention of both the IACHR and the Member states of the Organization of American States to this plight, which by and large remains invisible and needs urgent attention.

Organisations participating in the hearing are the Association for the Prevention of Torture, the NGO "Almas Cautivas", working on the issue of trans women in Mexican prisons, the Argentinean Ombudsman for federal prisons and the LGBT focal point of the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.

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More information on the hearings at the IACHR: [http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/coverage.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/coverage.asp)