



## **Checklist - Lawyers**

### ***The Istanbul Protocol - What to keep in mind***

#### Psychological aspects and mental health

- Psychological problems as reaction to torture are
  - very common (up to 90 %) but must not be present
  - are frequently overlooked (especially when they reflect culture based reactions, shame or fear)
- They are part of the evidence
- They also can interfere with legal procedures through anxiety, stress related memory problems and other factors. They can lead to incomplete reporting, contradictions, problems with concentration, and impaired memory
- Sequels are not limited to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- PTSD and Depression are the most common sequels
- Sequels can be
  - specific (could only be the consequence of a very severe stressful event or can even be demonstrated to link directly to a specific event (like: specific nightmares in PTSD) or
  - unspecific but related to the event (like: Depression)
- Dissociation as term in Psychiatry describes – different from the legal term – a common psychological reaction typical for traumatic stress, where the client temporarily loses the ability to concentrate, and awareness of his environment
- Symptoms increase in situations similar to the event or torture and can be “triggered” by apparently harmless factors such as waiting, loud voices, or bars on a window.
- It might be necessary to take breaks, shorten or postpone an interview
- The feeling of loss of control or helplessness should be avoided
- Physical medical disorders can mimic or contribute to psychiatric disorders, the most common such problem are blunt brain injuries after beatings or falls
- Traumatized clients can even without it being obvious induce strong positive or negative feelings in helpers including professionals such as health care professionals and lawyers
- While mild sequels can be frequently treated by (if available) competent professionals with good results, treatment can be life long and lead to no or only partial recovery
- Continuous exposure to trauma narratives without sufficient support and rest can lead to burn-out and indirect traumatization