

The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

THE  
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## Advocating for Survivors and an End to Torture

CVT opened a policy advocacy office in Washington, D.C., in 1992, to win release of nearly \$400,000 that the United States had pledged, but not paid, to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. With that successful campaign, we launched an effort to generate additional funding to sustain and expand the work of

the growing international network of torture survivor rehabilitation programs.

We posted a significant accomplishment with passage of the Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA) in 1998. Since 2000, TVRA has ensured federal funding for domestic and foreign torture survivor programs. It's nowhere near enough, but at about \$25 million annually, this funding makes the U.S. the largest international donor to torture survivor rehabilitation. And because of our work, every year 60,000 torture survivors worldwide receive the care they so urgently need.

### Post-9/11 Work

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States made illegal and unwise decisions that led to a systematic use of torture, cruel and inhuman treatment in U.S. detention facilities in Iraq, Guantanamo, Afghanistan and secret prisons around the world.

To counteract these actions, we organized the Campaign to Ban Torture—a partnership with the National Religious Campaign

Against Torture and a group of senior leaders from the military, national security and foreign policy sectors—to make the case for a presidential executive order banning torture. The campaign succeeded with President Obama issuing an executive order banning torture and cruelty on his second full day in office.

“With his signature, President Obama has signaled to the world the end of one era and the start of a new one where America’s greatest strengths—our core values—are once again clear to the world,” commented former executive director Douglas A. Johnson after the order was issued.

Despite this initial action, we remained critical of the Obama Administration for hindering efforts to secure accountability for the post-9/11 torture and for failing to close gaps in U.S. law that could again allow United States personnel to engage in acts of torture. In a break with its usual practice of confidentiality, the International Committee of the Red Cross described prisoner accounts of

*See page 3*



The Campaign to Ban Torture made the case for a presidential executive order banning torture.

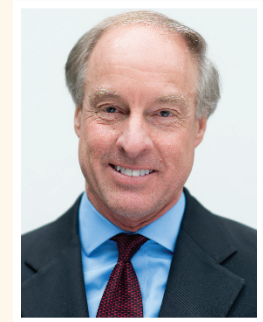
PHOTO © STEPHANIE HYNES

Restoring  
the Dignity of  
the Human Spirit

### INSIDE

- 2 Letter from the Executive Director, Curt Goering
- 4 Volunteer Coordinators: Connecting Survivors with Volunteers
- 4 Join CVT's *Circle of Hope*

## Letter from the Executive Director



**Curt Goering**

A recent editorial in the *Lancet Global Health* journal calls for urgent changes in research and advocacy for mental health care in low- and middle-income countries. The article points out that mental disorders and substance misuse are the greatest contributors to the global burden of disability.

This burden has a steep economic cost. A 2011 World Economic Forum report estimated that the cost of the global burden of mental illness in 2010 was \$2.5 trillion. This is projected to rise to more than \$6 trillion by 2030—an amount three times greater than international development assistance spent by all nations between 1990-2010.

Throughout the world, millions of men, women and children are survivors of torture and other violent human rights abuses. And those survivors often endure severe anxiety, deep depression or other debilitating conditions that impair their ability to care for themselves or their families.

All people affected by psychological distress and mental health problems need access to a range of appropriate services and supports including mental health care, protection and other basic needs. But globally, there are very few resources available to address the tremendous mental health needs of affected individuals and communities.

In CVT's international programs, we see the extraordinary need for additional mental health resources. Our staff provides quality mental health care to survivors of torture and war atrocities, but their work alone is not enough to address the long waiting lists or the lack of referral options to other qualified care providers. We see firsthand the way mental health needs impact the long-term economic, social, and familial outcomes of survivors.

As mentioned in the lead article, CVT helped create the Global Mental Health Advocacy Working Group, a partnership among U.S.-based non-governmental organizations advocating with the U.S. government and multilateral agencies to advance the prioritization, quality and availability of mental health services in humanitarian, transition and development settings. Mental health care is both a public health and a human rights priority, and its recognition as such is long overdue.

As always, thank you so much for supporting our work. And please contact us if you have questions or want additional information.

Sincerely,

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

Curt Goering  
Executive Director

Our staff in Zarqa, Jordan, discusses our work providing mental health counseling and physical therapy for Syrian and Iraqi refugees. In Jordan, we are piloting a project to track data related to human rights violations in Syria.



PHOTO © CVT

# Advocating for Survivors and an End to Torture

*From page 1*

previous interrogation techniques that included waterboarding, beatings, confinement in small boxes, prolonged nudity, sleep deprivation, exposure to cold temperatures, prolonged shackling and deprivation of solid food.

Acting on these accounts of torture, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) produced a report on the CIA's detention, U.S. interrogation and rendition program post-9/11. At more than 6,000 pages, the report is said to conclude that the program produced very little valuable intelligence and that the CIA intentionally misled the White House, Congress and the public about the effectiveness of the program. The study is also said to document the use of interrogation methods not approved by the Justice Department or CIA headquarters. While the Office of Legal Counsel opinion that repetition of the interrogation methods "will not be substantial because the techniques generally lose their effectiveness after several repetitions," the study is reported to conclude that one prisoner was waterboarded 83 times in one month, and another 183 times in one month.

On April 3, 2014, in a swift and decisive 11-3 vote, the Intelligence Committee approved declassifying the executive summary, findings, and conclusions of its report. "For five years, Senator Dianne Feinstein has led the Senate Intelligence Committee in a monumental effort to uncover the brutal truth of the CIA's illegal and misguided policies of torture and cruelty," said Curt Goering, executive director of CVT. "As a result, we now know that the CIA program was far more cruel, sweeping, and ineffective than

**Ann Willhoite, international clinical services advisor, spoke at a panel discussion at an event coordinated by the Global Mental Health Advocacy Working Group—a new NGO coalition to advance the prioritization, quality and availability of mental health services in humanitarian, transition and development settings.**

PHOTO © ANNIE SOVCIK



previously known."

The report has been sent to the Administration for declassification, and we are urging that the 480-page executive summary, and the findings and conclusions, be released in a form that is as unredacted as possible. President Obama has indicated he supports doing so, and we are urging that he direct it to happen without delay.

## **Future Policy Initiatives**

Beyond addressing the aftermath of our country's use of torture and securing resources to support the work of torture survivor centers, we are now working to raise the profile of mental health and torture survivor rehabilitation. As part of these efforts, we have co-launched the Global Mental Health Advocacy Working Group, urging U.S. policymakers to improve the

access and quality of mental health and psychosocial support services globally, particularly for crisis-affected populations.

Annie Sovcik, director of our Washington, D.C. office, is leading our work to create a stronger link between our healing and policy advocacy efforts. In Jordan, we are piloting a project with Syrian survivors to track data related to human rights violations in order to make new contributions to advocacy on humanitarian relief, as well as to promote accountability. "CVT's clinical expertise, in addition to its work in the field and with clients, provides us with a unique depth of knowledge, insights, and credibility. This can be extraordinarily powerful in influencing policies that can help survivors find healing and end the practice of torture worldwide," said Annie.

... the study is reported to conclude that one prisoner was waterboarded 83 times in one month, and another 183 times in one month.

# Volunteer Coordinators: Connecting Survivors with Volunteers

I want to thank all the volunteers and my teachers and helpers,” said one survivor from our St. Paul Healing Center. “Because of their help my health is better and I am feeling much better.”

Four women play an important, yet often understated role at our St. Paul Healing Center. Marilyn Mackie, Cynthia Crooks, Rita Manninen and Nancy Wagner (left to right in the photo) recruit and match volunteers with survivors for tutoring, befriending, and other activities. With backgrounds in teaching and healthcare, they all bring a commitment to helping survivors adapt to their new

community. Outside of their work with CVT, they enjoy spending time with family, reading and being outdoors.

“Because the wounds of torture are repaired through relationships, the volunteer coordinators play a vital role in matching each survivor with a volunteer who has the right combination of personal qualities, interests, and skills to provide that person with a healing experience,” said Andrea Northwood, client services director. “We sometimes take this for granted because our volunteers are so wonderful, but the first step in this process is matching a given survivor’s needs



and personality with a well-chosen volunteer.”

The survivors are deeply appreciative of their relationships with volunteers. “Volunteers are great friends. They changed and transformed my life. They committed to helping me,” said a second survivor. “They are people I will never forget.”

## Join CVT’S Circle of Hope

With your ongoing support, you have made a significant difference in our ability to heal the wounds of torture—in torture survivors, their families and their communities. We are so grateful for your compassion and generosity.

Today we invite you to help CVT and bring hope and healing to thousands of torture survivors worldwide in a very special way—by becoming a member of CVT’s *Circle of Hope*.

In the first four months of 2014, more than 20 new CVT supporters have stepped forward to join our *Circle of Hope*. By making a gift to CVT each month, you can join nearly 450 other committed supporters in building a steady stream of support that allows us to bring healing to survivors in Kenya, Ethiopia, Jordan

and here in the United States. *Circle of Hope* gifts also provide vital support to our advocacy efforts to end the use of torture.

Our *Circle of Hope* program is growing because people like you make modest gifts of \$15, \$20 or \$25 each month. For less than a dollar a day, you can make an enormous difference in the life of a torture survivor. Monthly gifts can be made with an automatic credit card charge or via electronic fund transfers.

We invite you to join the *Circle of Hope* by contacting Ashley at 612.436.4892 or [agotreau@cvt.org](mailto:agotreau@cvt.org). It’s easy and convenient, and you can change or stop your monthly contribution at any time. Thank you for your continued commitment to CVT’s mission of hope and healing.

## 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](http://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.



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