



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

THE  
**storycloth**

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Photo by Dreamstime

## Supporting Torture Survivors in the Face of COVID-19

**C**VT joins millions around the world in remembering our common humanity as we all cope with the challenging reality of the coronavirus pandemic.

We know that this time is very difficult for everyone. We are closely monitoring how this situation evolves and are assessing and addressing issues and impacts as they arise.

The need to practice social distancing has required us to shift from in-person services to providing counseling to our clients remotely. We put new systems in place that allow us to engage with our clients by phone, video-conference and other means. We are conducting regular check-ins and continuing therapy sessions without interruption in as many locations as possible.

Our first priority is—and always has been—the well-being of our clients—refugees and asylum seekers who have survived unimaginable torture and war trauma. While it's a challenging time for all of us, for survivors whose lives are in pieces because of torture

and atrocities they've experienced, what they're feeling now can be utterly overwhelming. Fear and anxiety, hopelessness and despair, and other emotions they're feeling are all so much worse.

CVT is a lifeline for vulnerable survivors like Shira who has been having terrible nightmares about her torture. She's new to the U.S. and had not made many friends before this crisis hit. She's feeling scared and all alone in the world. Shira's CVT therapist has been calling her more often than usual to check in, talk through her fears, offer coping tools and comfort so she doesn't feel quite so isolated and cut off from everyone.

Our therapists overseas are similarly making check-in calls with clients and conducting sessions remotely. A torture survivor in Jordan said her sessions make her feel more at peace and help her breathe a little easier, which is our hope for all of our clients in these difficult days.

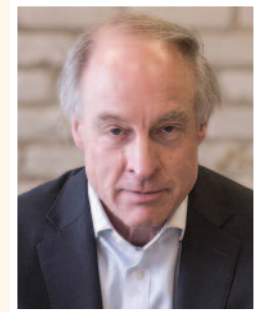
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Restoring  
the Dignity of  
the Human Spirit

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## Letter from the Executive Director



**Curt Goering**

Dear Friends,

In times of great uncertainty you think about what is most valuable to you.

I've been thinking of you, our CVT supporters. For the empathy you offer to survivors of torture. For the larger CVT family we have created together—making hope and healing possible around the world.

And I am thinking about the survivors of torture we work with every day. Having a crisis forced upon us is a feeling CVT clients know very well. And those same clients have shown how crises can be met with great resiliency.

I think of Prudence—a young woman in Uganda who survived the LRA war. She said that coming to CVT for counseling helped her understand her own strength. She said, “Now when I'm going through difficulties, I know that this is part of life.”

All our clinical teams are doing remarkable work connecting with survivors right now. In the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak, clients' needs have shifted, and the care we provide is shifting right along with them. We anticipate that in the coming weeks, as isolation grows and fear increases, survivors may need more support from CVT than ever.

It will take \$2.4 million dollars over the next several months to say yes to tens of thousands of survivors around the world who need our care. And I'll be honest—we may need to spend more than we were planning as we adapt our care because of coronavirus.

But what I do know is that with you, and all our other supporters, we will weather this storm. Survivors have found healing because of compassionate friends like you before, and they will continue to get their lives back because of you, too.

We will get through this together. From a safe distance, apart for as long as needed—but still together, united in our shared values and our mission to restore dignity, hope and wellness for people who have survived atrocities that are nearly unimaginable.

Your partnership in this work is a gift we value greatly. Thank you for helping CVT and all the survivors we're caring for in this moment of need. It means more than you may know.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Curt" and "Goering" being capitalized and prominent.

Curt Goering  
Executive Director

# Mexicali — A Mexican Border City That’s Often Forgotten

by *Andrea Cárcamo, CVT senior policy counsel*

In January I traveled with a group of CVT staff to Mexicali, a city just across the U.S. border and approximately 120 miles east of San Diego. We visited the city, among others, to assess the mental health needs of asylum seekers, humanitarian workers and attorneys, and determine how CVT may be of assistance.

We chose Mexicali because it is one of the Mexican border cities where asylum seekers have been forced to wait while their U.S. Immigration cases are pending. This is the result of a policy created by the Trump administration referred to as the “Remain in Mexico” policy (officially, and inaccurately, known as Migrant Protection Protocols or MPP).

While there are shelters in town where asylum seekers can stay, the number of people and the length of time each person is forced to wait has stretched the limits of existing resources. There are some trusted shelters, but others are known to be corrupt—besides things like

charging people for basic articles necessary for personal hygiene—we were told that girls are taken from shelters at night. The reason is unclear. But we know that children and young girls are particularly vulnerable to violence and human trafficking at shelters all along the Mexican border.

Every step in the asylum process is difficult and the barriers that MPP imposes on asylum seekers to obtain legal representation are impenetrable. They are retraumatizing survivors and eroding the U.S.’s reputation for fairness and respect for due process.

The horrific experience of asylum seekers on the U.S. southern border is compounded by the coronavirus pandemic. The overcrowded camps and shelters are dry tinder for the virus, particularly among vulnerable children and families who may be suffering from other illnesses.

In addition to Mexicali, CVT has also assessed the urgent needs of several other Mexican border communities. Our goal is to design



Photo by Urmy Shukla

programs to assist asylum seekers with mental health care, psychological evaluations to support for their asylum claims, and training and support for local care providers.

We are working with partners on both sides of the border with the hope that CVT can bring our healing services to help relieve the terrible human suffering on our border with Mexico.

## Supporting Torture Survivors in the Face of COVID-19

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At the same time we’re working to ensure our clients receive the healing care they so urgently need during this crisis, CVT is continuing our advocacy work for torture survivors. We are deeply concerned about the Trump administration’s

efforts to close the border to asylum seekers—and the many thousands of torture survivors among them. This cruel action flies in the face of human decency and good public health policy, and it’s abhorrent.

In the most fundamental ways, we rise and fall as a people—not

just Americans, all of us—based on our willingness to practice the golden rule: treat others the way we would want them to treat us. That is the spirit with which our government’s decisions must be taken, as we face the COVID-19 pandemic together.

# A Passion for Helping

**K**athleen Knepper is an unwavering supporter of CVT. She understands the importance of compassion and generosity—values she tries to live by in her daily life and interaction with others. Recently, Kathleen traveled with CVT to visit our healing center in Amman, Jordan. While meeting with survivors, she was deeply moved by the story of a client from Iraq who had lost both his wife and young child. He had given up hope and felt that he had nothing to live for. But then he found CVT. And the services he received brought him renewed optimism

and a sense of purpose.

Kathleen is inspired to support CVT because of its unique role in providing lifesaving services to survivors like the Iraqi gentleman, services which heal the wounds of torture and other forms of trauma. Kathleen knows that her financial support helps to expand CVT's services around the world.

When asked why she decided to increase her support, Kathleen said that in the midst of a global pandemic, refugees, asylum seekers and other victims of trauma need help now more than ever. The economic downturn threatens



**Kathleen Knepper (right) and CVT's Fawn Bernhardt-Norvell (left) Director of Development, on a recent visit to CVT Jordan.**

financial support to meet their needs. Kathleen knows that sending an extra donation now will go a long way in helping CVT provide services to those who are most in need. She hopes that others will be motivated to do the same.

## Ways to Support Healing and Hope for Survivors

**Charitable Contributions**—To help survivors heal and advocate for an end to torture worldwide, CVT relies on the generosity of our supporters. Your gifts restore the dignity of the human spirit and we thank you for also considering the many ways you can further support CVT.

**Circle of Hope, CVT's Monthly Giving Program**—By providing a reliable, continuous source of funding, members of our Circle of Hope sustain all of CVT's healing care and advocacy. Monthly giving is hassle-free and decreases administrative costs so that more of your generous support helps survivors directly as they rebuild their lives.

**Workplace Giving and Corporate Matching Gifts**—Designating CVT as the recipient of employer-matched charitable giving is an easy way to leverage your generosity. You may be able to arrange a simple payroll deduction and some companies will match your donations, doubling or even tripling your impact in healing survivors and working for an end to torture.

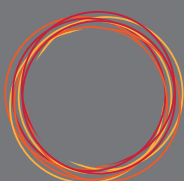
**Planning Your Legacy**—Many donors who do not have the resources to make substantial gifts during their lifetimes find it possible to be extraordinarily generous through their wills. A gift of this kind will extend your

legacy of hope to future torture survivors while also offering potential financial benefits to you and your loved ones and sparing them complex probate procedures and costly taxes.

- You can make a bequest by naming CVT in your will or living trust.
- You can name CVT a beneficiary of your IRA or other retirement plan.
- You can make a gift of appreciated securities—stocks, bonds or mutual fund shares—to CVT.
- If you are 70½ years of age, you can make a qualified charitable distribution to CVT from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

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](mailto:azaros@cvt.org).

Donate online at [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), send a check to 2356 University Avenue W, Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114, or call (612) 436-4808 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.



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