



UNITED NATIONS  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*Wok Bung Wantaim*

# WanWok



Issue 4, Friday 28 May 2010

## UN Special Rapporteur on torture calls for end to torture and inhuman treatment in PNG



The Royal Papua New Guinea's Constabulary needs a complete overhaul to effectively protect and promote human rights, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Prof Manfred Nowak.

Prof Nowak said the PNG Constabulary is not always in a position to enforce the rule of law due to insufficient human and financial resources, a high level of corruption and unprofessionalism, difficulties in accessing remote rural areas and a lack of political will. "These deficiencies have led to private security companies carrying out some of the main duties of the police. The fact that there are far more private security officers than police officers in the country is a worrying sign of police weakness and a failure of the State to provide security and freedom from fear to its people. Particularly worrying is the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary's lack of capacity to prevent and to investigate crimes relating to domestic violence, tribal fighting and to victims of accusations of sorcery", he said.



"My main concerns are systematic beatings of detainees by the police upon arrest and within the first hours of detention, including during interrogation," he said "This regular practice of police violence, corroborated by medical evidence, often reaches the level of torture," added the Special Rapporteur.

Prof. Nowak, who said he received the full cooperation of the Commissioner of Police and Correctional Services during his visit, also highlighted the "appalling" conditions of detention in police lock-ups, where detainees are often kept for many months, amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment

"Detainees are locked-up in overcrowded and filthy cells, without proper ventilation, natural light, access to sufficient food and water for drinking, washing and using the toilets," he said, adding that, in all police stations, detainees were forced to sleep on the floor.

Prof. Nowak expressed concern at overcrowding in correctional institutions, particularly in high-risk and remand sections. Detainees on remand are not separated from convicted prisoners. Most prisoners do not have sufficient beds, mosquito nets or blankets. He was particularly concerned that "prisoners who escape are subjected to severe punishment, amounting to torture, including through brutal beatings with bush knives and gun butts, shooting detainees at close range and cutting their tendons with axes and bush knives after they are apprehended, with the intent of disabling them. The victims are usually kept in punishment cells, without any medical treatment, which sometimes even led to their death".

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Prof Nowak and his team revealed these findings in a Press Conference in Port Moresby after completing a 12-day fact-finding mission in Papua New Guinea.

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