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UN torture prevention body suspends Ukraine visit citing obstruction

Ukraine visit halted

25 May 2016

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GENEVA (25 May 2016) – The United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) has suspended its visit to Ukraine after being denied access to places in several parts of the country where it suspects people are being deprived of their liberty by the Security Service of Ukraine, the SBU.

“This denial of access is in breach of Ukraine’s obligations as a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. It has meant that we have not been able to visit some places where we have heard numerous and serious allegations that people have been detained and where torture or ill-treatment may have occurred,” said Sir

Malcolm Evans, head of the four-member delegation.

The delegation concluded that the integrity of the visit, which began on 19 May and was due to end on 26 May, had been compromised to such an extent that it had to be suspended as the SPT mandate could not be fully carried out.

Under the Optional Protocol (OPCAT), the SPT is mandated to visit all States parties and can make unannounced visits to any places of detention. This is only the second time the SPT has halted a mission – such suspensions are made in cases where a lack of cooperation by the State party prevents the SPT from fulfilling its OPCAT-mandated duties.

“The SPT expects Ukraine to abide by its international obligations under the Optional Protocol, which it ratified in 2006. We also hope that the Government of Ukraine will enter into a constructive dialogue with us to enable the SPT to resume its visit in the near future and so work together to establish effective safeguards against the risk of torture and ill-treatment in places where people are deprived of their liberty,” said Sir Malcolm.

The focus of the SPT’s visit was to evaluate how its recommendations made after its first visit in 2011 had been implemented. The work of the SPT, which is composed of independent human rights experts, is guided by the principles of confidentiality and cooperation.

The SPT delegation to Ukraine comprised: Sir Malcom Evans (United Kingdom), Ms. Mari Amos (Estonia), Ms. June Caridad Pagaduan Lopez (Philippines) and Mr. Victor Zaharia (Moldova).

ENDS

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Background:

The Optional Protocol on the Prevention of Torture has to date been ratified by 81 countries. The SPT communicates its recommendations and observations to the State by means of a confidential report, and if necessary to National Preventive Mechanisms. However, State parties are encouraged to request that the SPT makes these reports public. More about the

SPT: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/OPCAT/Pages/OPCATIndex.aspx>

The SPT is composed of 25 independent and impartial experts from different regions of the world. More about the

SPT: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/OPCAT/Pages/OPCATIndex.aspx>

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