



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

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### **CVT Submits Testimony to Senate Judiciary Committee on Indefinite Detention at Guantanamo**

**St. Paul, MN** – On July 24, 2013, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights is conducting a hearing on "Closing Guantanamo: The National Security, Fiscal, and Human Rights Implications." In written testimony provided to the subcommittee, Curt Goering, executive director of the Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT), addresses the human rights implications of indefinite detention of prisoners held at the Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility.

#### **Excerpts from Goering's testimony:**

"CVT opposes indefinite detention, which we define as detention without trial for an undefined duration over which the individual has no knowledge of when or whether he will be released. From our 27 years of experience healing torture survivors, we know indefinite detention causes such severe, prolonged and harmful health and mental health problems for those detained that it can constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Among the thousands of survivors CVT cares for are many who have suffered while being imprisoned without charge or trial and without being told when, if ever, they might be released."

"Medical examinations have disclosed that indefinite detention have led to profound depression and vegetative symptoms, with all the attendant degradation of multiple aspects of health. The harmful psychological and physical effects of indefinite detention include:

- Severe and chronic anxiety and dread;
- Pathological levels of stress that have damaging effects on the core physiologic functions of the immune and cardiovascular systems, as well as on the central nervous system;
- Depression and suicide;
- Post-traumatic stress disorder; and

- Enduring personality changes and permanent estrangement from family and community that compromises any hope of the detainee regaining a normal life following release.”<sup>1</sup>

“Many of our clients who were imprisoned without trial or charge speak of the absolute despair they felt, never knowing if their detention would come to an end. CVT clinicians who work with survivors of torture that have been indefinitely detained tell us that with no defined end, clients feel there is no guarantee there will ever be an end. This creates severe, chronic emotional distress: hopelessness, debilitation, uncertainty, and powerlessness.”

“The recent hunger strike among the detainees at Guantanamo underscores the despair among detainees facing indefinite detention. Hunger strikes are a form of expression by individuals who have no other way of making their demands known. CVT takes the position that forced feeding of mentally competent hunger strikers is a breach of various bans on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

“CVT urges the U.S. government to put an end to the indefinite detention scheme at Guantanamo by either charging detainees with a recognizable criminal offence and trying them in a court which meets international standards for a fair trial or releasing them. To accomplish this, **the President** should begin transferring cleared detainees to foreign countries using his existing security waiver authority, and **Congress** should pass the Senate Armed Services Committee’s version of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2014, which includes provisions ending or lowering barriers on transferring all detainees from Guantanamo.”

“CVT also urges the U.S. government to follow the World Medical Association’s Guidelines for Physicians Concerning Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Relation to Detention and Imprisonment (Declaration of Tokyo) and the World Medical Association’s Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers and its accompanying Guidelines for the Management of Hunger Strikers. To this end, the **Secretary of Defense** should order the immediate end of all force-feeding of Guantanamo prisoners who are competent and capable of forming a rational judgment as to the consequences of refusing food. He should also allow independent medical professionals to review and monitor the status of hunger-striking prisoners in a manner consistent with international ethical standards.”

[LINK TO GOERING’S FULL TESTIMONY](#)

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*The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit headquartered in St. Paul, MN with an office in Washington, D.C. and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org).*

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<sup>1</sup> Physicians for Human Rights, “Punishment Before Justice: Indefinite Detention in the U.S.,” [https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR\\_Reports/indefinite-detention-june2011.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_Reports/indefinite-detention-june2011.pdf)