

# the storycloth

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## CVT Honors Survivors Around the World on June 26

“This is a day where we are reminded that our experience is not forgotten and that there are important people fighting to make sure it never happens again,” said one CVT client about the significance of June 26th.

On this day, supporters and staff around the world joined together to honor United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture by speaking out against torture. The day marks the anniversary of the enactment of the *UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*.

In spirited and heartfelt events we honored the resilience of survivors worldwide and expressed our hope for a world without torture.

### Jordan

In Amman, Jordan, CVT clients and staff planted flowers in individual pots. For survivors who live in despair and fear, the blossoms are a reminder of the hope and healing that comes as they rebuild their lives.

In the Irbid, Jordan office, CVT clients created a mural reflecting

how torture survivors are silenced and isolated by their experiences. The project offered a place where survivors' voices are made visible and barriers are broken.

A poster competition was held throughout June as a public education campaign about torture, its effects and CVT's healing services. Community members submitted designs representing how survivors can heal from the devastating wounds of torture. An exhibition of all entries is scheduled for September.

### The Democratic Republic of Congo

In the provincial capital of Lubumbashi, CVT commemorated June 26th with partner organizations. Congolese counselor Regine Masengo Kidjamba participated in a panel discussion for an audience of community members, law enforcement



PHOTO © REEM KLOUB

Local counselor Inshirah Musa displayed the flower she planted to symbolize how torture survivors rebuild their lives in Amman, Jordan.

officers and social service and health care providers.

In Pweto and Moba, motorized caravans, speeches by local officials and short skits by local youth brought attention to the devastation

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*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*

When President Obama signed an executive order banning torture and cruel treatment last year, it marked a turning point in U.S. counterterrorism policies.

As the first organization to call for the executive order, CVT celebrated this turn away from torture. At the same time, we knew there was an urgent need for more permanent restrictions against torture. A recent report by Physicians for Human Rights reinforces that need.

According to the report, doctors working for the CIA may have violated legal and ethical standards for human subject research by directly monitoring the torture of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay detention center, and by producing medical data to refine interrogations. Records also show that medical personnel made suggestions for preventing the death of detainees. For example, they suggested placing a tracheotomy kit in each interrogation room so surgery could be done immediately if a waterboarding victim began choking.

Most disturbing, the evidence suggests that, by establishing medical standards for “enhanced interrogation techniques” the experiments could help to legally redefine them as something other than torture and cruel treatment.

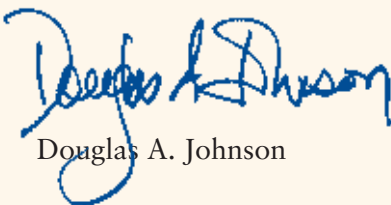
The professionals on our staff use their expertise to heal the wounds of torture and rebuild lives. We are appalled that medical professionals may have used their expertise to set a scientific and legal foundation for torture.

CVT joined Physicians for Human Rights and other groups in a complaint filed with the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) requesting a full investigation of medical professionals’ involvement in CIA interrogations. Unfortunately, OHRP declined to investigate, explaining that it did not have jurisdiction over the CIA. CVT is consulting with Physicians for Human Rights on other options. And we remain committed to our call for an independent, non-partisan commission to examine and report on all forms of torture and cruel treatment of prisoners since September 11, 2001.

Read the full report at [www.PHRTorturePapers.org](http://www.PHRTorturePapers.org). Then sign up at [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org) for e-mail alerts to receive updates on this and other issues.

Thank you for being part of this movement to stop torture.

Sincerely,



Douglas A. Johnson

*Guests at the June 26th commemoration in Minneapolis signed the Physicians for Human Rights petition and created a collage of hopes for a world without torture.*



STEPHANIE HYNES [WWW.STEPHANIEHYNES.COM](http://WWW.STEPHANIEHYNES.COM)



**Douglas A. Johnson**

# CVT Honors Survivors Around the World on June 26

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caused by torture. Authorities, including police and military commandants, denounced torture in the strongest possible words. One police commandant declared, "If there is any police officer who tortures citizens, you come and tell me. Torture is not allowed here."

In Pweto, women played a soccer game to protest the pervasiveness of sexual assault and demonstrate the resiliency of survivors.

## Sierra Leone

In Freetown, Sierra Leone, CVT joined with several international nongovernmental organizations to organize a two-day commemoration called "Hope for a Future Without Torture." Activities were held in Aberdeen and Calaba Town. The Sierra Leonean Police Force led a march, followed by remarks by local officials and music by children's choirs.

The national radio station held a panel discussion on the issues of torture. Academicians, politicians and human rights activists spoke about the prospects of a future without torture.

A particularly poignant part of the day included the opportunity for survivors to give testimony

about their experiences. For some men and women, this validation of their experiences serves an important role in their healing process.

## Washington, D.C.

In Washington, D.C., Elisa Massimino, president and CEO of Human Rights First, received the Eclipse Award for her efforts to end the use of torture and cruelty in U.S. interrogation policy. Featured speakers included Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner, Senator Al Franken and Congressmen Keith Ellison and James McGovern. Massimino expressed her gratitude to the concerned military officials she worked with, calling them "lions" in the fight to change the policy.

## Minnesota

CVT clients, staff and supporters gathered on the lawn of the Minneapolis Healing Center to commemorate the day. Working together, guests created a collage of written hopes for a peaceful future. During the formal program, a client shared how her life was transformed from despair to meaning, and Unity Unitarian was recognized for the eight years of immeasurable support and services the congregation provided to CVT.



PHOTO © MAKI KATO

Police Commandant Mambo joined CVT and other officials in Moba, DRC to condemn torture.

*"If there is any police officer who tortures citizens, you come and tell me. Torture is not allowed here," said Congolese Police Commandant Mambo on June 26th.*

PHOTO © CVT



Sierra Leonean counselor Thomas Bindi marched to demonstrate against torture in Aberdeen.



Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner with Elisa Massimino, president and CEO of Human Rights First in Washington, D.C. Massimino was the Eclipse Award honoree for her work in changing U.S. interrogation policy.

PHOTO © JAY PREMAK / WWW.JAYPREMAK.COM

# June 26 Policy Discussion: Connecting International Work to Local Refugees

The morning of June 26th, before the public commemoration of UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, elected officials and board members joined Executive Director Douglas A. Johnson for a briefing on CVT's policy priorities.

Among others, Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, State Representative Paul Thissen and an aide to Congressman Keith Ellison sat with Johnson at the Minneapolis Healing Center.

"Our work with clients is our moral base, but we expand on that," Johnson told them. "We believe that the power of our clients' experiences can change policy."

Policy makers were taken with Johnson's description of CVT's International Services programs.

In Africa and the Middle East, CVT trains refugees and national staff to be highly skilled paraprofessional psychosocial counselors.

Johnson explained how this model might be used to help refugees resettle in the U.S. Experienced clinicians could train refugees to be peer counselors in the camps. As refugees resettle in the U.S., these counselors could travel with them, serving as interpreters and bicultural workers.

Refugees frequently experience horrific traumas during war. Addressing the mental health needs of refugees will help them resettle successfully and regain economic independence.

Mayor Rybak spoke enthusiastically about the connection between CVT's work in refugee camps and



PHOTO © HOLLY ZIEMER

Former Minneapolis mayor and U.S. representative Don Fraser, CVT Executive Director Doug Johnson, congressional aide Allison Harris and Minneapolis mayor R.T. Rybak discussed how CVT's international programs can influence local policies.

refugee communities in the U.S., such as the Somali community in Minnesota. A trauma treatment corps modeled on CVT's work would give refugees a positive opportunity to serve their communities wherever they live.

## Our Matching Gift Offer Will Double Your Contribution to CVT

Many CVT supporters step forward each summer to help the Center for Victims of Torture in a very special way—by participating in our \$25,000 Matching Gift campaign whereby contributions are matched dollar-for-dollar by a longtime friend and former CVT board member.

*If you are able to make a gift before August 31st, our former board member will match your gift and the impact of your contribution will be doubled! CVT will have twice the resources to serve our clients this summer.*

This Matching Gift Offer couldn't come at a better time for CVT. The fact is, our support from individuals

and foundations generally declines during the summer months—and this campaign gives us \$50,000 in urgent funding that will help our healing centers and training programs in July and August. Your contribution will help torture survivors here in the United States, Africa, and the Middle East who are working hard to rebuild their lives.

Please give as generously as you can before August 31st, and know that your gift will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, by CVT's special \$25,000 Matching Gift Offer. For more information, please contact Ashley Gotreau at 1-877-265-8775 or by e-mail at [cvt@cvt.org](mailto:cvt@cvt.org).

### 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 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.



*Restoring the dignity of the human spirit*

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