

## Restoring Dignity After Sexual Torture

Sexual assault is a common form of torture, including for the survivors we work with in the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Jordan. Among the men and women we care for in Minnesota, 67 percent have experienced some type of sexual torture.

“By its very nature, rape is more invasive than other forms of torture and often results in overwhelming feelings of shame,” said CVT’s Director of Client Services, Andrea

Northwood, Ph.D., L.P. “The level of invasion caused by sexual assault is difficult to match because it goes to the most private, core identity of a person,” leaving devastating effects on individuals, relationships and communities.

It also puts both men and women at risk for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases and can leave them unable to have children. For survivors in Minnesota, rape can also complicate the asylum process. Men who were forced to rape to

save their own lives and women who were held as sex slaves might be denied asylum because they are considered perpetrators or “supporters” of those who enslaved them. Despite the physical invasion, lingering health issues and legal complications, the men and women we care for are able to heal and live fully again.

### The woman’s experience

“Culturally, rape has profound social and economic consequences for women,” said Andrea. “When a girl is raped, she may no longer be considered eligible to marry in the community. When a wife is raped, her husband may have intolerable guilt for not being able to protect her and blame her instead.” It can destroy marriages and families. Physically, women may bleed for months or years or have chronic infections.

*See page 3*

**Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo marched during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence to raise awareness of the devastation of rape.**



PHOTO © JANE REILLY



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

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

### INSIDE

- 2 Letter from the Executive Director
- 4 Jane Reilly—from Paris to Rural Africa
- 4 A New Way to Help CVT—and Yourself

## Letter from the Executive Director

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**Douglas A. Johnson**

June is significant for all of us dedicated to healing survivors of torture and ending this global scourge. Each year on June 26, we commemorate United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

CVT will be joined by volunteers, supporters and survivors at special events in Minnesota; Washington, D.C.; Jordan; the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya.

This year we are honored to present Dr. Elizabeth Lira with CVT's Eclipse Award. The award is given each year on June 26 to pay tribute to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the protection or healing of torture survivors.

Past recipients include Elisa Massimino, President and Chief Executive Officer of Human Rights First; Dr. Inge Genefke, founder of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims; and Alberto Mora, former General Counsel of the U.S. Navy who waged a three-year campaign against the United States' use of torture and cruelty in counterterrorism efforts post-9/11.

A pioneer in the field of care for torture survivors, Dr. Lira is one of the most inspiring thinkers in torture rehabilitation. Today, she is a psychologist and researcher at the Center for Ethics, Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago, Chile.

Since 1977, Dr. Lira has worked mainly in the field of mental health and human rights in clinical services, psychosocial research and national and international advocacy. She has co-authored several books on political reconciliation with San Diego State University Professor Brian Loveman, and written other books related to therapy and memory for victims of human rights violations.

"I am thrilled Dr. Lira is receiving this year's Eclipse Award," said CVT's Senior Consulting Clinician Rosa E. Garcia-Peltoniemi, Ph.D., L.P. "I consider her the founding mother of torture treatment and having her for a mentor has been my great privilege."

Dr. Lira will receive the Eclipse Award at CVT's annual reception in Washington, D.C., on June 23, 2011. If you will be in the Washington area and would like to attend, please let us know at [cvt@cvt.org](mailto:cvt@cvt.org).

I also invite you to check [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org) or CVT's Facebook page for updates on June 26 activities in Minnesota and at CVT projects in Jordan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya.

Thank you for your continued support and for joining us on June 26 to celebrate the strength and resiliency of torture survivors.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Johnson



Chilean psychologist Dr. Elizabeth Lira will receive the Eclipse Award for her pioneering work in caring for torture survivors.

Visit [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org) to learn about events commemorating UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

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*From page 1*

In many cultures, a woman who is raped is shunned, making it very effective in destroying communities. During the war in the DRC, rape was used extensively to frighten and intimidate men and women. “You can be certain that a very high percentage of women in our counseling groups in the DRC have been raped,” said CVT psychotherapist and trainer Jane Reilly.

But in the DRC, attitudes towards rape survivors are changing. Village chiefs are beginning to understand how devastating it is and are slowly starting to respond by making sure women receive the medical care they need. “During my time in the DRC, I’ve seen women begin to speak out, not just about their own rapes, but about how their communities and governments need to combat sexual violence,” said Jane.

“Lots of women come to us saying they can’t trust a man,” explained Andrea. “They may feel on-guard in any public setting. They may feel so branded or shamed that they become convinced strangers can identify them as a rape survivor, as if it’s tattooed on their forehead.” Most women cannot talk about rape early in their treatment. Slowly, though, women find the words to talk about their experience. They begin to feel safe and empowered and are able to develop relationships with other women.

“Whether she is in Africa or the U.S., when a woman can accept herself again, then she is making steps towards healing,” said Andrea.

**Michael Buttsworth (center) and MaryAnn de Ruiter are training Ahmad Hudaib and other physical therapists in Jordan in techniques that can be used for sexual assault survivors.**

Physical therapy is used in Jordan and the U.S. to

help sexual assault survivors with lower back and pelvic pain. After a medical exam for untreated injuries, physical therapy can address issues of pelvic alignment, muscle tension and injured tissues. In Jordan, some severe cases first require very gentle and non-threatening treatment to peripheral areas. Once a survivor develops trust in the physical therapist, more direct approaches to treating the lower back and pelvic areas can be applied.

## **The man’s experience**

For men, rape or other forms of sexual torture such as beating to the genitals, is particularly shameful and humiliating because of gender roles and expectations. “In Jordan we work with many Iraqi men who have been raped or sexually tortured in a variety of ways,” said Josephine Anthoine-Milhomme, CVT psychologist and trainer. “And very often the men are further humiliated by the perpetrators saying ‘You will not be a man anymore.’”

While women are frequently assaulted by more than one perpetrator in a public setting, men are typically tortured in a more secretive manner. Because of the secrecy and the stigma, men are less likely to speak about their experience—even to their own spouses or families. In the counseling setting, a man might begin talking hypothetically about rape as a way to slowly bring up his experience. Or, the psychotherapist might ask a survivor what rape



PHOTO © CVT

means within his culture.

When a man is able to disclose his rape, he has taken the first step towards healing. Then he can be referred to physicians for medical care and receive physical therapy for lingering physical issues as well. Healing the body promotes emotional and psychological healing.

Men who were sexually assaulted may be left impotent or unable to digest solid food. “One man I worked with had his genitals beaten. He was haunted by the idea of never having children,” said Andrea. “But we arranged for him to see a urologist and he was so relieved when he learned he could still be a father. And when he does become a father, he will be a good one.”

There are countless survivors of sexual torture in desperate need of help. But with your support, we’ll continue helping them heal so they can rebuild their lives and relationships.

## Jane Reilly: From Paris to Rural Africa

Jane Reilly's professional path from culinary school to psychotherapy in a remote area of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a bit unusual.

After her culinary career, including training in Paris, Jane studied clinical social work and began working for torture rehabilitation centers on the East Coast. In 2005 she relocated to Minneapolis to work at CVT as a psychotherapist/trainer and coordinator of a school-based mental health program for refugee children. Jane led therapy groups; trained educators, social workers and graduate students on the effects of torture; and wrote a curriculum for working with refugee youth in schools.

Since September Jane has been counseling individuals and supervising and training local counselors in the DRC. "This experience has changed the way I work as a clinician," said Jane. "Being with clients in their cultural homes and being in the place where the horrific atrocities occurred have developed my understanding of the refugee experience and trauma treatment."

While Jane adjusted to the living conditions, she still misses hot showers and easy access to clean water. The rewards far outweigh the challenges, though. "I now have a more thorough understanding of the extreme poverty and hardship that grips most of the people living on this planet and am keenly aware



**CVT psychotherapist and trainer Jane Reilly with local Congolese children.**

of my responsibility to support individual and community healing and human rights for all people."

"Our work in the DRC is so important," Jane continued. "The local counselors we're training will stay and make a difference in their communities. I wish every clinician had the opportunity to work with survivors in their home countries."

## A Unique Way to Help CVT—and Help Yourself

Some of our supporters have chosen to help the Center for Victims of Torture in a unique way—and have helped themselves to significant tax savings at the same time. People who are 70½ years of age or older may make distributions from their IRAs directly to nonprofit organizations without incurring the taxes that would apply to a normal withdrawal from their IRA accounts. This special opportunity has been extended to the end of 2011, so you still have time to take advantage of making a gift from your IRA.

An IRA distribution of this kind is a wonderful way to make a contribution to CVT, and for some people it may also mean their heirs will pay lower taxes on inherited

IRAs. Distributions like this are a creative way for CVT supporters to provide funding that makes it possible for torture survivors throughout the world to heal from their wounds and rebuild their lives.

If you qualify for this opportunity, be sure to speak with a professional advisor to understand your tax benefits. This information is not intended as legal or financial advice, and the tax savings may not be the same for all individuals.

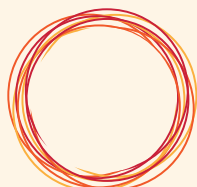
If you have questions or would like additional information on how to ensure this gift is made properly to avoid being taxed, please contact Rachel Hughes, Individual Giving Officer, at 1-877-265-8775 or [rhughes@cvt.org](mailto:rhughes@cvt.org).

## 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 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

Restoring the Dignity of the Human Spirit

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