

Does abuse of children in juvenile detention qualify as torture?

DYLAN Voller — the hooded face of the Territory's child prisoner shame. "His mouth was his weapon, because he's tiny," his sister Kirra told the NT News.



"He's always been a little boy and he's never had a father figure. He's always been lost, looking for that role model."

Pictures chronicling Voller's abuse at the hands of the NT justice system have shocked Australia. The vision, first aired on Four Corners, showed Dylan, then 13, slammed to a mattress on the floor by a prison guard. Footage of other incidents show Dylan growing up with institutional abuse the only constant in his life.

In the final frames, a 17-year-old Voller sits eerily still, shackled to a chair by his ankles, wrists and head, a hood obscuring his face.

Brutal *Four Corners* footage of abuse against juveniles in detention in the Northern Territory led almost immediately to Prime Ministerial intervention with the announcement of a Royal Commission.

Federal Cabinet will consider the terms of reference for that Royal Commission and questions are being raised about whether Australia has breached its international legal and human rights obligations.

The revelations cast a new spotlight on Australia's treatment of Indigenous people in general and also on the NT government's hard-line approach to crime.

Indigenous youths make up 96% of the young prison population in the Northern Territory and Indigenous people are overwhelmingly represented in the NT prison system across the board. Indigenous people make up 30% of the overall population of the NT.



<http://mashable.com/2016/07/25/juveniles-tear-gassed-australian-prison/#8FBR13gKSmqw>

But what about the instruments of international law that Australia has signed up to? *How does Australia's signature to UN conventions on torture and the rights of the child sit in light of this week's revelations?*

Ellen Fanning spoke to Juan Mendez, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment to get his take on the issue.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/does-abuse-of-children-in/7667508>