Solitary Confinement and Its Human Rights Implications

Tuesday, 6 March 2012
11.00 - 13.00
Room XXIV, Palais des Nations

Every day tens of thousands of prisoners and detainees are held in solitary confinement worldwide. Usually in isolation for at least 22 hours a day and denied all meaningful human contact, these prisoners and detainees are frequently held for months, years, and sometimes decades. They are held in conditions that the Special Rapporteur on Torture has found can amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and even torture.

In a global study of the practice published last year at the General Assembly and in his statement to the 19th session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur called on all countries to ban solitary confinement except in very exceptional circumstances and for minimal time periods. This briefing will examine the detrimental impacts of solitary confinement, the research that finds it to be a human rights violation, and the disproportionate impact of its use on mentally disabled persons and youth. The briefing will also offer concrete recommendations for future action to increase protections and effective safeguards from abusive and prolonged solitary confinement.

Prof. Juan Mendez, Special Rapporteur on Torture
The global practice of solitary confinement

Panelists:

Amy Fettig, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
The practice of solitary confinement in the United States

Dr. Sharon Shalev, University of Oxford & International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS)
European practices of solitary confinement and its use during pre-trial detention

Dorottya Karsay, Mental Disability Advocacy Center (MDAC)
Persons with disabilities in solitary confinement

Justice Renate Winter, Appeals Chamber of the Special Court of Sierra Leone
Juveniles in solitary confinement

Andrea Huber, Penal Reform International (PRI)
Solitary confinement of death row inmates/ lifers and the lack of international safeguards against solitary confinement

Moderator: Jamil Dakwar, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)