



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

THE
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The Last Brick on the Wall: A Blanket Ban on Asylum at the U.S. Borders

By **Andrea Cárcamo**
CVT senior policy counsel

When President Trump spoke of building a wall during his racist presidential campaign, we knew he meant a physical structure between Mexico and the U.S. But he's built another kind of wall through hateful and xenophobic policies meant to stop the migration of asylum seekers into the United States.

Over the past three and a half years, many of these policies have decimated the right to seek asylum in the United States. And now, as the world confronts the COVID-19 crisis, further steps have been taken to shut down asylum seeking under the guise of protecting people from the pandemic. On May 19, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued an order closing the border indefinitely. The CDC invoked its authority to suspend the admission of individuals without documentation on the grounds they could be "vectors" for transmission of COVID-19. The

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) interpreted the rule as granting permission to the agency to summarily expel individuals who attempt to cross, including asylum seekers and survivors of torture.

It's unconscionable for the Trump administration to use public health to justify the border closure. Refugees and asylum seekers from Central America are being expelled into dangerous Mexican border cities and others are returned to their country of origin where they face persecution and torture. And now, during the pandemic, desperate

families and children fleeing violence must face yet more danger as the spread of coronavirus continues with the scantest of protections in place.

The president is using the CDC to deflect attention from his failure to respond effectively to the pandemic by casting blame on immigrants. We must not be distracted by his deceitful manipulations making Americans believe that the way to keep America safe is by keeping asylum seekers out.

Here at CVT, we are well aware that a significant portion of asylum seekers are torture survivors. But,
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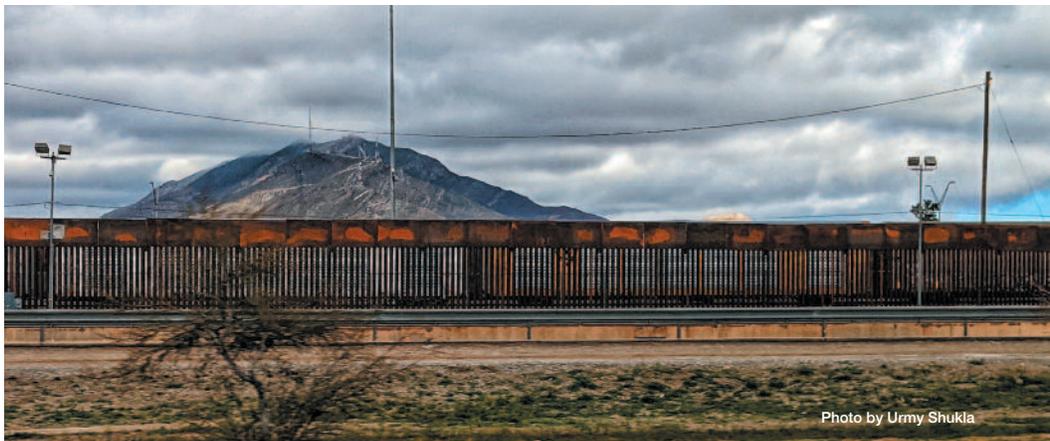


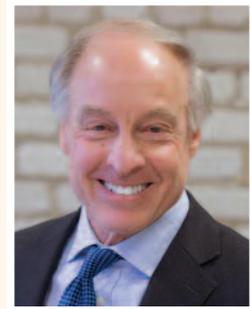
Photo by Urmy Shukla

Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

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Letter from the Executive Director



Curt Goering

Dear Friend,

The killing of George Floyd by police in CVT's hometown of Minneapolis filled me not only with outrage and anger but also with grief—for him and his family, for the Black community and for all non-white communities who experience unjustified police violence.

A situation in which a man repeatedly informs officers that he cannot breathe, only to be ignored and killed, is a world that allows torture. It's a world without conscience! Human rights defenders have tirelessly worked against the systemic racism that is the root of these killings, yet far more must be done—by all of us.

We must have decisive action to protect people of color, among whom many CVT clients number, from authorities who disregard prudent practices of law enforcement.

The COVID-19 crisis has compounded anxiety and depression for many CVT clients here in the U.S. with re-traumatizing memories of confinement and isolation. On top of that, seeing the recent authoritarian violence and militarized police action exacerbates their fears further.

At CVT, with your support, we work to heal the wounds of torture and to influence the structures that should be—that must be—designed to protect the rights of all human beings. We stand with our clients, our neighbors and communities affected by unlawfulness at the hands of authorities.

But the issue at hand is even bigger.

We must stand up against the cruelty, hate and white nationalism that pervades the current administration and the ways its inherent racism and xenophobia have upended the country's longstanding tradition of being a welcoming safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers—the large percentage of whom we know are torture survivors.

Thank you for standing with us. Your generous commitment to our mission of healing the deep wounds of torture and working for the end of torture worldwide is indispensable. When we are tested, as we are now by the combined impact of the pandemic and the ruthless, cruel policies of this administration, you help CVT stand strong as a shining moral beacon.

With my deepest appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

Curt Goering
Executive Director

Help on So Many Levels

By Hiba,* *a young mother forced to flee Syria for safety. She made it to Amman, where she found CVT Jordan, and today she lives there with her children.*

When I think about all that I have lived through, I think about mercy. I wish I could ask the world for mercy, to have mercy on the people.

Everything in my experience is painful. We fled to one city and then another. At one building, we had hidden many families—I remember that they were hungry and there were children crying. My father-in-law brought things so I could cook. They told me not to bother cooking for all of them because they said that they were going to die. But I told them that it's fine; I am cooking for the children who were crying because I can't handle seeing them cry.

When I remember this, I wonder how can I still smile after being through all of that, and also facing the difficulties I have here?! I found out that I am a strong person. I used

to get scared from cats and insects, and yet I faced tanks and bombings and people dying in front of me.

I am proud of myself, but it affected me. I don't see life colored anymore. We used to draw rainbows and the sun and the moon and flowers but now it is not the same anymore. I don't think of it this way. Now I think of it as colorless, and I have to color it the way I want to. The sun is not as big as we used to draw it on paper.

I went to CVT because I was tired and I was lonely. I don't have friends in Jordan. We don't even know the neighbors, and I hardly ever go out. I am always at home, so I thought coming here would help. It helped on so many levels.

First, I got to know new people. Second, there are things I didn't expect to find here like talking about something that I thought I could never say—the events I have in my memory. And the physiotherapy was very useful. I gained a lot by coming here.

What I learned from the center here was very useful and I'm still

using it. At CVT, I learned that the mind and the body are connected together, so when memories come to my head I change my place. I might also watch something that can change my mood, and I might do exercises like the breathing exercise and the here-and-now exercise. I also can change my behavior. I learned all that from coming to CVT and I still use them. Nothing will change if we haven't changed, that's what I want to say.

CVT saved my life and there are so many people, from Syria and other countries, who urgently need the same healing care I received at CVT. Thank you for making it possible.

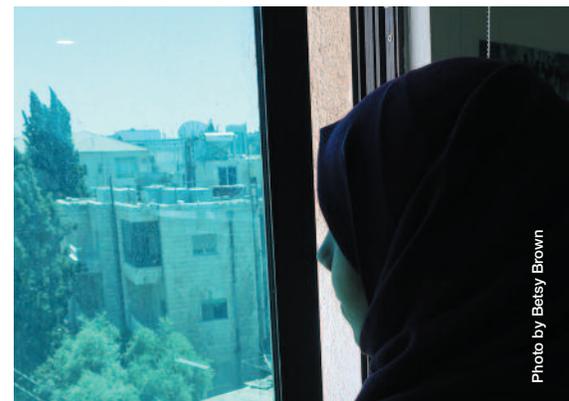


Photo by Betsy Brown

**Hiba chose this pseudonym for confidentiality and security purposes.*

The Last Brick on the Wall

(from page 1)

during the asylum process, they are not being screened to determine whether they have a fear of being tortured. They are summarily being returned to their countries. This is a grievous violation of the United States' non-refoulement obligations under both the Convention against Torture and the Refugee Convention. Furthermore, the administration's actions expose torture survivors to both re-traumatization and re-

victimization regardless of whether they remain near the border or are deported back to their home country.

Those deported to their home countries are faring no better than those stranded in Mexico. Beyond the violence and potential torture they face upon return, they also find an underfunded health system confronting a rise in the coronavirus cases caused, in part, by the crowded deportation flights from the U.S. It is actions like the border closure

and the deportation of infected individuals that put the world at greater risk of COVID-19.

Asylum seekers have the legal right to seek protection in the United States—a right the U.S. has long championed. I strongly urge all our friends and supporters to reach out to their congressional representatives and the CDC director to tell them to demand the lifting of the border closure. The president is exploiting a global crisis as a means to racist, bigoted ends. It is an irrationally cruel stance to take when the world needs wisdom and compassion.

Ways to Support Healing and Hope for Survivors

● Gifts of Healing and Hope

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

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.

● Expand the Circle of Hope Every Day

Every gift to CVT makes a difference in our ability to provide lifesaving care to survivors of torture. *Circle of Hope* members help CVT work more efficiently by providing a stable source of reliable funding. With monthly gifts, you help decrease our administrative costs and ensure that more of your donation supports life-changing rehabilitative care. Best of all, your monthly contributions bring hope and healing to thousands of torture survivors worldwide.

As a *Circle of Hope* member, you can choose to make your monthly donation by credit card or have your gift transferred electronically from a checking account. All choices are efficient, safe and easy to arrange. As a monthly donor, you will receive an annual statement in January with all of your donations for the previous year. In addition, we will keep you informed about how your contributions are making a difference in the lives of

survivors with our newsletters. You can change, suspend or cancel your giving at any time.

To join the *Circle of Hope*, contact Anna Zaros, at azaros@cvt.org or 612-436-4859.

● Plan 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.

Donate online at 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.

How the CARES Act Affects 2020 Charitable Giving

1 Required minimum distributions (RMDs) from certain retirement plans and accounts, including traditional IRAs, are suspended for 2020. If you are 70½ years of age, you can still make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), which lowers the fair market value of your IRA and can have the benefit of lowering your RMD amount for future years.

2 For taxpayers who *do not* itemize, if you make a \$300 charitable contribution you can add it as a

deduction on top of the standard deduction. This is for cash gifts only.

3 The adjusted gross income limitation for charitable gifts is lifted for 2020. Typically when you give a cash gift to charity only 60% of that gift is able to be deducted from your adjusted gross income. For any cash gift you make to charity this year you can deduct the full amount of the contribution on your 2020 tax return.



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