

Launch of IRCT Report on Conversion Therapy*

Torture Journal Editorial Team

On 23 April 2020, IRCT published its research on the global practice of conversion therapy. The report, entitled “*It’s Torture Not Therapy*,” compiles information on the “practices, practitioners and roles of states in conducting, supporting, promoting and acquiescing in conversion therapy” and is intended to supplement the Expert Statement of the Independent Forensic Expert Group on the same issue, also printed in this edition of Torture Journal.

The paper identifies a number of practices as used by at least 68 states in conversion attempts including:

- Aversive treatment
- Electroconvulsive therapy
- Medication
- Forced confinement
- Psychotherapy
- Corrective violence
- Exorcisms and ritual cleansing

Perpetrators

Whilst the author notes that prevalence of groups of perpetrators varies by country and region, a disturbing number of perpetrators

are identified to include health professionals (doctors, psychiatrists, psychotherapists professional counsellors, sexologists and ayurvedic practitioners), with police and religious practitioners also cited. The paper further notes that perpetrators conduct this type of “therapy” under the false guise of medicine and mental health, although it causes significant harm and there is no evidence that it can be effective.

State Involvement

The report finds that states perpetuate conversion therapy through direct involvement, acquiescence, or financial support, as well as via promotion and endorsement of conversion practices. It highlights that conversion therapy is, in some cases, ordered by state officials and practiced by the police and also finds its practice in publicly funded religious or educational institutions, or in government hospitals.

The authors further discuss the widespread failure of states to regulate conversion practices where they occur, noting a prevalence of practices in government-licensed institutions. Although they may be qualified as torture or ill-treatment as well as child abuse and fraud, practices often remain, the report finds, un-sanctioned in the majority of legal or regulatory frameworks.

Finally, the paper highlights examples in which States have promoted and legitimised

*) Full report available at https://irct.org/uploads/media/IRCT_research_on_conversion_therapy.pdf

practices through encouragement of its usage by governmental officials and workers and through the provision spaces for practices to be carried out. The report also highlights cases where crimes of “corrective violence” are ignored by both the public and by police.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In its conclusion, the report emphasises the role of the state in providing, financing, or encouraging conversion therapy, being complicit in acts carried out by state officials or acquiescing to private practice of conversion therapy.

IRCT makes 11 recommendations to states including:

Repeal laws criminalising individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI); issue an apology for discrimination and historical injustices against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse communities; ban conversion therapy practices; issue and enforce clear guidance to identified groups of perpetrators that prohibits and punishes conversion therapy; establish a complaints mechanism and programmes to provide full reparation for those harmed by conversion therapy and undertake research on the practice and provide widespread education on SOGI and wider human rights principles.