



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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FEBRUARY 2019

VOLUME 29, ISSUE 2 • WWW.CVT.ORG

Seeking Asylum After Torture

What if, at a moment's notice, you found yourself in life-threatening danger? What if you had no choice but to flee your home? As you scramble to permanently leave your house, neighborhood, city, country, what do you take? Whom do you bring with you?

For the countless individuals fleeing war and violence in their home countries, these questions aren't hypothetical. They're a heartbreaking reality, one CVT

clients know well. At CVT's St. Paul Healing Center, two-thirds of our clients are asylum seekers. They are also doctors, lawyers, teachers and journalists. They are mothers and fathers, daughters and sons.

Back home, these asylum seekers were often unafraid to speak out. They were targeted for their activism, their associations or their identity. Some were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Forced to flee from imminent danger, many

weren't able to bring their loved ones with them to safety. They came to us alone, as Esme* did.

Esme couldn't talk during her therapy sessions; she could only cry. The pain of being separated from her children felt worse than memories of her torture. Because of her immigration status, Esme did not qualify for any public benefits. Most asylum seekers do not. Fortunately, once taken on as a client at CVT, Esme could access general medical assistance just by virtue of being in our care.

Esme was persecuted in her home country in the Middle East because of false accusations of political involvement. A family member helped her get to the U.S. on a visa. Like most asylum seekers, Esme struggled to find housing. CVT is not a residential facility. Survivors must often rely on relatives, acquaintances, kind strangers or shelters for a bed at night. This and the added stress of a pending asylum case can compound symptoms of
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* For privacy and security reasons, name and some details have been changed.



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Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

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Letter from the Executive Director



Curt Goering

Dear Friend,

Human rights are for everyone, everywhere. Yet in the United States there is a very methodical shrinking—a major sustained crackdown—on protections for asylum seekers.

People across the globe are fleeing war, violence, dire economic circumstances and torture. Thousands of asylum seekers at our southern border escaped horrific circumstances—gang violence, death squads, rape. They are desperate. They are simply trying to live, and as a result, they are being punished.

If they make it into the U.S., they risk being detained, potentially prosecuted depending on how they entered, and separated from their families. Seeking political asylum isn't a crime—it's a human right. They are legally entitled to apply for asylum and have their claims adjudicated fairly, notwithstanding how they got here.

U.S. law policy and practice must change. CVT's healing care and advocacy is made possible by your generosity and your support today will strengthen our call for the following actions:

- First, law and policymakers must speak out against the false and discriminatory rhetoric that treats asylum seekers as criminals.
- Second, there needs to be vigorous and sustained oversight into the human rights violations that persist at our southern border, followed where appropriate by legislative solutions.
- Third, Congress needs to provide, and government officials then need to effectively spend, sufficient funding to fairly and efficiently resettle refugees and evaluate asylum seekers' claims.
- Fourth, Congress should legislate a smart and humane immigration detention system, one that limits as much as possible the scope and length of detention.
- Fifth, our government needs to put meaningful attention and resources toward addressing the root causes of the global immigration crisis.

We rely on supporters like you to stand with all of the torture survivors, refugees and asylum seekers whose human rights are being denied. Your ongoing commitment allows us to create the change we seek by holding fast to the values and principles we share in our vision for a better world. Thank you for standing with CVT.

With my thanks,


Curt Goering

Self-directed Healing for Mothers and Aunties in Jordan

For the past 70 years, an international non-governmental organization called SOS Children's Villages Jordan has been caring for orphans and children legally deemed abandoned. In three Jordanian villages a full-time caregiver—a "mother"—is assigned to look after a household of five to seven children with another woman, an "auntie," serving as a relief caregiver.

CVT Jordan recently offered a three-hour self-care workshop for 16 mothers and aunties in Amman. Topics included ergonomics education, physical exercises, pain education and relaxation techniques. "For these women, self-care is such a unique concept," said Physiotherapist Farah Al Dweik, who led the training with a small team of other CVT physiotherapists

and an interpreter. "Most of the activities the mothers and aunties do are related to caregiving and their children. It was a new experience for most of them to focus solely on themselves."

Prior to the workshop, participants completed a needs assessment to give staff a better idea of how to arrange the sessions. Needs among the mothers and aunties were extremely high. Farah was stunned. It was clear that they weren't taking care of themselves, choosing instead to invest their energy in the children. Farah and her supervisor adjusted the workshop materials accordingly and developed a plan to teach simple self-care strategies and coping skills.

When the workshop concluded, participants were emotional. Exploring the relationship between

their bodies and minds was a new experience for many, and for some, a revelation. Farah disseminated materials outlining the concepts and exercises covered during the workshop, so mothers and aunties could embark on their own self-directed wellness journeys.

The experience was unforgettable for Farah and one she hopes to repeat soon. "I'm passionate about building external capacity," she said. "Providing self-care workshops and building partnerships with national organizations and NGOs is an important goal for CVT Jordan." Bringing hope and self-directed healing to women who give so much of themselves was a successful and invaluable step in that process.



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.

Photo © Kristin Lucas

Seeking Asylum After Torture

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trauma, especially now, when there is a mounting backlog of unprocessed asylum cases.

“In the U.S. in particular there is a major sustained crackdown on protections for asylum seekers and enormous delay in processing most of their claims,” states Curt Goering, CVT executive director. “CVT’s clients are facing hearings three, four—or in the case of one client I spoke with recently—five years out.”

Meanwhile, recent political rhetoric and action continues to surface new fears among CVT

clients. For instance—in response to refugees fleeing violence and seeking safety at the southern border—President Trump signed a proclamation in November that makes them ineligible for asylum if they enter the United States outside an official port of entry. And yet, at the same time, Customs and Border Patrol are obstructing, and in some cases preventing entirely, asylum seekers from accessing ports of entry. Now, at nearly every counseling session, clients experience extreme fear and uncertainty over their unknown future in the U.S. Some ask, “Will

I be sent to an internment camp? Will the police send my family and me to jail?”

In spite of these challenges, clients persevere. At CVT, we work tirelessly to bring hope and rehabilitation to survivors, and to bring back an America that strives to be a safe haven for people like Esme. She obtained asylum and was finally, after five years, reunited with her children. Now she arrives at CVT with a smile, a reminder of how profoundly far she’s come.

By Sabrina Crews, CVT marketing communications specialist

Many Ways to Support Healing

Charitable Contributions—CVT relies on the generosity of our supporters to help survivors and advocate for an end to torture worldwide. Thank you for your gifts of hope and healing, and for considering some of the many ways you can further support CVT.

Circle of Hope, CVT’s Monthly Giving—Both a hassle-free way to support CVT and help us work more efficiently, your monthly gift ensures a stable source of continuous funding. As a Circle of Hope member, you will help CVT decrease administrative costs so that more of your donation helps torture survivors directly, restoring human dignity and rebuilding thousands of lives worldwide. To sign up to be a monthly donor, visit cvt.org/donate.

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 CVT 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 Anna Zaros at (612)436-4859 or azaros@cvt.org.



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