



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

# CVT Overview

## Restoring the Dignity of the Human Spirit

The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) is dedicated to healing survivors and ending torture. By extending rehabilitative care to survivors, building the capacity of institutions and individuals and advocating against torture and in support of human rights, CVT works toward a future in which torture ceases to exist and its survivors have hope for a new life. CVT was founded in 1985 as the first torture survivor rehabilitation center in the United States and just the third internationally; we remain the largest organization of our kind in the world.

### **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities and to end torture worldwide.

### **What is Torture?**

Torture is the intentional and systematic infliction of physical or psychological pain and suffering in order to punish, intimidate or gather information. Torture is illegal, immoral, ineffective, and makes us less safe. Torture is, however, a highly effective means of controlling populations. Torture destroys leaders, disintegrates opposition and terrorizes communities. It creates cultures based on apathy and fear.

Torture results in a complex set of physical and psychological problems for its survivors: Chronic pain in muscles and joints from being bound, hung, or confined to small places like cages. Balance and mobility problems, often from being beaten on the soles of the feet or lower legs. Sleep disorders including sleeplessness, sleep interruptions, and intense and incessant nightmares. Deep depression. Severe anxiety. Frequent thoughts of suicide. Fortunately, with sensitive and professional care, survivors can heal from their wounds and reclaim their lives.

### **CVT'S Work in the World**

Over the course of the past 34 years, CVT's work has evolved to center in four primary areas:

#### **Rebuilding Lives and Restoring Hope**

In CVT's home state of Minnesota, a professional staff that includes physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers and interpreters, complemented by volunteer occupational, physical and massage therapists, touches the lives of about 1,000 people annually. We extend rehabilitative care to more than 270 individual survivors; assist hundreds of members of their families; provide training to mainstream health and human services professionals, as well as attorneys, refugee leaders, law enforcement officials, and others; and refer survivors we can't help to other care and service providers in the community. CVT also extends rehabilitative care to refugee torture survivors and asylum seekers in Atlanta, Georgia (59 clients in 2018), and hopes to expand this work to other states in the coming years.

Internationally, CVT works in refugee camps and communities where there are large numbers of survivors, employing a model in which professional staff hire, train and supervise paraprofessional mental health counselors. Increasingly, physical therapy is a key component of CVT's international projects, which aim to build capacity that will endure beyond the duration of CVT's presence.

CVT currently has projects in Africa and the Middle East. We have a project in one of the world's largest refugee camps at Dadaab, Kenya, primarily with Somali survivors. At our project in Nairobi, Kenya, we extend care to urban refugee survivors from around the Great

Lakes region (including large numbers of women who endured sexual violence in the Congo). At our project in the Kakuma refugee camps in northwest Kenya, we work with South Sudanese survivors. We work in northern Uganda with victims of atrocities committed by the Lord's Resistance Army and have begun working with South Sudanese refugees in the Bidi Bidi settlements. In northern Ethiopia, we extend care to Eritrean survivors, many of whom have fled this repressive government's forced military conscription policies. In the Gambella Region of Ethiopia, we extend rehabilitative care to South Sudanese refugees. In Amman, CVT Jordan extends care to survivors from seven nations facing crises, including Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

### **Building Capacity**

CVT organizes technical assistance and training for 40 torture survivor centers and programs in the U.S. and eight other countries. The National Capacity Building and Partners in Trauma Healing projects build clinical skills and help to develop strong and financially stable organizations. Additionally, through CVT's Washington, D.C., office, we generate federal resources that sustain and expand the domestic and international networks of torture survivor centers. Because of CVT's work, the U.S. is the largest international donor to survivor rehabilitation.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation, Research**

CVT is widely known for the quality of our program evaluation efforts, as we document significant improvements in our clients' mental health and functionality. Our Healing Hearts project, serving Karen survivors, is a four-year, \$3 million randomized controlled trial that is testing the proposition that the addition of specialized mental health and case management services to a primary care setting will produce improved patient health outcomes and/or reduced patient health costs. CVT's research team produced a study documenting a 44% prevalence rate among refugees arriving in the United States, translating into a torture survivor population of 1.3 million (or 1 in every 245 Americans), a figure that has become widely accepted as the best available information.

### **Policy and Human Rights Advocacy**

CVT has been deeply engaged in efforts to solve problems associated with the United States' embrace of torture and cruelty in post-9/11 counterterrorism activities; we played a key role in securing release of the Senate Intelligence Committee's CIA Torture Report and continue work on related issues. Through our New Tactics in Human Rights Project ([www.NewTactics.org](http://www.NewTactics.org)) we promote enhanced strategic and tactical thinking among the international human rights community.

### **Annual Budget**

The 2019 budget totals \$23 million, of which \$6 million will be contributed by individuals, foundations, corporate philanthropies and other institutions. \$17 million will be earned through government contracts and medical and targeted case management billing.

**Staff** – CVT employs about 441 staff, including about 130 in the U.S. and 311 in Africa and the Middle East.