



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

THE
storycloth

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Confronting Wrongful Police Violence

CVT opens an important new front in our advocacy work for justice and human dignity

It was a scene many of our clients, from Syria to Iraq to South Sudan, know all too well. Heavily armed security forces burst through a home's front door in the predawn hours, weapons drawn and trained on the terrified inhabitants.

But this particular scene didn't occur in Syria or Iraq or South Sudan. It took place in Minneapolis, not far from the Center for Victims of Torture's headquarters, when a Minneapolis Police Department SWAT team executed a no-knock raid in an apartment building this past February. And in less than ten chaotic seconds, three gunshots from one of the SWAT team members killed Amir Locke, a young Black man startled out of his sleep. He wasn't even the target of the warrant.

And Amir was far from the first innocent Black person to be gunned down in a no-knock police raid in

this country. It's impossible to say exactly how many, since no state in the country tracks the use of no-knock warrants, but a recent *Washington Post* article estimates that nearly 60 percent of the fatalities resulting from no-knock warrants since 2015 were Black or Hispanic. Each of these deaths is a personal tragedy, but their impact spreads far beyond the grieving family and loved ones left behind.

When police use no-knock warrants, even when the raids don't result in a fatality or injury, they are traumatizing the very community they are supposed to be serving. They are decreasing trust in law enforcement and increasing collective fear, resentment and trauma—especially when there is such a

starkly disproportionate impact on communities of color. It's the same sense of foreboding and trauma our clients in the Middle East and Africa describe, an unremitting fear of police, of knowing, every time they go to sleep at night, armed people with the power of the state behind them might smash through their front door.

Despite increasing criticism of the practice, no-knock warrants remain legal in all but four states. That's why the Center for Victims of Torture is supporting a growing movement to end no-knock warrants. In Minnesota, we're backing state legislation to ban no-knock warrants, and, in Washington, we're working with allies on Capitol Hill in support
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Photo by Dreamstime

Restoring the Dignity
of the Human Spirit

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Letter from the President and CEO



Dr. Simon Adams

Dear Friend,

Even before Vladimir Putin’s horrific assault on Ukraine, the world was already grappling with the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. It is now unimaginably worse, with more than 4 million Ukrainians fleeing their homes for neighboring countries, and millions more internally displaced.

Where is United States leadership in this crisis? We have seen some positive developments. President Biden announced, for example, that the United States will accept 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, and it’s heartwarming to see individuals and communities across our country preparing to welcome these families.

Even while applauding the President’s initiative, it is impossible to miss the difference in how both European countries and the United States have responded to Ukrainian refugees, who are mostly white and Christian, compared to our response to Syrian and Afghan refugees, or asylum seekers from Central America.

The lesson shouldn’t be to criticize that difference but, instead, to harness the humanitarian sentiment behind the welcome offered to Ukrainian refugees and extend it to other frontiers and to other peoples.

That’s why we were pleased with another recent piece of good news: after years of lobbying from CVT and allied organizations, the Biden administration announced that it would rescind Title 42, a medically dubious and morally reprehensible Trump-era measure that used COVID-19 as an excuse to summarily expel traumatized asylum seekers, mostly from Central America, at our southern border. However, even as I write this letter, members of Congress are pushing an amendment to try to keep Title 42 in place.

We’re urging the Biden administration to not only press ahead with rescinding Title 42, but to rebuild our asylum system in a just and humane manner that treats those seeking safety with the dignity and respect they deserve. Specifically, we’re pushing for an end to the “Remain in Mexico” program and reliance on a detention-based immigration system, while on Capitol Hill we’re building support for the Refugee Protection Act.

And, of course, CVT is expanding our presence at the southern border with initiatives like our project with the *Casa Alitas* shelter in Tucson. At Casa Alitas, CVT staff are conducting mental health screenings and providing psychological first aid and other mental health interventions to asylum seekers. The article on Page 3 of this newsletter gives you a personal glimpse of the difference that project is making in just one family’s life.

It’s a difference we could not make without your caring support. On behalf of all of us at CVT, and those whose lives you touch every day, thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Dr. Simon Adams
President and CEO

A New Beginning for a Traumatized Family

Mariana Perez* and her three children arrived at our southern border badly traumatized. Mariana had been forced into marriage and prolonged captivity, during which she suffered torture and rape. They managed to escape and made the long journey from Central America to the border while being pursued by government agents.

Shortly after they arrived at the *Casa Alitas* Welcome Center in Tucson, a CVT case manager connected with the family carefully evaluated their particular needs as trauma survivors. While in captivity, for example, they had never seen a doctor. So, the case manager scheduled physicals at a local clinic, and accompanied them to the appointments. During the physicals, the case manager was able to help explain new and unfamiliar medical

procedures, and stress to the medical provider the importance of a careful, trauma-informed approach to physical exams.

The case manager also worked with an Indigenous cultural expert to coordinate culturally-appropriate services in the family's destination city. Since the family will also need specialized services as survivors of torture, the case manager connected with local torture treatment centers in the destination city to begin coordinating referrals.

Mariana and her children have already reported improved feelings of confidence and safety navigating life independently. The case manager has witnessed the children able to enjoy just being teenagers rather than focused solely on their survival. With this family and so

many others who have encountered traumatic events in their countries of origin or while in migration, a specialized trauma-informed and culturally-attuned style of accompaniment and case management services is essential to establishing safety, security and stability in the United States.

* Identifying details have been changed to protect client privacy and security.



Casa Alitas Welcome Center pictured above.

Confronting Wrongful Police Violence

(from page 1)

of HR 6877, the Amir Locke End Deadly No-Knock Warrants Act.

Our campaign against no-knock warrants is part of a new front in our advocacy work for justice and human dignity: Confronting police violence here in the United States and fighting to reform the criminal legal system. For reasons outlined earlier, deadly and disproportionate police violence is a human rights violation with a major impact in the community, especially among BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). More broadly, our entire legal system remains profoundly discriminatory.

George Floyd's murder galvanized discussions that had been underway at CVT about taking a stronger public position on policing and justice in the United States, and in 2020, our board of directors affirmed its desire to expand our work in this area. In partnership with community organizations and advocates, CVT is supporting reform and public safety initiatives that put communities first and end mistreatment, brutality and murder inflicted by state actors in the United States.

In addition to lobbying against no-knock warrants, we're also advocating for measures like requiring body camera footage to be made available within 48 hours of critical

incidents and ending police-only responses to mental health crises. Our advocacy will also include efforts to advance post-conviction relief legislation, thus sparing the children of refugees and other immigrants who run afoul of the law, often for minor offenses, being deported to countries they left as very young children and that they've never really known. This is an issue that has affected some CVT clients.

You'll be hearing more about this important new work in the coming months and how your generosity is helping build a future where *all* of us can live in safety and be treated with the respect and dignity we deserve.

How Your Traditional IRA Can Help Survivors of Torture

There are two ways you can use your traditional IRA to help torture survivors, either today or years into the future.

First, if you are 70 ½ or older, you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution of up to \$100,000 immediately. If your gift is transferred directly from your plan administrator to CVT, it will not be subject to federal taxes and will count toward any Required Minimum Distribution due. Contact your IRA plan

administrator, and have the IRA distribution sent to CVT, 2356 University Avenue W, Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114.

Second, you can designate CVT as a beneficiary of a future bequest from your IRA. Contact your IRA plan administrator for the appropriate designated beneficiary form and related information necessary to complete the bequest.

Other Ways to Put Your Compassion to Work

Here are a few more ways you can help even more survivors heal their wounds, rebuild their lives and rediscover joy and hope in the future.

Monthly Giving. Rather than donating once a year, or a few times throughout the year, many of our supporters choose instead to join the CVT *Circle of Hope* by having a smaller gift charged every month to a credit card or transferred electronically from a checking account. As a *Circle of Hope* member, you will help provide a stable source of reliable funding, reduce our administrative costs and ensure that even more of your donation supports life-changing rehabilitative care. You will receive an annual statement in January with all of your donations for the previous year. And, of course, you can change, suspend or cancel your giving at any time. To join the *Circle of Hope*, contact us at (612) 436-4808 or giving@cvt.org.

Donor Advised Funds

If you have set up a donor advised fund (DAF), you can contact its representative to make a grant recommendation for CVT. You will need the following information:

Organization Name: The Center for Victims of Torture
Organization EIN: 36-3383933
Organization Address: 2356 University Ave. W,
Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114

If you are interested in learning more about starting a DAF, or need assistance in making a gift from an

existing DAF, please contact Laura Kuhlmann at Lkuhlmann@cvt.org.

Employer-Matching. Many employers will match charitable giving from their employees, doubling or even tripling their contributions. Contact your employer's human resources department to find out whether this is a way you can leverage your impact.

Bequest in Your Will

You can make a bequest by naming the Center for Victims of Torture in your will or living trust. Your bequest has no impact on your current cash flow, and you can modify your bequest at any point through a codicil to your will or an amendment to your trust. Your bequest to CVT is entirely free from federal estate taxes, and there is no upper limit on estate tax deductions taken for charitable bequests.

For more information on any of these options or other ways to make a legacy gift to the Center for Victims of Torture, please contact Laura Kuhlmann at Lkuhlmann@cvt.org. Of course, you should always consult with your attorney, accountant or financial planner to ensure that your gift fits your personal situation.

If you wish to make an immediate gift, visit us online at www.cvt.org, send a check to 2356 University Avenue W, Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114, or call (612) 436-4808.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.



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