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## Restoring Human Dignity

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Local and International NGOs join in Celebration of UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture June 26, 2006

The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) in collaboration with Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture in Liberia (ACAT) and Prisoners Assistance Program (PAP) have organized a march and indoor program commemorating the **UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on Monday, 26 June 2006**. Organizers desire to join with communities from the Monrovia area to demonstrate the aspiration of Liberian citizens to enjoy and live safely in a **torture-free Liberia**.

Organizers are focusing on the need for all **Liberians to join together** in supporting those who are still suffering from their past experiences of torture and war related trauma. Also being highlighted is the need to **make torture a crime under domestic law** as provided for in Article 26(e) of the Liberian Constitution and Article 4 of the Torture Convention (**UNCAT**) and plans to make the provisions of UNCAT and its Optional Protocol (**OPCAT**) work in Liberia so that Liberians can live free of the fear of torture.

Activities will include a parade from City Hall past the Capitol, Temple of Justice, Barclay Training Center, and Prison to the Monrovia Archdiocese Retreat Center on Randall Street. The march will be followed by an indoor program featuring the reading of the UN Secretary General's statement, a key-note address, remarks by a panel of honored guests, drama and song, and the planting of a tree with audience inspirations for a torture-free Liberia.

Participating individuals and groups should gather at **City Hall at 8:30am on Monday, 26 June 2006**. The **indoor program** will commence at **11:30am** at the Monrovia Archdiocese Retreat Center on Randall Street.

Organizers have extended invitations to various community and government leaders, as well as representatives of relevant UNMIL sections and both local and international NGOs. Additionally, an **open invitation** is extended to groups from Monrovia-area communities such as church and mosque groups, community leader groups, youth groups, schools, etc. for both the march and the indoor program. Organizers wish for this to be a day of community action and so, rather than these groups seeming to represent CVT, PAP, or ACAT, they will be representing their group and community in standing against torture in Liberia. It is hoped that, as they did during election time, people will see this gathering as an opportunity to **make their voices heard** by decision-makers. Community members and groups are invited to **come of their own free will as citizens against torture**. Organizers will be providing some paper hats and signs but community groups should feel free to wear their group t-shirts or uniforms and to bring signs with their own messages, group names, and logos.



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### Background Information:

The Center for Victims of Torture is a US-based international humanitarian organization that works to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities and to stop torture worldwide. More information is available at [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org). The Prisoners Assistance Program is a local human rights, prison reform and anti-torture advocacy NGO, established since 1994 in Liberia. Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture in Liberia is a local Christian-based anti-torture, anti-death penalty, anti-gender-based violence, prison reform and advocacy educational NGO fighting for a torture-free society. These three organizations are collaboratively working to prevent torture, care for torture victims and abolish torture in Liberia.

Since its creation, the United Nations has worked to eradicate torture. In 1984, the General Assembly adopted the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which entered into force on 26 June 1987. The Convention obliges States to make torture a crime and to prosecute and punish those guilty of it. It notes explicitly that neither higher orders nor exceptional circumstances can justify torture. To date 141 nations, including Liberia, are party to it, with another 10 having signed but not yet ratified.

The decision to annually observe the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture was taken by the UN General Assembly in December 1997.

The Committee Against Torture (CAT) is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by its State parties. An Optional Protocol to the Convention (OPCAT) creates a sub-committee and allow in-country inspections of places of detention to be undertaken in collaboration with national institutions.

Following the simultaneous ratification by Bolivia and Honduras on the 23rd of May, the instrument had the twenty ratifications necessary for it to come into effect and entered into force on the 22nd of June 2006. Liberia is one of three African states that have ratified OPCAT.

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*Some information copied from [www.un.org](http://www.un.org), [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org), and [www.apr.ch](http://www.apr.ch)*