

Hope for Survivors Who Would Say #MeToo

The #MeToo movement has captured U.S. news headlines and launched widespread social change as professional women across industries have stepped up to disclose sexual assault and harassment and to say No More.

In rebuilding the lives of survivors of torture, CVT is all too familiar with issues of sexual violence. We have been listening to survivors' stories for more than 30 years and CVT stands with all our clients who would say Me, Too.

"Clinicians effectively work under the assumption that many

clients have suffered some version of sexual assault, humiliation or serious threat thereof," says Andrea Northwood, Ph.D., LP, CVT's director of client services. "To be imprisoned or detained for political reasons in most of the countries where our clients lived means being under implicit threat of sexual violation. In addition, torture is used to destroy a person's identity, and because our sexuality is a deep part of who we are, torturers often use sexual assault in order to achieve their aim."

Rape is used by tyrannical regimes as a weapon of war, a horrific method of humiliating and wounding individuals and controlling communities. CVT clinicians describe clients being illegally detained by government officials, or non-state actors sometimes for months, and enduring sexual assault—often repeatedly—to serve a larger political goal.

Afterward, many survivors are hesitant to report what they've experienced.

Cultural issues and social stigma often silence the victims of sexual and gender-based violence and keep them from asking for the help they need. Clients are often not comfortable disclosing the sexual violence they've survived until they've been to multiple counseling sessions over several weeks or even months.

That was certainly true for Dina*, who was only a teenager when she was abducted by a militia in Congo. The soldiers took Dina and other girls to their camp, where the girls were raped daily and forced to do domestic chores. Dina was frequently beaten, threatened with loaded guns, denied food and, at times, sleep.

The camp leader singled Dina out to be his wife and locked her

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ILLUSTRATION: AMANDA SCHEID

* Names and some details have been changed for her security and confidentiality.

Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

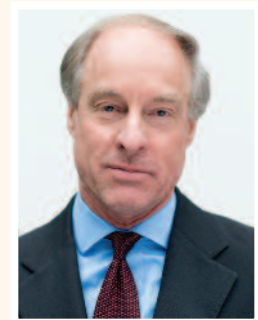
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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the U.S. admitted about 5,000 refugees from October through December of last year. That number is less than that of similar periods in recent years—and 20,000 fewer refugees than were admitted during the same three months in 2016.



Curt Goering

If this pace continues, far fewer refugees than the 45,000 cap the president set will be admitted into the United States this year—and that number is down from 110,000 in 2017. Right now, thousands upon thousands of refugees—including children—are fleeing for their lives, many escaping unimaginable torture and propelled by the hope and safety of resettlement.

Severely cutting the number of refugees welcomed to the U.S. is reprehensible, especially considering the unprecedented numbers of refugees at this moment. And now on top of that, even more refugees will be subjected to intolerable delays because of the increased restrictions on refugees and their families the president ordered when his 120-day refugee ban expired last October.

Adding restrictions on people already “extremely vetted,” and indefinitely suspending reunification of families separated by violence and war, is a wanton display of nativism and cruelty. The executive order was a thinly-veiled, pernicious effort to devastate the refugee program from the inside out, and the very low number of refugees admitted to the U.S. recently is gravely concerning, not to mention a betrayal of our humanitarian tradition of welcoming refugees fleeing torture and persecution.

We know from CVT’s research that nearly half of refugees living in the U.S. are torture survivors. Further closing this country’s doors to the world’s most vulnerable people in urgent need of our help is unconscionable.

As this President rejects the principles of basic humanity, civil society organizations must step in. CVT is proud to be a part of that movement, standing up to draw attention to the impacts of these shameful actions. We’re rallying with allies to stand with refugees and for the care and protection of the great number of torture survivors who are caught up in this devastating global humanitarian crisis.

Thank you for standing with us, and adding power to CVT’s voice as a moral beacon in these deeply troubling times.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Curt Goering

The Travel Ban: Still Doing Damage One Year Later

“What can we do now?” asked Fajer*, whose family escaped torture and death threats in his home country, Iraq. He and his family are still struggling to carve out a refugee life after the president’s Travel Ban cancelled their resettlement to the United States.

Four years ago, Fajer’s family began to receive death threats because they are part of an ethnic minority group. Fajer was arrested and endured torture while he was held. After he was released, a close family member was murdered. Fajer and his family ran from their home, leaving everything behind.

Because of symptoms caused by

the torture, Fajer found CVT Jordan. He and two of the children came for rehabilitative care and began feeling that their lives were getting closer to normal. They took all the necessary steps to be placed in the pipeline for resettlement, and when asked to choose either the U.S. or the U.K. as their future home, they selected the United States because they had relatives living in Massachusetts.

The family went through all the required phases and screenings, a process that took two years before they were approved for resettlement in the U.S. They started their preparations to travel

in February 2017 but then the UN informed Fajer that they were not going to the U.S. They were not given any explanation for the change. The U.S. Travel Ban was announced January 27, 2017.

For refugee families who’ve gone through the years-long screening process, it’s not possible to simply select a different country and get on a different plane. One year later, Fajer still lives in a world of questions and uncertainty.

For Fajer and his family, the impacts have been catastrophic and deeply personal. Everything had to start over again. They cannot return home under fear of death, but they cannot stay in Jordan indefinitely either. The travel ban ended the only way for them to build a new life.

Fajer said he doesn’t understand why this is happening to them. “I lived all my 40 years peacefully in my home country. I worked as a civilian, had no connection to any conflict. I always lived co-existent with my neighbors. Why us?” he said. “What can we do now?”



ILLUSTRATION © ROUTE 55 | DREAMSTIME.COM

* Name has been changed for confidentiality and security. The name Fajer means Dawn of a New Day. Funding for CVT’s work in Jordan is provided by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

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away from the others. She feared he would kill her, especially when he realized she was pregnant. So, she and another girl fled, running for hours. Dina's friend was eight months pregnant and started bleeding. There was nothing Dina could do as she watched her friend die in her arms.

Finally, a caring individual gave her money to flee to Nairobi, Kenya. Once she was there, she found people from her community, and then she found CVT. When Dina came for counseling, she often spoke with a soft voice, avoiding eye contact. She reported

having nightmares and frequently would remember her friend and start crying. Dina was also struggling with mixed feelings about the baby she had born as a result of rape.

Gradually, with CVT's counseling Dina began to heal. Dina said CVT walked with her without judging her and gave her hope when she had lost hope. At her follow-up a year later, Dina was strong and happy and felt hopeful about her future. She was well dressed and beautiful. Her baby was doing well, and Dina felt Lucky was a gift from God.

The effects of rape, sexual and gender-based violence, sexual

assault and torture are deep and long-lasting, but with CVT's help survivors like Dina can embark on a transformative healing journey that enables them to rebuild their lives.

There is hope for CVT clients who would say #MeToo.

CVT's work in Nairobi is made possible by a grant from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration; the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture; United Methodist Women; and the S.L. Gimbel Advised Fund at The Community Foundation – Inland Southern California.

Multiply the Healing Power of Your Gift

CVT is very grateful for the generosity of our supporters and any contribution you are able to make to help survivors and end torture worldwide. Thank you for your gifts of hope and healing, and considering some of the many ways you can further support CVT.

Circle of Hope, CVT's Monthly Giving

As a Circle of Hope member, your monthly gift ensures reliable support for CVT and hassle-free giving for you. Every gift to CVT makes a difference in our ability to provide lifesaving care to survivors of torture. Circle of Hope members help CVT work more efficiently by providing a stable source of reliable

funding. With monthly gifts, you help decrease our administrative costs and ensure that more of your donation helps torture survivors directly. Your monthly contributions automatically renew your annual CVT support and, best of all they bring hope and healing to thousands of torture survivors worldwide.

Workplace Giving and Corporate Matching Gifts

If your employer has a workplace giving program or will match your charitable contributions, designating CVT as the recipient is a convenient and easy way to leverage your generosity. Some companies will allow you to make a simple payroll deduction, and others will match

your donations, doubling or even tripling your impact.

Planning Your Legacy

You can extend your support for the Center for Victims of Torture and leave a legacy of hope for torture survivors with a bequest in your will or another planned gift. You don't have to be wealthy to make a meaningful gift, and there are many ways you can personally benefit as well as spare your loved ones from complex probate procedures and costly taxes.

For more information on making a planned gift to the Center for Victims of Torture, please contact Fawn Bernhardt-Norvell at (612) 436-4888 or giving@cvt.org.



The
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VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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