

The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

THE
storycloth

FEBRUARY 2013

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 1 • WWW.CVT.ORG

Healing in the Heart of Nairobi

A group of men, women and children lives in the bustle of Nairobi, Kenya, yet remains largely unnoticed. They are refugees who have fled civil war, tribal conflicts and persecution at the hands of authorities. While they seek more peaceful lives, their tortured pasts often follow them in the form of nightmares, despair or anxiety.

This spring, the Center for Victims of Torture is launching its newest international project in Nairobi to bring hope and healing to these urban refugees.

Up to 100,000 refugee men, women and children are living in poorer parts of Nairobi. They've come from Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and other countries that have experienced upheaval during the last few decades.

While Kenya is known for hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees in camps along its borders, Nairobi and other cities are also home to large numbers of refugees. Many choose to live in Nairobi for its relative safety and anonymity. Others believe there is more economic

opportunity in an urban area. But living in a city brings a unique set of challenges. Refugees aren't able to connect with the resources they need as easily as refugees who live in camps. In particular, accessing health care and education can be especially challenging.

Many refugees settle in Eastleigh, a neighborhood in Eastern Nairobi. "Eastleigh is a thriving yet volatile community of Somalis and Oromo. Business is booming with shops and kiosks selling all types of goods," said Paul Orieny, CVT's clinical advisor for the project. "But the roads are pitted with large potholes and so crowded with cars and matatus [privately-owned minibuses] that pedestrians scramble for safety through the waste and debris in the streets."

Without official work permits, refugees eke out a living of a few dollars a day by shining shoes, washing cars, cooking or working as day laborers. It is often not enough to pay rent on a dwelling that may lack direct access to water or electricity.

"I left the Congo because of



Awo Jama Abdibile is a 55-year-old widow who arrived in Nairobi in 2006 after escaping violence in Somalia. Of Awo's eight children, two daughters and a son are missing amid the chaos in her homeland. Her three grandchildren are orphans. Awo says she believes in hard work to sustain her family and hopes for a better future that includes a good education for her children and grandchildren.

PHOTO © ANNE RICHARD/INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

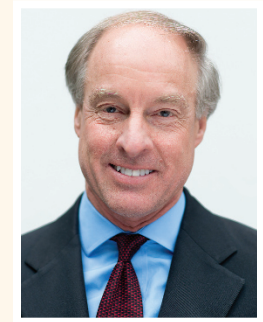
See page 3

Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

INSIDE

- 2 Letter from the Executive Director, Curt Goering
- 4 Donor Profile: Julien Courson and New Tactics in the Middle East
- 4 Your Annual Renewal Creates Hope and Healing

Letter from the Executive Director



Curt Goering

For a brief period after the election of Muhammad Morsi last summer, there was a sense of optimism as Egypt set off on a new path of democratic rule. But what followed was months of upheaval and turbulence.

Protests, some bloody, erupted after President Morsi granted himself broad new powers. As I write this, Egyptians are voting on the flawed constitution pushed forward by Morsi.

The Arab Spring ignited a sense of hope and expectation in peoples across the region which resonated around the globe for all people struggling for greater freedom, democracy and dignity.

But Egypt's struggles are not unexpected. We know countries emerging from autocratic rule and systematic torture lack the civil society needed to support democratic transitions. Indeed, many people have never had an opportunity to learn the art of self-government. Torture destroys what every citizen needs to engage in public life: trust in government institutions, including the courts and police, even trust in neighbors. Building (or rebuilding) that trust is a long, slow process.

But it is not impossible. In Egypt, where CVT's New Tactics in Human Rights program is working, there are hundreds of advocates striving for the change so many crave.

Since 2009, New Tactics has supported human rights activists in the Middle East and North Africa. Through in-person trainings and Web-based discussions, we've worked with them to build collaborations, develop effective strategies, and share ideas, resources and moral support needed to do this difficult work.

I encourage you to visit www.NewTactics.org to see the new Web site. The new site makes it easier to find information and allows you to search for inspiration and ideas by keywords, including regions and specific human rights topics. The Arabic version of the site promises to be a valuable tool to activists in the Middle East and North Africa.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our work to stop torture and to restore the dignity of all survivors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Curt Goering
Executive Director



PHOTO © CVT

In January, Egyptian human rights defenders gathered for a New Tactics in Human Rights training on developing effective strategies.

Healing in the Heart of Nairobi

From page 1

the many killings,” said one woman recorded in a video by the International Rescue Committee. “In addition, when they came to the homes, for example, my sibling was raped and all the children, too.” She now washes clothes to earn a living. “But now life is hard since getting food, medical care when we are sick...it becomes such a problem for my family. Even paying the rent is becoming a difficulty.”

Building on our experience with other international projects, CVT will bring mental health care and counseling to refugees who still suffer from the results of torture and violence.

“We’re just starting to train ten local counselors who will assess refugees and lead counseling groups. They all have advanced degrees or extensive experience working with refugees,” explained Paul. The counselors will work under the leadership and supervision of an expatriate psychotherapist and trainer. Outreach workers will conduct community activities, develop relationships with non-governmental organizations and be a presence in the local communities. “We’re making very good connections with several local organizations that work with refugees and will certainly be partners in our work.”

In our work at headquarters and at our Jordan project, we have learned that physical therapy can

relieve pain and impairment, which can reduce the depression, fatigue and despair that survivors experience. So the Nairobi project will include hiring two local physical therapists to work with survivors who experience on-going pain.

While the Somali and Ethiopian populations have settled in Eastleigh, other refugee groups are scattered. CVT will be based in the Komarock community to be within walking distance of Eastleigh and other neighborhoods with high concentrations of refugees.

Because CVT already has an office in Nairobi that supports the work in the Dadaab refugee camps, we hope work in the capital can begin quickly and that at least 600 survivors can receive care this year.

“These men and women have fled torture and war,” said Neal Porter, CVT’s director of international services. “But now they are living in a difficult urban environment on the margins of Kenyan society. As we begin to provide both individual and group counseling, these refugees will heal from their devastating experiences and find ways to rebuild their lives with hope.”

CVT’s work in Nairobi is made possible with support from the State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

Photos are used with the permission of the International Rescue Committee and Chet Gordon/www.ChetGordon.com.

Refugees living in Nairobi’s Eastleigh neighborhood endure poverty as well as harassment by the police. “Thousands of refugees are now living in fear of arrest even if they have identity papers,” says Kellie Leeson, the IRC’s country director in Kenya. Despite these challenges, many refugees say that they would rather live here than in overcrowded camps where there are few job opportunities.



PHOTO © CHET GORDON / WWW.CHETGORDON.COM

Kenyan vendors sell ground nuts in the Eastleigh neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya, on Thursday, December 1, 2011. Eastleigh is the main commercial center for Somali ex-pats, and is traditionally known as “Little Mogadishu.”

While Somali and Ethiopian refugees have settled in Eastleigh, other groups are scattered. CVT will be based in the Komarock community to be within walking distance of Eastleigh and other neighborhoods with high concentrations of refugees.



PHOTO © ANNE RICHARD/INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Julien Courson: Supporting the Human Rights Community in the Middle East

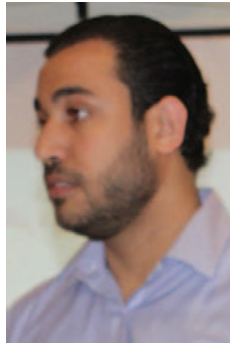


PHOTO © CVT

Since 2010, Julien Courson has consulted from his home in Beirut, Lebanon, as CVT's New Tactics in Human Rights Middle East North Africa (MENA) Liaison and Lead Methodology Trainer.

As the lead trainer, Julien has brought the New Tactics tools and methods to a number of organizations across the Middle East. Most recently, he has been developing partnerships with local human rights organizations in Egypt and Tunisia to co-host trainings, as well as leading the trainings for these

groups. Ultimately, these trainings help local activists become more effective by teaching them how to develop strategies and tactics that support their work.

Having worked as the executive director of a Lebanese human rights organization and in roles in education and conflict transformation, Julien's experience is invaluable as we support human rights activists in the region.

"Julien is committed to helping human rights groups more effectively carry out their work," said Kate

Kelsch, New Tactics program manager. "His engaging and approachable manner builds our credibility with local organizations. But more importantly, it makes him more effective in strengthening the human rights defenders who are on the ground building more just societies."

New Tactics' MENA initiative is supported by the Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and Open Society Foundations Middle East and North Africa Initiative.

Your Annual Renewal Creates Hope and Healing

At the beginning of each year, we encourage all of our supporters to show their commitment to healing the wounds of torture by renewing their annual support. Renewal gifts received early in the year have a vital impact because they provide financial support that sustains our work throughout the entire year.

Because of your generosity, CVT cared for nearly 2,000 men, women and children in 2012—giving them hope and courage to rebuild their lives. In the year ahead, we expect to serve even more survivors—here in the United States; in Jordan, where we care for Iraqis and a rapidly growing number of Syrian refugees; in Dadaab, Kenya, where 500,000 Somalis languish in the harsh desert heat; in Nairobi, Kenya, where survivors are settling after fleeing countries in Eastern

and Central Africa; and in Ethiopia, where we'll extend care to Eritrean survivors.

Your renewal coupled with the support from new donors allows us to provide funding for our work in Washington, D.C., against torture and in support of human rights.

When you receive your renewal request, please respond promptly. If you wish to renew your annual support online via our secure server, visit www.cvt.org and click "DONATE NOW." Our Web site also makes it easy for you to become a member of CVT's monthly giving program, the Circle of Hope.

Or call us toll-free at 1-877-265-8775 if you wish to use your credit card or if you have any questions. Thank you, again, for your generosity, your compassion and your partnership in restoring the dignity of the human spirit.

Make a Difference in the Life of a Survivor

Your generous support brings healing to torture survivors worldwide. CVT welcomes all types of donations.

- **Monthly Sustainers** allow for ongoing planning and delivery of healing services.
- **Planned Giving** continues your legacy of support.
- **Gifts of Stock** support survivors while offering tax benefits to donors.
- **In-Kind Donations** of specific items improve the lives of survivors.
- **Tribute Gifts** celebrate events or memorialize loved ones.

Donate online at www.cvt.org, send a check to 649 Dayton Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104, or call 1-877-265-8775 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

649 Dayton Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
www.cvt.org

© 2013 Center for Victims of Torture All rights reserved.

Please contact CVT for permission to reproduce this newsletter or any part of it.

