



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 are one of the largest organizations 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 35 years, CVT's work has evolved to center in four primary areas:

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

In CVT's home state of Minnesota, our professional staff includes physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, community educators and interpreters, complemented by volunteer occupational, physical and massage therapists. We extend rehabilitative care to more than 340 individual survivors; assist 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 more than 70 refugee torture survivors and asylum seekers in Clarkston, Georgia, 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. 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, and in Tigray, not far from the Eritrean border, we extend rehabilitative care to Eritrean survivors in the Adi Harush and Mai-Ayni camps. 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 53 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, help to develop strong and financially stable organizations, and strengthen their technical and organizational capacity in the delivery of effective and sustainable healing services for survivors and their families and communities. 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, was a five-year, \$3 million randomized control trial that tested the proposition that the addition of specialized mental health and case management services to a primary care setting would produce improved patient health outcomes and/or reduced patient health costs. CVT's research team produced a [study](#) documenting a 44 percent 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 program ([www.NewTactics.org](http://www.NewTactics.org)) we promote enhanced strategic and tactical thinking among the international human rights community.

### **Annual Budget**

The 2021 budget totals \$26 million, of which \$5 million will be contributed by individuals, foundations, corporate philanthropies and other institutions. \$21 million will be earned through government contracts and medical and targeted case management billing.

**Staff** – CVT employs approximately 340 staff, including about 100 in the U.S. and 240 in Africa and the Middle East.