

Attn: News Desks

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**UN Committee against Torture issues Concluding Observations
on Hong Kong's hearing**

11 December 2015: In response to the concluding observations that the UN Committee against Torture issued 8 December 2015 on the third report of the HKSAR under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), Piya Muqit, Executive Director of Justice Centre said:

“The Committee’s recommendations to the Hong Kong Government could not have come at a more needed time when discourse in the public arena towards people seeking protection has become particularly negative. On the occasion of International Human Rights Day, and in the context of an unprecedented global refugee crisis, we should all remember that seeking asylum is a human right. In fact, the Committee raised particular alarm about the discourse that the Hong Kong Government is actively using to describe claimants seeking protection, noting that such language may risk portraying all claimants as abusers of the system.

In regards to human trafficking and forced labour of migrant domestic workers, it is high-time the Hong Kong Government take heed of the impact that certain regulations – like the ‘two week rule’ or the ‘live-in requirement’ – have on increasing domestic workers’ vulnerabilities to abuse, exploitation, torture and ill-treatment. The Committee has raised strong concerns about cases of exploitation among migrant domestic workers. This is precisely why Justice Centre has conducted a large-scale study to estimate the prevalence of forced labour and human trafficking among migrant domestic workers, the findings of which will be released early next year.

Specifically, a motion has been put forth in the Legislative Council to review the Unified Screening Mechanism (USM) for processing non-refoulement claims. We urge the Hong Kong Government to use this opportunity to review the USM from a human-rights based approach, and we call on the government to implement the recommendations as set out in the Committee’s concluding observations without delay.”

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Notes to Editors

To read the UN Committee against Torture’s concluding observations, please see: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fCHN-HKG%2fCO%2f5&Lang=en

To read Justice Centre's December 8 statement on the motion recently put forth in LegCo to request a review of the USM, please see: <http://www.justicecentre.org.hk/framework/uploads/2014/03/Justice-Centre-Statement-on-Motion-December-16-Converted.pdf>

Justice Centre Hong Kong is an NGO that works to protect the rights of refugees and survivors of trafficking. www.justicecentre.org.hk