



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 29, 2024

CONTACT: Pam McCurdy
pmccurdy@cvt.org

Center for Victims of Torture Launches Raahat and Arman Projects Providing Essential Support for Afghan Refugees in Clarkston, Georgia, and Minnesota

St. Paul, Minn – As many Afghans fled their home country in 2021 through Operation Allies Refuge, communities in the United States welcomed them as they sought asylum. Many fled quickly because of the political turmoil, and as a result they experienced grief and trauma. To support the transition, the Center for Victims of Torture has opened two new projects serving the Afghan refugee communities in Clarkston, Georgia and Minnesota.

These projects have been given special names: Arman and Raahat. In Georgia we named the program Arman as it means “hope” in Dari and Pashto, the two languages our clients primarily speak. In Minnesota the program was named Raahat, which means “comfort” or “ease” in Dari, Farsi and Pashto, so that our project participants quickly see that the heart of the program is about helping them find comfort and healing.

The programs consist of **social support groups and activities, psychotherapy and social work services. In Minnesota** we offer group sessions that focus on well-being and are adapted to meet the needs of the clients based on age or other factors. Our sessions focus on wellness through a number of initiatives that include key topics like parenting in a different culture and ways to adapt culturally. We work closely with our partner [Afghan Culture Society](#) to ensure solid connections with the community.

Therapists for both projects bring unique understanding to the challenges faced by clients, who are new to the United States. These clinicians help clients with the kinds of stress they face as they navigate a new culture and location while also processing past trauma. The program in Georgia also includes medical care with a doctor.

Dr. Dawood Azeemy, project lead for Georgia, commented, “As a physician from Afghanistan, when my fellow Afghan citizens were evacuated to the U.S. in August 2021, I recognized from the beginning that addressing mental health would be crucial for this vulnerable community. I am thankful that CVT established the Arman Clinic to cater to this population in a critical time, and it brings me great pleasure to serve as the project lead at the Arman Clinic.”

Naweed Ahmadzai, program manager for Minnesota commented, “Our aim is to encourage individuals to explore a range of options based on their specific needs and comfort levels. Whether they prefer group counseling, participation in parenting groups, individual therapy, or simply seek assistance in navigating a job search or healthcare channels, we are committed to supporting them every step of the way.”

Even in its early stages, clients are reporting good results from the projects. One of our clients gave these remarks when they ended their 10-week group: "This program was the best program for both health and relaxation." Another said about the learning in their group, "The guidelines for people who are stressed and how they can control their stress or emotions were so helpful. The teachers taught us useful methods and techniques. Thank you for our teachers' help and support."

Adapting to a new society can be stressful. Our teams have created a caring program that not only addresses the grief and trauma our clients have experienced but provided hope and healing thru connection as they discover their new life.

-###-

The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization with offices in Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda, United States and additional project sites around the world.

Visit www.cvt.org