



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

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Center for Victims of Torture Presents 2020 Eclipse Award to Dr. Heval Kelli

ST. PAUL, Minn.—The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) is today presenting its annual Eclipse Award to Dr. Heval Kelli, a Katz Foundation Fellow in Preventive Cardiology at Emory University School of Medicine and a Syrian Kurdish refugee. The award is presented each year to an individual or organization that has played a crucial role in ending torture or in extending care and rehabilitation to torture survivors.

After his father was imprisoned and beaten by the police in Syria, Dr. Kelli's family fled their home country, eventually landing in Clarkston, Georgia, after first living in refugee camps in Germany until 2001. To help support his family, he washed dishes at a local restaurant while learning English and finishing high school. He completed his undergraduate pre-med studies at Georgia State University—where he is now an adjunct assistant professor in the School of Public Health—and graduated cum laude from Morehouse School of Medicine. Dr. Kelli finished his internal medicine residency training at Emory University with honorable distinction, and he was awarded the Katz Foundation Fellowship in Preventive Cardiology, concluding his cardiology fellowship this year.

In addition to his work as a cardiologist, Dr. Kelli provides free medical care for community members and individuals without health insurance, and has been assisting with the COVID-19 response as well. He also cares for U.S. veterans at the Atlanta VA Medical Center and is deeply engaged in veterans groups in Georgia.

To give back to the community, Dr. Kelli co-founded several nonprofits, including the Young Physicians Initiative, You4Education, U-Beyond, Mentorship Initiative for New Americans and You4Prevent. He has been recognized for his service and his exceptional work, with awards including the 2017 Friend of Freedom award, the 2018 inaugural Georgia State University 40 under 40 Award, the 2019 Morehouse School of Medicine 10 under 40 Award, and the 2019 Emory University 40 under 40 Alumni Award. In addition, Dr. Kelli is a 2020 recipient of the Healthcare Georgia Foundation Community Service Award. He was honored with the George H.W. Bush Points of Light Award, and was recently elected to the national Refugee Congress as the delegate for Georgia.

Together with his wife, Dr. Abdullah, Dr. Kelli is among the first Kurdish American cardiologists in the United States. He is also a founder of the Kurdish American Medical Association.

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Dr. Kelli will accept the Eclipse Award today in a virtual ceremony held to honor his deep devotion to mentoring and inspiring refugees and others to serve their communities and pursue careers in the healing arts, and his commitment to helping those most in need, including survivors of torture among the refugee populations he serves. CVT [estimates](#) that as many as 1.3 million refugees in the United States are torture survivors.

“I am truly honored to recognize Dr. Kelli’s unwavering commitment to extending a helping hand and a spirit of hope, both through his work in the medical field and his tireless work to mentor others,” said Curt Goering, CVT’s executive director. “That he came to this country in search of safety and made it his mission to help others is no surprise to all of us who know that so many refugees give back to their adopted countries a thousand fold. CVT is indeed fortunate that Dr. Kelli is not only a member of our Georgia Advisory Council, but that he is part of our community in Clarkston, where our CVT Georgia healing center is based. His work is a shining light, and we are proud that he chooses to accept the Eclipse Award today.”

CVT presents the Eclipse Award each year on or around June 26, the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. On June 26, 1987, the United Nations Convention against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment went into effect. Events are held around the world honoring and celebrating this day.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit cvt.org