

OPCAT and torture  
prevention: the role of  
CSOs  
Ireland 01.26



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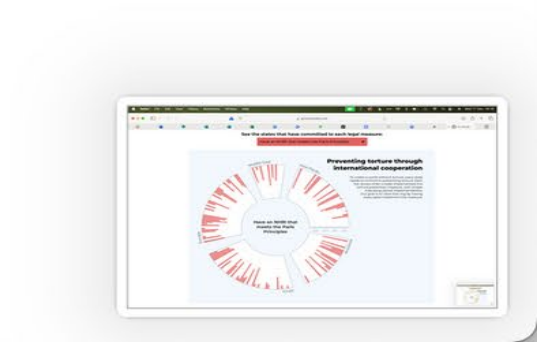
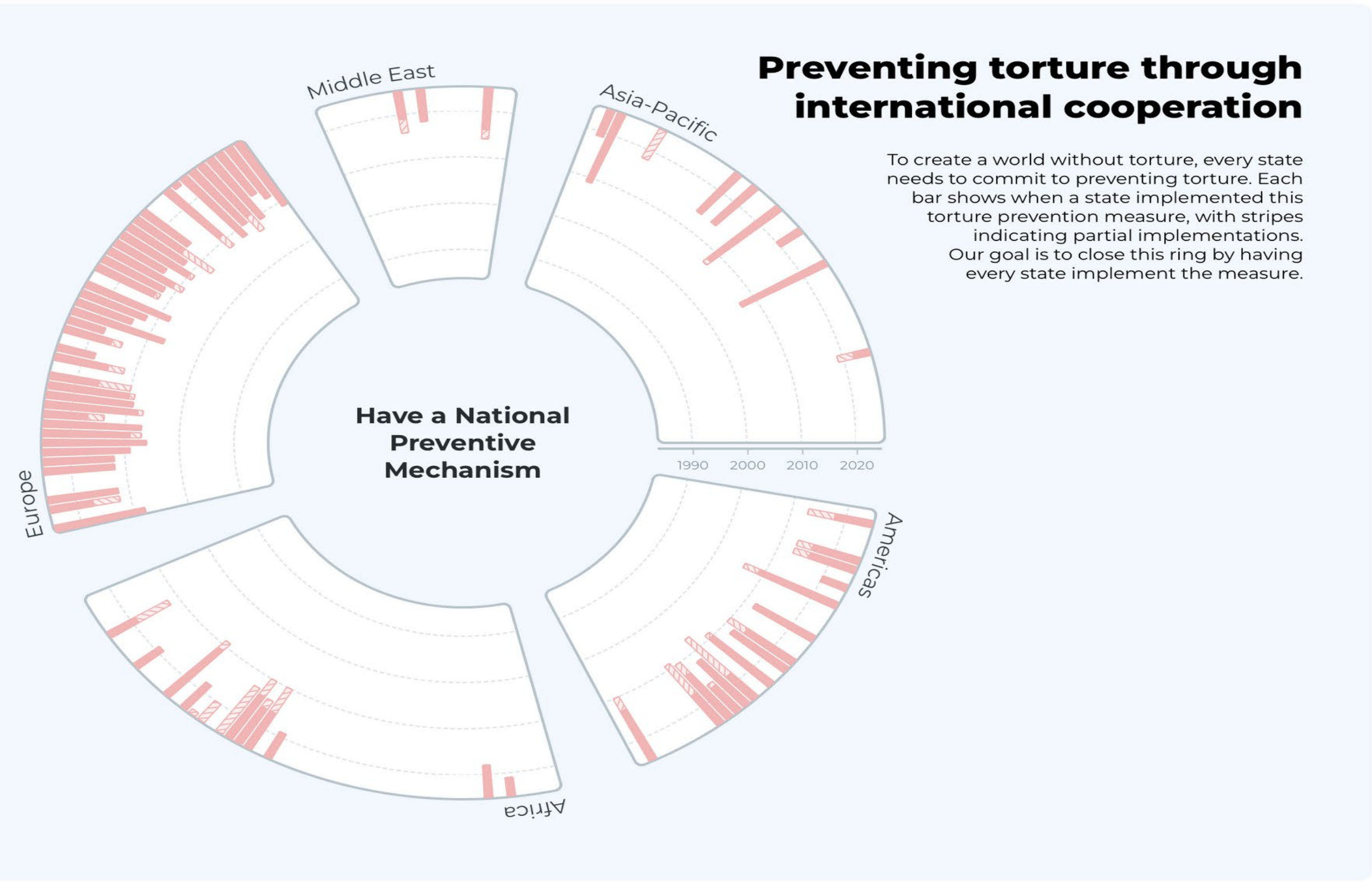


Ratified UN Optional Protocol 

To create a world without torture, every state needs to commit to preventing torture. Each bar shows when a state implemented this torture prevention measure, with stripes indicating partial implementations. Our goal is to close this ring by having every state implement the measure.

See the states that have committed to each legal measure:

Have a National Preventive Mechanism







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OPCAT:

A way for states to implement their existing obligations to prevent torture.

A treaty based on dialogue and cooperation, not denunciation.





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Creates an international body: The  
SPT  
And national monitoring bodies:  
NPMs



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## About the SPT:

- 25 members elected by and from states parties
- Powerful visiting mandate (around 10 visits per year)
- To advise and assist states and NPMs on OPCAT implementation
- Can conduct visits to detention but SPT reports remain confidential
- Triangular relationship





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## About NPMs:

- Different forms but all are independent and have the power to visit all places of deprivation of liberty, including unannounced
- Publish reports and recommendations
- Make comments on legislation
- Enter into dialogue with the authorities

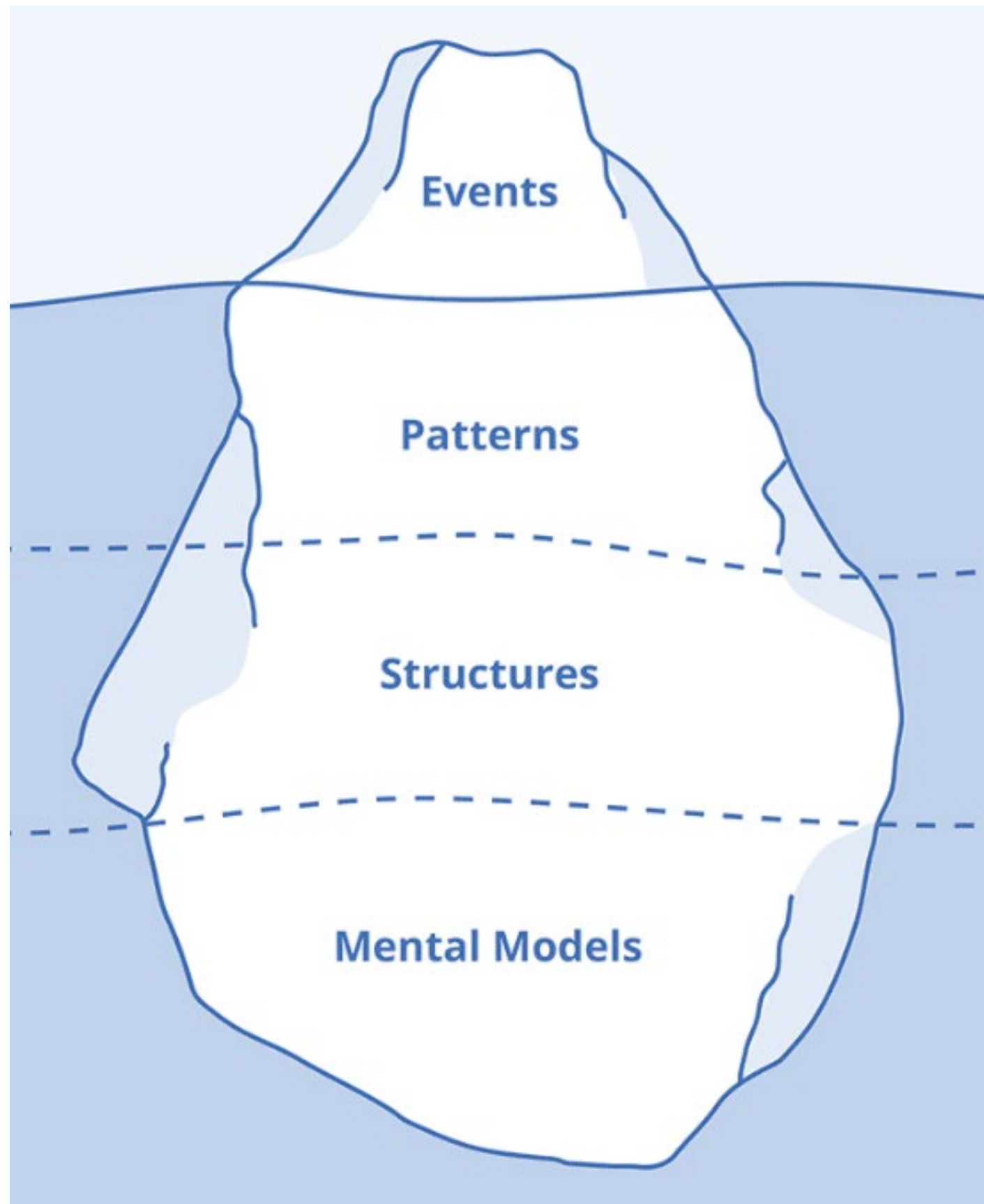


# Understanding prevention using a metaphor from ecology



Individual	—————→	One person
Population	—————→	Several people who maybe have some things in common
Community	—————→	Everyone in a particular place of deprivation of liberty
Ecosystem	—————→	All the places and institutions that are linked to that place
Biosphere	—————→	The detention system in one country / region / globally





## What happened?

- Restraints are used without documentation

## What trends do we see over time and across places?

- This is common across mental health establishments
- This happens repeatedly in the same place

## What influences those trends?

- Lack of staff training
- Inadequate processes
- Lack of clear regulations

## What mental models allow this to continue?

- “These practices are not harmful”
- “We are doing good for patients”
- “We are just following the rules”





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- Information exchange
- Advice on priorities
- Alignment with international system
- Specific expertise
- Visiting?

Learning from other CSOs  
and NPMs





Ensure an independent, prompt and impartial review of all deaths in custody

Take urgent measures to protect minority ethnic groups from ill-treatment and disproportionate restraint

Review the overall Fatal Accident Inquiry system to find ways to speed up the process

Review behaviour management policies

Reduce the number of deaths by suicide

Consider measures to ensure body cameras for all control and restraint operations

Compile data to assess the effectiveness of suicide prevention strategies

Stop using segregation for those with mental health needs

Tackle overcrowding and reduce the remand population

Ensure appropriate use of segregation, adequate regimes and reintegration

Improve prison conditions – “dog boxes”, cell sizes, access to purposeful activity

Address staffing issues

Ensure prompt and systematic investigation of all injuries and allegations of ill-treatment

Improve record sharing

Address substance use

Collect, analyse and publish data

Establish accessible complaints mechanisms

Improve mental healthcare in all prisons

Ensure ongoing, up-to-date training

Transfer prisoners with acute mental health problems to appropriate psychiatric facilities

Ensure human rights standards are included in training

Develop a methodology to assess the effectiveness of training

Provide training for prison personnel on recognising symptoms of mental health problems and appropriate referral

Explicitly prohibit the use of harmful devices, disciplinary restraint and any technique designed to inflict pain on children

Establish a high-secure psychiatric unit for women

Improve admission screenings for women

Develop statutory guidance on the use of restraint on children

Upgrade the female prison estate

Collect, analyse and publish data on restraint on children

## Recommendations assessed by the UK NPM 2014-24





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Thank you!

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