

the storycloth

A Publication of the Center for Victims of Torture
Fall 2006, Volume 16, Issue 3
www.cvt.org

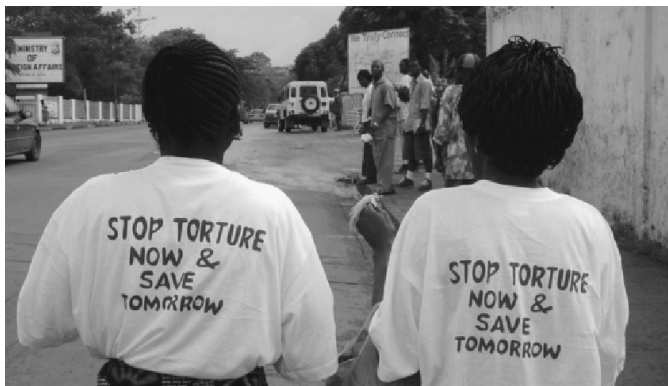
June 26: Solidarity with Survivors, Hope for the Future

"I am a torture survivor. And my wish for today is that we replicate CVT in every state in this country, every nation in the world including Iraq, where many people have been suffering from torture."

Thus began remarks on June 26 by Adolph, a torture survivor from West Africa. Adolph joined the Center for Victims of Torture at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul to commemorate United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

June 26 is the anniversary of the Convention Against Torture and since 1998 has been honored worldwide. From Minnesota to Liberia, Washington D.C. to Sierra Leone, CVT led events to show solidarity with torture survivors and bring people from all walks of life together to speak to our highest aspiration: a torture-free world.

In the U.S. and West Africa, CVT staff members rededicated themselves to speaking out against torture and for the protection and healing of torture *June 26 cont'd page 3*



From Monrovia to Minneapolis: Women in Monrovia, Liberia commemorate June 26 at a parade; CVT social worker Alice Tindi and her sister Monica Atieno Nyaro sing at the tree planting ceremony at the Minneapolis Healing Center.

Healing the Wounds of Torture and Trauma in Cambodia

Mao Irang, orphaned when she was 7 or 8, described the horrors she experienced in Cambodia: "When I heard my parents were killed, I fainted...In the hospital, they thought I was dead. They put me in a pile of bodies. When I woke up I thought, 'What is that smell?' And I crawl, crawl, crawl to the door. And then I realize I am in the dead people's room."

Mao Irang's experience, reported by Seth Mydens in the *New York Times* last February, is just one story of torture and brutality shared by millions of Cambodians.

The spiraling violence began in 1975 when Pol Pot and Khmer Rouge rural insurgents overthrew the government beginning a four-year regime of forced labor, persecution,

torture and execution. The movement forced city-dwellers to become field workers. Educated Cambodians and those with ties to the West were targeted for death. In only four years 1.7 million people—21 percent of the country's population—died from execution, disease, starvation and overwork.

Nearly three decades later, the effects of torture and trauma linger. A culture of impunity and extreme violence lingers. People like Mao Irang experience nightmares, depression, thoughts of suicide, physical pain, anxiety, relationship difficulties and posttraumatic stress disorder. Even those born after the regime are affected by the torture and brutality committed. *Healing in Cambodia cont'd page 2*

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2006 Election: Break the Silence

This is an important election year because 33 Senate and all House seats are up for election. Civic engagement is a right denied to many in countries where torture occurs. Exercise your right and find out where your candidates stand on the issues so you can make an informed decision November 7.

Learn about the candidates

Candidates for the House and Senate will be appearing at community events and public forums until the election. Most candidates list their appearances on their campaign Web sites. Attend a candidate forum or town meeting and ask them their position on the treatment of detainees in the conflict with Al Qaeda.

Suggested questions for candidates for the House and the Senate:

What role should Congress play to ensure that the U.S. does not engage either directly in torture or indirectly through policies such as extraordinary rendition (i.e. detainees sent to countries such as Syria and Egypt that use torture)? What leadership will you provide if elected?

How can Congress monitor and enforce the provisions of the McCain Amendment, which prohibits U.S. personnel from engaging in torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees? How would you advance that role if elected?

Vote November 7!

Exercise your right and vote November 7. Visit your state secretary of state's Web site to register, find your polling place and district or vote by absentee ballot. To find useful links and more information about CVT's Voter and Candidate Education Project, visit www.cvt.org.

CVT's Voter and Candidate Education Project is nonpartisan. CVT does not endorse or oppose any candidates.

Healing in Cambodia from page 1

The Center for Victims of Torture hopes to heal these wounds through the Cambodia Trauma Healing Initiative. Based in Phnom Penh, CVT is partnering with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization of Cambodia (TPO-Cambodia). The United States Agency for International Development is funding the initiative.

According to the *New York Times*, there are only 26 psychiatrists to serve the 12 million Cambodians – all of whom are survivors of the genocide or children of survivors. With no trained psychologists and few providers who conduct psychotherapeutic interventions, capacity to conduct mental health work is limited.

CVT will strengthen the mental health knowledge and capacity by training clinicians on identifying and working with torture and war trauma survivors. CVT will also develop tools for clinicians and education, legal and other professionals who work with traumatized people.

Because accessing health care outside the capital of Phnom Penh is difficult, CVT will create a pilot network of healing resources in a rural area to help people living in the small villages find the help they need.

Many Cambodians rely on traditional healers and monks to help with their mental health problems. To supplement these approaches, CVT and TPO-Cambodia will create a publicity campaign to educate people on self-coping mechanisms and the availability of additional services for those most severely affected.

As Cambodia prepares for war crime tribunals in 2007, mental health experts anticipate old wounds of torture to resurface. With newly trained clinicians, expanded networks of resources and increased public awareness of the effects of torture and what can help, the work of CVT and partner organizations will help to break the cycle of violence and heal the country.

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Published by the Center
for Victims of Torture

717 East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612) 436-4800
www.cvt.org
cvt@cvt.org

Graphic design: Schwartz Powell Design

Printing: Gopher State Litho

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Our mission: To heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities, and to stop torture worldwide.

Restoring the dignity
of the human spirit

Join CVT on the Walk for Justice

On September 17 the Center for Victims of Torture will participate in the Walk for Justice in Minneapolis.

Volunteers Lindsay Eastwood and Jenifer Siegle organized a team to raise \$20,000 for CVT.

You can help by sponsoring a team online at www.walkforjustice.org. Or, visit www.cvt.org and look for a link to the Walk for Justice site.



From left to right: Martha Newton, Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Representative Jim Ramstad and Representative Betty McCollum speaking on June 26 in Washington, D.C.

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survivors. In addition to parades and public events, CVT honored the dignity of survivors of torture, as well as those who did not survive.

Sierra Leoneans Unite in Memorials

June 26 provided the people in Buedu, Sierra Leone with the opportunity to bring some healing and dignity to the site of a mass grave, where dozens of corpses had been unceremoniously dumped during the war. Working closely with Christian, Muslim and traditional faith leaders, CVT helped organize a commemoration at the site of one of three mass graves within the Buedu town limits.

Religious leaders led traditional ritual, Muslim and Christian prayers in a deeply moving memorial service for the victims of torture buried at the site and for those who disappeared. The ceremony was a public recognition and honor of those who were lost and was full of significance and some tears.

In Kono the day of peace and reconciliation began with a child reading poetry. The day-long commemoration included a parade to promote solidarity, speeches by community leaders and music. A candle-lighting ceremony honored the lives lost and facilitated healing in the community. The day ended with a video report of the Sierra Leonean truth and reconcilia-

tion commission on the consequences of war and promoting peace.

Police and Soldiers Speak Out Against Torture

A hopeful sign in West Africa was involvement of police officers and soldiers in the June 26 celebrations. Many of them had participated in CVT training workshops on the meaning and effects of torture.

In Monrovia, corrections officers heard the Liberian Ministers of Health and Labor speak in support of human rights, while United Nations soldiers joined the people of Foya, Liberia in an impressive parade of citizens, students, civil servants and nongovernmental organizations.

A Second Lieutenant in the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, speaking at Koindu's Day Against Torture, described the psychological impact of torture and acknowledged past involvement by the Armed Forces in the most egregious human rights abuses. Recognition by military and police of torture and past human rights abuses are an important step in breaking the silence so common in countries ravaged by torture.

Americans Assert Support for Torture Victims

In Washington D.C., Martha Newton, Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, affirmed her commitment to torture treatment,

describing her experience working with victims of crime in the Illinois Attorney General's office. Newton spoke movingly about the impact violence has on individuals, as well as their families and communities, and her desire to provide refugees with the support and healing they deserve. U.S. Representatives Betty McCollum (D-MN) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN) also joined CVT in Washington and their commitment to supporting torture treatment.

In St. Paul, CVT was joined by Rep. McCollum, torture survivors and their friends and family to recognize the need for healing services. Executive Director Douglas A. Johnson called on all Americans to get involved in the upcoming elections by asking candidates their position on the use of torture and abusive interrogation practices.

While separated by geography, CVT friends are joined by common hopes. Tesfa, a survivor from East Africa voiced these international dreams at the Minnesota State Capitol saying:

"I hope a time will come when the innocent who are jailed will be free. Tears to dry, wounds to heal, and for all of us forced to leave our country to go back and help our poor people. I also hope that human beings can change the world so we can live in peace and harmony."

Do you know anyone who would be interested in learning more about CVT? Please pass on this newsletter or contact us at cvt@cvt.org or 612-436-4800.

Don't forget to vote!

November 7

The League of Women Voters Web site provides information on voter registration and links to secretary of state offices. Learn more at www.lwv.org.

Circle of Hope Keeps Expanding

More and more Friends of CVT are joining the Circle of Hope monthly giving program. These generous individuals are using the convenience of pre-authorized monthly giving to provide financial support for CVT's continuing work. The steady increase in the number of monthly gifts is truly creating a Circle of Hope for torture survivors and their families.

As the Center for Victims of Torture is able to count on a steady and predictable flow of monthly contributions, we can plan more effectively for the future. Because we are receiving gifts each month from credit cards or electronic funds transfers, the cost of processing gifts is lower. That means more of every contribution goes to support torture treatment.

What makes the Circle of Hope especially effective is that even very modest monthly gifts of \$10 or \$15 add up to substantial annual support for CVT's work of healing the wounds of torture. Participants in the Circle of Hope also save the time and trouble involved in responding to mailed reminders about their giving.

You can obtain the Circle of Hope enrollment form by visiting our Web site at www.cvt.org and clicking on Make a Difference and then Monthly Giving. You're also welcome to call Belma Demirovic at 612-436-4870 for more information or to begin authorizing monthly gifts immediately.

Lindsay Eastwood and Jenifer Siegle: Volunteers for Justice *by Patricia Drey*

Encouraging people to take a walk isn't as easy as it sounds. The Center for Victims of Torture volunteers Jenifer Siegle and Lindsay Eastwood know that firsthand.

Siegle and Eastwood are working together to recruit volunteers to represent CVT in an upcoming fundraiser called The Walk for Justice on September 17 in Minneapolis. The walk brings together representatives of various organizations that promote justice to raise money for their respective causes.

CVT is hoping to raise \$20,000 through the walk.

Recruiting walkers isn't the only thing Eastwood and Siegle are doing. They're also helping those signed up meet their fundraising goals.

"If you have a walker that doesn't meet their goal, they're not going to want to do it again," Siegle said. "I think we owe it to them to be as resourceful and helpful as possible."

The pair has sent walkers a list of ways to raise funds other than asking

friends and family outright, such as selling cookies or having a garage sale, Siegle said.

"We're soliciting walkers, but also really allowing them to understand how accessible dollars are," she said.

Siegle and Eastwood both started working on the project in June and were motivated to help because they believe so strongly in CVT's work.

Eastwood, a student at the University of Minnesota Law School, said working with clients during her internship at an immigrant law center has helped her understand the importance of CVT's mission.

"It makes you see what some of these people have to deal with now and what they've had to deal with in the past," Eastwood said. "CVT is one of those organizations where you can actually see how they're helping others."

Siegle now works in marketing at ADC, but a stint in the Peace Corps in Guatemala gave her a deeper understanding of how human rights are undervalued in some countries.



CVT Volunteers Lindsay Eastwood and Jenifer Siegle

"I think coming back I really wanted to get involved in an organization where I could really help them – from a communications, funding and development perspective – continue to run their programs and heal victims and be a safe haven for them," Siegle said. "I just really connected with the cause" of CVT.

Even though Siegle and Eastwood have found that recruiting isn't always easy, being able to play a role in raising money for CVT makes the hard work worth it, they said.

For more information on the Walk for Justice, visit www.cvt.org.