

the storycloth

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Speaking Out Against Torture on June 26

From lush Central and West Africa to a bustling urban center in the Middle East to the U.S. capital and the open skies of America's heartland, employees, clients, volunteers, and supporters of the Center for Victims of Torture gathered on June 26 to speak out against torture and honor survivors of torture.

June 26 is recognized as United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture—

marking the anniversary of the *UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* going into effect. For more than ten years CVT has commemorated the day with special events, speeches and marches. This year spirited gatherings in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Jordan, Washington D.C., and Minnesota celebrated the resilience of torture survivors and the hope for a world without torture.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

In Pweto in the Democratic Republic of Congo CVT staff organized a motorized caravan to raise awareness of the health consequences of torture and CVT's healing services. The caravan traveled through the center of Pweto, stopping in four communities.

Nearly 100 people gathered at CVT offices to listen to speeches by

In Sierra Leone, CVT staff, community dignitaries and partners marched against torture, among them Chief Mark Kamara, Calaba Town, Sierra Leone.



PHOTO © JAY PREMACK / www.jaypremack.com

Harry McPherson, former Special Counsel to President Lyndon B. Johnson, Alberto Mora, former General Counsel to the United States Navy and 2007 Eclipse Award recipient, and William H. Taft, IV, former Legal Counsel to the State Department, at the Washington, D.C. reception.

the police chief, non-governmental representatives and local officials. Community members asked questions about torture, its effects and CVT's work. Attendees shared a meal in the afternoon followed by an impromptu soccer game.

That evening, psychosocial counselors spoke on a local radio program about CVT's healing programs and the importance of the UN Convention.

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PHOTO © SIMONE VAN DER KAADEN



Our mission: To heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities, and to stop torture worldwide.

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Letter from the Executive Director



Douglas A. Johnson

Last month, we commemorated UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture (June 26th). As we do every year, we celebrated the incredible resilience of survivors. The courageous individuals who overcome the unimaginable continue to inspire us with their strength, perseverance and extraordinary capacity to let their spirits endure.

We marked this occasion with events at our healing centers in Minnesota, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Jordan. We also hosted our annual reception in Washington, D.C., where we honored Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) with our Eclipse Award in recognition of his opposition to the torture and cruel treatment of prisoners held in U.S. counterterrorism efforts. We also presented awards to Harry McPherson, former Special Counsel to President Lyndon Johnson, and William H. Taft, IV, former Legal Counsel to the State Department, for their leadership last year in our Campaign to Ban Torture and their long-standing work against the use of torture.

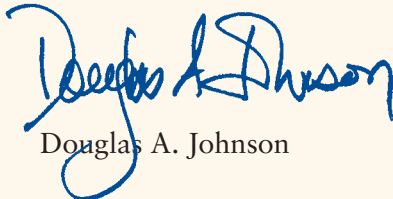
We were honored to have Alberto Mora, former General Counsel to the United States Navy and our 2007 Eclipse Award honoree, speak at the Washington event. Other signatories of the *Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty* were in attendance, including retired Brigadier General Stephen N. Xenakis, retired Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, and former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake.

The annual reception in Washington is part of our ongoing effort to create new allies against torture and new resources to heal survivors. In May I met with senior White House staff and shared proposals for actions that would build on President Obama's January executive order banning torture. I outlined some ideas for highlighting America's historic bipartisan commitment to healing torture survivors and for taking steps to lead a renewed effort to prevent torture.

We were particularly pleased when President Obama announced the Administration's commitment to one of those proposals. On June 26, the President directed the State Department to solicit information from our diplomatic missions overseas about effective policies and programs for stopping torture and assisting its victims. We will monitor this and other promising efforts and look for ways to continue to advance our shared commitment to ending torture worldwide.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to end torture, and for being part of the healing community that helps torture survivors reclaim their lives.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Johnson



Douglas A. Johnson, CVT executive director (left) and John Cairns, chair of CVT's board of directors (right) present Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) with the Eclipse Award.

PHOTO © JAY PREMACK / www.jaypremack.com

Speaking Out Against Torture

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Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, CVT organized a school competition sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Freetown. Throughout the month of June students spoke out against torture and celebrated hope and healing through drama, poetry and dance.

The June 26 events began with a march consisting of 200 invited community dignitaries, partners and staff, accompanied by a police brass band, to demonstrate against torture. At the CVT offices in Aberdeen, activities included music, student and community performances, speeches and testimonies. Attendees ended the commemoration with a symbolic candle lighting ceremony.

Jordan

To reflect CVT's efforts to work hand-in-hand against torture, CVT staff in Amman, Jordan designed an office mural with their handprints. Through radio and television interviews, CVT reached out to Iraqi refugees living in Amman who may be suffering from torture and war trauma. Staff members detailed the services provided by CVT and emphasized that the wounds inflicted

by torture and war trauma could be healed.

To raise awareness of the effects of torture and the availability of CVT services within Amman's Iraqi refugee community on June 26 and beyond, a poster competition was launched. Participants were asked to submit designs of healing that appeal to Iraqis.

Washington, D.C.

In Washington, D.C., Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) received the Eclipse Award for his work opposing the torture and cruel treatment of prisoners held in U.S. counter-terrorism efforts. Legislative staff, human rights advocates, retired military leaders, and national security experts attended CVT's annual reception. Special awards were given to Harry McPherson and William H. Taft, IV for their outstanding work against the use of torture by U.S. personnel and for their leadership in CVT's successful effort to secure a Presidential executive order banning torture.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

At the Minneapolis Healing Center, CVT clients, staff, volunteers and supporters knit their hopes together into an artistic weaving, listened to volunteers and supporters speak about their commitment to CVT, and enjoyed African dance and food.



PHOTO © STEPHANIE HYNES / www.stephaniehynes.com

CVT supporters knit their hopes together into an artistic weaving in Minneapolis.

Carl Nelson, president of the Greater Minnesota Association of Evangelicals, spoke at the event. "Today is a day when all of us stand up to support survivors of torture," declared Nelson. "Victims of torture from around the world live here in Minnesota now—they are our neighbors."

Mark Hiemenz, CVT supporter and Community Relations Director of Ameriprise Financial, asked attendees to commit to supporting survivors of torture and CVT's work for a torture-free world. "Often, people talk about the need for closure when there is difficulty and pain," said Hiemenz. "But I think equally important is opening—opening up hearts and lives to a better tomorrow."

The many events on June 26 demonstrate the hope for a brighter future. Around the world, men, women and children spoke out against torture on this important day. With the support of so many people, CVT persists in its life-changing work of healing the wounds of torture on individuals, families and communities and creating a world free of torture.

In Pweto, DRC, a motorized caravan raised awareness of the effects of torture.



PHOTO © CARLOS ACEVES



PHOTO © CVT

CVT staff in Amman, Jordan created a mural to reflect working hand-in-hand against torture.

International Volunteers Contribute to CVT

Each year CVT touches torture survivors and treatment centers in over 25 countries with direct healing services, training programs and organizational support. This global work is supported by volunteers around the world, including Chandrika Gadiewasam and Henrik Petaisto.

Chandrika Gadiewasam, who lives in Sri Lanka, designed the invitation for the June 26 commemoration of UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture in Washington, D.C. Working half-way around the world from CVT's Minneapolis headquarters, she designed the invitation within a few weeks.

Gadiewasam, whose hobbies include creative arts and graphic design, works as a librarian at a local

non-governmental organization involved in human rights and good governance advocacy work.

While researching organizations that work with war-affected populations, Gadiewasam discovered CVT and responded to a request for graphic design volunteers. "It seemed like an excellent opportunity to link internationally for a good cause," said Gadiewasam of becoming a volunteer.

Henrik Petaisto, now based in Finland, first learned of CVT as a Minnesota high school student. Drawn to CVT because of his interest in human rights, Petaisto helped with a food drive for CVT's New Neighbors/Hidden Scars project and organized materials for a conference.

But Petaisto's extended family

and college opportunities led him to relocate to Finland. Despite moving last winter, he has continued volunteering for CVT by assisting on several Web-based projects. Petaisto's education plans include teaching English. "I have an interest in different cultures and how we communicate with each other," said Petaisto.

CVT relies on volunteers around the world to support its work. "Having a strong network of volunteers, not only in Minnesota but across the globe, reflects the local and international nature of CVT's work," said Beth Wickum, director of volunteer services. "It's inspiring to consider the ripple effect that each volunteer creates, not only in the extraordinary services they provide but in how their dedication to CVT's mission affects others they meet around the world."

Small gifts make a big difference

On June 26th, CVT observed United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. And in keeping with the spirit and intent of this occasion for the world to remember those who have survived unspeakable abuse, our goal is to secure commitments from 100 individuals who agree to make a monthly gift of \$26. This will give us \$2,600 each month—more than \$31,000 each year—to expand our work on behalf of victims of torture.

Your monthly commitment will ensure a dependable financial foundation for CVT to continue bringing hope and healing to thousands of torture survivors worldwide. By becoming a monthly sustainer, you help decrease our administrative

costs and ensure that more of your donation helps torture survivors directly.

Please consider joining *Circle of Hope* by making a gift of \$26 a month to symbolize your commitment to supporting torture survivors. Your monthly gift—coupled with gifts from other *Circle of Hope* members—will make a big difference in helping to relieve the suffering of torture survivors and work for an end to torture.

You can obtain the *Circle of Hope* enrollment form at the Make a Difference section of our Web site www.cvt.org. You're also welcome to call Ashley Bennett at 1-877-265-8775, or e-mail cvt@cvt.org for more information.



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 on-going 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 717 East River Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55455, or call 1-877-265-8775 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.