



## Press release – 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

### « *The human rights challenged by the terrorist threat* »

On 10th December 1948, the 58 States that then constituted the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)<sup>1</sup>. Today, the United Nations gathers 193 Member States. This declaration, the first of its kind at the international level, is considered to be the cornerstone of the international system for the protection of human rights. It affirms the indivisibility and universality of human rights.

70 years after its adoption, it seems more important than ever to continue to defend the principles, rights and values contained in this text, including the absolute prohibition of torture.

However, in recent years, these rights have been challenged, particularly due to the terrorist threat around the world. In April 2015, the Pew Research Center carried a survey in 38 countries on the acceptance of torture in counterterrorism. The study showed that a median of 40% of respondents believed the use of torture by their government could be justified against suspected terrorists to try to gain information about possible attacks in their country<sup>2</sup>.

The prohibition of torture, contained in the UDHR and many subsequent international and regional instruments, is, however, absolute and is not subject to any exception. It has been proven on several occasions that the use of torture is not effective and could, on the contrary, be counterproductive. Shane O’Mara, a neuroscientist at Trinity College Dublin explained in an interview from February 2017 that « *There is an absolute consensus. Inducing extreme states of pain, stress, fear or anxiety inhibits cognitive processes in a way that goes against the ability to obtain reliable information.* »<sup>3</sup>.

On the occasion of the anniversary of the UDHR, the FIACAT and the ACATs wish to reaffirm the importance of defending the absolute prohibition of torture and call to oppose this practice, which goes against human dignity, in all circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> 8 States abstained during this vote

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center, [Global Opinion varies widely on use of torture against suspected terrorists](#), February 2016

<sup>3</sup> Le Temps, [Pourquoi la torture ne fonctionne pas](#), 8 février 2017