



**For Immediate Release:**  
Thursday, September 28, 2006

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**THE CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE TO PROVIDE HEALING SERVICES IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

**Minneapolis**—The Center for Victims of Torture today announced it will open offices in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to provide community mental health services to torture survivors and build resources for healing. The project will be located in Katanga province in the southeastern part of the country.

A regional war, with its roots in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, raged in eastern DRC from 1998 to 2003. Residents of Katanga province suffered extreme levels of violence, even after the official end of the war. Reports document beatings, disappearances, extortion and arbitrary detention and torture, including high rates of sexual torture among men, women and children.

“This project will provide direct services to individuals who have suffered brutal treatment, as well as build sustainable healing resources to address the long-term needs of Congolese survivors long after the tenure of this project,” said Neal Porter, CVT’s Director of International Services.

To address the overwhelming mental health challenges, CVT will:

- Provide mental health services to returning refugees and internally displaced persons who are survivors of torture and war trauma;
- Train local mental health paraprofessionals who can act as counselors and advocates for human rights;
- Train staff of international and national nongovernmental organizations and other agencies to provide appropriate care for survivors;
- Lead community education activities to build awareness and support for human rights and the needs of survivors and reduce the stigma of mental health.

CVT will establish an office in the provincial capital, Lubumbashi, before the end of 2006, with a second site likely located in the interior of the province by early 2007. Funding for CVT’s work in the DRC is from the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

CVT currently operates healing projects in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Established in 1985, CVT is an independent, nonprofit whose mission is to heal the wounds of torture and to stop torture worldwide.

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