



British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Online Newsletter: 3 July 2020

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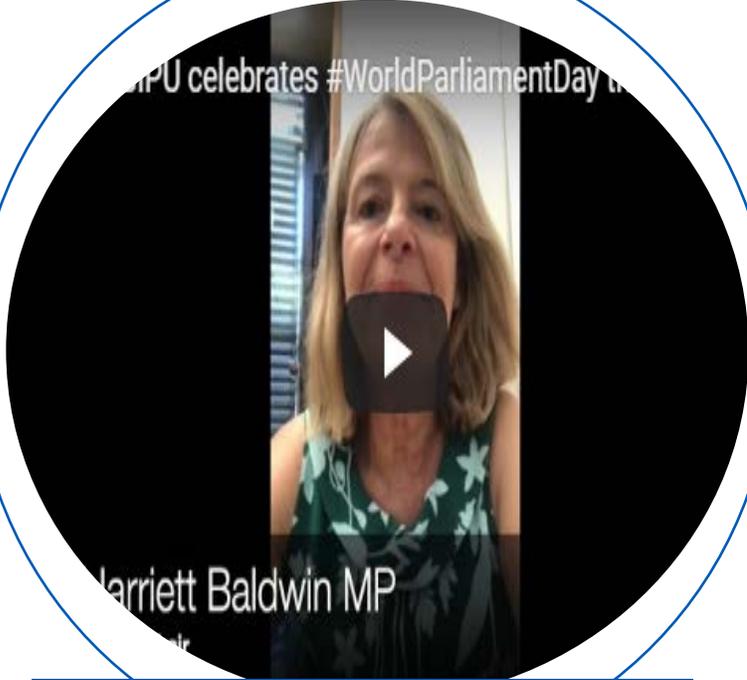
IPU calls on Parliaments to do more to help eradicate torture

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IPU LAUNCHES SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY BOOK ON #WORLDPARLIAMENTDAY

On 30 June, on the 3rd International Day of Parliamentarism, the IPU entered its 131st anniversary year with the publication of a book outlining its achievements over the past 13 decades with contributions from almost 100 of its Member Parliaments. The IPU was founded in Paris on 30 June 1889 at the initiative of parliamentarians from UK and France as the first political multilateral organisation in the world, encouraging parliamentary cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Since that first meeting attended by MPs from 9 countries, the IPU has grown into the global organisation of national legislatures with 179 Member Parliaments and 13 Associate Members. The [130th Anniversary book](#) shows the IPU's milestones in promoting peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality & parliamentary diplomacy over the past 130 years as well as views on its key aims and objectives from dozens of its member Parliaments, including the UK Parliament.



VIDEO: BGIPU MARKS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PARLIAMENTARISM ON 30 JUNE

On 30 June 2020 the IPU and the parliamentary community [celebrated](#) the 3rd [International Day of Parliamentarism](#) and the 131st anniversary of the foundation of the IPU. Under the slogan “130 years of empowering parliamentarians”, [the IPU & its Members celebrated the milestone](#) through the past 12 months in various ways around the world.

BGIPU had marked the 130th anniversary last year with inter-parliamentary events with our [French counterparts in Paris](#) and a [diplomatic reception hosted by the Speaker at the Palace of Westminster](#) in June 2019. There was also recognition of the occasion at the 141st IPU Assembly in Serbia, Belgrade where the [leaders of the UK and French delegations spoke about the history and vision](#) of the creation of the IPU.

To celebrate the 30 June occasion in 2020, BGIPU released a [video](#) with BGIPU Chair, Harriett Baldwin MP, past Chair Rt Hon Alistair Burt, Executive Committee members, Wayne David MP, Alicia Kearns MP and Chris Law MP as well as Rt Hon Lord McConnell talking about the importance of being a parliamentarian, democracy and the future of parliaments.





BGIPI CO-HOSTS UK LAUNCH OF AWARD-WINNING DOCO "WELCOME TO CHECHNYA: THE GAY PURGE"

BGIPI was very pleased to co-host with the [BBC](#) and the [All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group](#) a UK launch event on 18 June for an award-winning documentary which lays bare the Russian republic's deadly war on LGBTQ people.

Following introductory remarks from actor, author, activist [Stephen Fry](#), the preview event was chaired by [Ben Hunte](#), BBC LGBT Correspondent and featured [David France](#), Director of *Welcome to Chechnya: The Gay Purge*, Veronika Lapina of the [Russian LGBT Network](#), Crispin Blunt MP, Chair of the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGBT+ Rights](#) and Tanya Lokshina, Associate Europe and Central Asia Director of [Human Rights Watch](#) with UK MPs and Peers participating to hear the views of the panel.

Already screened and lauded at a number of filmed festivals and shown on HBO in the United States, the film was transmitted on [BBC Storyville](#) on 1 July 2020 and is available on [catch-up](#).



"With the LGBTQ community living in fear and secrecy, this brave and searing film follows the extraordinary bravery of the Chechens...and the underground team fighting to rescue them before it's too late."





“...the IPU calls on Parliaments to bring about the universal ratification of the UN Treaty on Torture to ensure that its provisions become domestic law...”



IPU CALLS ON PARLIAMENTS TO DO MORE TO HELP ERADICATE TORTURE

On 26 June, the [International Day in Support of Victims of Torture](#), the [IPU calls](#) on parliaments to use all their powers to help eradicate state-sponsored physical and psychological abuse and all other forms of serious ill-treatment.

The day also marks the entry into force 34 years ago of the [Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#), a UN treaty which aims to prevent torture and other acts of inhuman treatment or punishment around the world. The UN treaty also includes an [Optional Protocol](#) which allows for domestic or international inspections of places of detention.

To date, [170 states have ratified the UN treaty](#), of which 90 have ratified the Optional Protocol. Once the Convention has been ratified, parliaments have a role in making domestic legislation compatible with the treaty's obligations.

The IPU [calls on parliaments](#) to bring about the universal ratification of the UN treaty to ensure that its provisions become domestic law, including by clearly enshrining torture as a crime in the criminal code and establishing appropriate punishment for perpetrators.

Parliamentarians can use their oversight and budgetary powers to effectively enforce anti-torture laws. They can also help by visiting prisons themselves to inspect conditions in which people are detained, as many of them already do.

Although parliamentarians can play a leading role in eradicating torture, many of them are also victims of ill treatment. The [IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians](#) is currently monitoring the cases of 18 MPs around the world who have reportedly been victims of torture and abuse.

IPU SG CHUNGONG SAYS VITAL TO LIFT LOCKDOWNS ON PARLIAMENTS TOO

Op-Ed by IPU Secretary General – During the ongoing coronavirus emergency, extraordinary measures may have been necessary so that national leaders can make rapid and vital decisions that have had a restrictive effect on how we enjoy freedoms. But these measures should be short-term only. They must not become the norm. As many countries begin to lift their lockdowns, power must be returned to national parliaments. It is true that most of us have been willing to sacrifice a little bit of freedom if it helps to save lives, including ours, lighten the burden on our health systems, or even protect our economies. After all, this pandemic has seen millions of us stay at home, hand over personal data, even change the way we live & work.

Health can hardly be characterised as controversial. Nobody can legitimately challenge the rationale for protecting people's health. And while we may differ in our modalities, we should all be able to rally behind such a noble objective. That is also why parliaments and thousands of their members around the world have changed the way they work, often using the latest video technologies. The robust way in which parliaments have thus responded to the crisis bears testimony to the vitality and centrality of parliaments in any governance dispensation, especially when, more than ever parliamentary scrutiny is essential.

Unfortunately, some national leaders have seen this crisis as an opportunity to increase their executive powers and encroach on those functions that accrue to parliaments...By some calculations, at least 84 governments have introduced emergency laws, giving extra powers to the executive. The autocrats are grabbing power. By tolerating these power grabs, however, we are storing up problems for the future. As the lockdowns begin to lift, our societies have some difficult questions to answer. What is the best way to protect our societies while we have not conquered the virus? Who will win and who will lose in our post-coronavirus societies?

Parliamentary democracies will do a better job of answering these questions than an autocracy ever can. Nobody claims that parliamentary democracies are perfect. But open discussion tends to allow a better flow of ideas, insights, and information, making it more likely that our societies will arrive at a better solution. For this very reason, parliamentary democracies tend to have stronger, fairer, more stable, politics, societies, and economies.

The representative nature of our parliaments means that these solutions are good for a wider range of people, not for one limited group. This is another reason why we need to make our parliaments as representative as possible of the people, especially in terms of age and gender. Our parliaments become more inclusive. Our societies become much fairer. After all, is it not said that parliaments should mirror the society in its composition, diversity and interests? Is that not the basis of its legitimacy? [Read More....](#)

