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PRESS RELEASE

National Agency for the Prevention of Torture Presents New Annual Report

Wiesbaden/Berlin – “The Joint Commission of the States at the National Agency for the Prevention of Torture visited 18 places of detention in Germany in the last year. As in the year before, it did not encounter signs of torture. However, it again had to point out a number of complaints. Visiting only 18 facilities is absolutely insufficient. More could though not be managed with only four honorary members. It is therefore essential that the number of members be increased. I welcome that the Justice Ministers' Conference will deal with this important issue in June”, said former State Secretary Rainer Dopp, chairman of the Joint Commission of the States, on the occasion of the presentation of the 2012 annual report in Berlin. The chairwoman of the Conference of Prime Ministers, Thuringian Prime Minister Christine Lieberknecht, received the report on behalf of the governments of the Länder from Rainer Dopp, former Regierungsdirektor Klaus Lange-Lehngut, head of the Federal Agency for the Prevention of Torture, and the Thuringian Commissioner for Foreigners, Petra Heß, member of the Joint Commission.

The National Agency for the Prevention of Torture, consisting of the Federal Agency and the Joint Commission of the States, took up its functions in May 2009, after the Federal Republic of Germany had ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Anti-Torture Convention. As of today, a total of 68 states have also ratified the Optional Protocol. The National Agency shall prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment through regular visits at places of detention, of which there are about 13,000 in the Federal Republic. To this end, it has to verify the treatment of persons placed in detention and make recommendations.

The National Agency mainly visited prisons and police stations. It also verified the conditions in psychiatric facilities as well as child and youth welfare service facilities.

It criticised for instance the placement of several prisoners in a cell without a separated toilet, which affects human dignity even if a mobile wall is being provided.

The use of metal cuffs to fix prisoners cannot be accepted as these cause an elevated risk of injury. As far as fixations are inevitable, they may only be administered with suitable bandage systems. Such systems are in use in a majority of facilities.

The National Agency focused its attention to solitary confinement over several years. This can also affect human dignity.

In April the UN Subcommittee for Prevention of Torture visited the National Agency and pointed out the insufficient funding. The Federal Republic of Germany cannot comply with its role as a forerunner in the observation of human rights with the current funding of the National Agency.

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