

South Africa

Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act, 2013

Act 13 of 2013

Legislation as at 29 July 2013

FRBR URI: /akn/za/act/2013/13/eng@2013-07-29

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Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act, 2013
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South Africa

Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act, 2013

Act 13 of 2013

[Published in Government Gazette 36716 on 29 July 2013](#)

Assented to on 24 July 2013

Commenced on 29 July 2013

[This is the version of this document from 29 July 2013.]

(English text signed by the President)

ACT

To give effect to the Republic's obligations in terms of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; to provide for the offence of torture of persons and other offences associated with the torture of persons; and to prevent and combat the torture of persons within or across the borders of the Republic; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

SINCE section 12(1)(d) of the [Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996](#), provides that everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right not to be tortured in any way;

AND MINDFUL that the Republic of South Africa—

- has a shameful history of gross human rights abuses, including the torture of many of its citizens and inhabitants;
- has, since 1994, become an integral and accepted member of the community of nations;
- is committed to the preventing and combating of torture of persons, among others, by bringing persons who carry out acts of torture to justice as required by international law;
- is committed to carrying out its obligations in terms of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

AND SINCE each State Party to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment must take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa therefore enacts as follows:—

1. Definitions

In this Act, unless the context indicates otherwise—

"**accused person**" means any person who has committed or allegedly committed an act of torture;

"**Constitution**" means the [Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996](#);

"**Convention**" means the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1984 and ratified by the Republic on 10 December 1998;

"**court**" means a court contemplated in section 166 of the [Constitution](#);

"**public official**" means any person holding public office and exercising or purporting to exercise a public power or a public function in terms of any legislation;

"**torture**" has the meaning assigned to it in [section 3](#); and

"**victim**" means any person who has or has allegedly been subjected to an act of torture.

2. Objects and interpretation of Act

- (1) The objects of this Act are to—
 - (a) give effect to the Republic's obligations concerning torture in terms of the Convention, in particular—
 - (i) the recognition that the equal and inalienable rights of all persons are the foundation of freedom, dignity, justice and peace in the world;
 - (ii) the promotion of universal respect for human rights and the protection of human dignity;
 - (iii) that no one shall be subjected to acts of torture;
 - (b) provide for the prosecution of persons who commit offences referred to in this Act and for appropriate penalties;
 - (c) provide for measures aimed at the prevention and combating of torture; and
 - (d) provide for the training of persons, who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of a person subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment, on the prohibition and the combating of torture.
- (2) When interpreting this Act, the court must promote the values of Chapter 2 of the [Constitution](#) and the achievement of the objects referred to in subsection (1).

3. Acts constituting torture

For the purposes of this Act, "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person—

- (a) for such purposes as to—
 - (i) obtain information or a confession from him or her or any other person;
 - (ii) punish him or her for an act he or she or any other person has committed, is suspected of having committed or is planning to commit; or
 - (iii) intimidate or coerce him or her or any other person to do, or to refrain from doing, anything; or
- (b) for any reason based on discrimination of any kind,

when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of, or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity, but does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

4. Offences and penalties

- (1) Any person who—
 - (a) commits torture;
 - (b) attempts to commit torture; or
 - (c) incites, instigates, commands or procures any person to commit torture,is guilty of the offence of torture and is on conviction liable to imprisonment, including imprisonment for life.

- (2) Any person who participates in torture, or who conspires with a public official to aid or procure the commission of or to commit torture, is guilty of the offence of torture and is on conviction liable to imprisonment, including imprisonment for life.
- (3) Despite any other law to the contrary, including customary international law, the fact that an accused person—
 - (a) is or was a head of state or government, a member of a government or parliament, an elected representative or a government official; or
 - (b) was under a legal obligation to obey a manifestly unlawful order of a government or superior, is neither a defence to a charge of committing an offence referred to in this section, nor a ground for any possible reduction of sentence, once that person has been convicted of such offence.
- (4) No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, including but not limited to, a state of war, threat of war, internal political instability, national security or any state of emergency may be invoked as a justification for torture.
- (5) No one shall be punished for disobeying an order to commit torture.

5. Factors to be considered in sentencing

Any court that imposes a sentence in respect of any offence under this Act must, when considering the presence of aggravating circumstances and without excluding other relevant factors, take the following factors into account:

- (a) Any discrimination against the victim;
- (b) the state of the victim's mental or physical health;
- (c) whether the victim had any mental or physical disability;
- (d) whether the victim was under the age of 18 years;
- (e) whether the victim was also the victim of a sexual act as contemplated in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 ([Act No. 32 of 2007](#));
- (f) the use of any kind of weapon to harm, threaten or intimidate the victim;
- (g) the infliction of serious mental or physical harm to the victim;
- (h) the conditions in which the victim was detained;
- (i) the role of the convicted person in the offence;
- (j) previous convictions relating to the offence of torture or related offences; and
- (k) the physical and psychological effects the torture had on the victim.

6. Extra-territorial jurisdiction

- (1) A court of the Republic has jurisdiction in respect of an act committed outside the Republic which would have constituted an offence under [section 4](#)(1) or (2) had it been committed in the Republic, regardless of whether or not the act constitutes an offence at the place of its commission, if the accused person—
 - (a) is a citizen of the Republic;
 - (b) is ordinarily resident in the Republic;
 - (c) is, after the commission of the offence, present in the territory of the Republic, or in its territorial waters or on board a ship, vessel, off-shore installation, a fixed platform or aircraft

registered or required to be registered in the Republic and that person is not extradited pursuant to Article 8 of the Convention; or

- (d) has committed the offence against a South African citizen or against a person who is ordinarily resident in the Republic.
- (2) If an accused person is alleged to have committed an offence contemplated in [section 4\(1\)](#) or (2) outside the territory of the Republic, prosecution for the offence may only be instituted against such person on the written authority of the National Director of Public Prosecutions contemplated in [section 179\(1\)\(a\)](#) of the [Constitution](#), who must also designate the court in which the prosecution must be conducted.

7. Liability

Nothing contained in this Act affects any liability which a person may incur under the common law or any other law.

8. Expulsion, return or extradition

- (1) No person shall be expelled, returned or extradited to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would be in danger of being subjected to torture.
- (2) For the purpose of determining whether there are such grounds, all relevant considerations must be taken into account, including, where applicable, the existence in the State concerned of a consistent pattern of gross, flagrant or mass violations of human rights.

9. General responsibility to promote awareness

- (1) The State has a duty to promote awareness of the prohibition against torture, aimed at the prevention and combating of torture.
- (2) Without derogating from the general nature of the duty referred to subsection (1), one or more Cabinet members, designated by the President, must cause programmes to be developed in order to —
 - (a) conduct education and information campaigns of the prohibition against torture aimed at the prevention and combating of torture;
 - (b) ensure that all public officials who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of a person subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment, are educated and informed of the prohibition against torture;
 - (c) provide assistance and advice to any person who wants to lodge a complaint of torture; and
 - (d) train public officials on the prohibition, prevention and combating of torture.

10. Regulations

- (1) The Cabinet member responsible for the administration of justice may make regulations regarding any matter referred to in [section 9\(2\)](#), which are reasonably necessary or expedient to regulate in order to achieve the objects of this Act.
- (2) Any regulation contemplated in subsection (1) must be tabled in Parliament before it is promulgated.

11. Amendment of laws

The laws specified in the Schedule are hereby amended to the extent indicated in the third column thereof.

12. Short title

This Act is called the Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act, 2013.

Schedule (Section 9)

Laws amended

Number and year of law	Short title	Extent of amendment
Act No. 51 of 1977	Criminal Procedure Act, 1977	1. The amendment of Schedule 1 and Parts II and III of Schedule 2, by the inclusion of the offences referred to in section 4(1) and (2) of the Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act, 2013.
Act No. 121 of 1998	Prevention of Organised Crime Act, 1998	2. The amendment of Schedule 1 by the inclusion of the offences referred to in section 4(1) and (2) of the Prevention and Combating of Torture of Persons Act, 2013.