

The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE

THE  
**storycloth**

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## A Journey to Hope: Oba's Story

I wanted to die more than anything else in life," said *Oba*. Oba is from the northern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo where tribal differences brought about war. He lost his parents and several siblings to groups of gunmen. He shared his story with Judith Twala, a psychotherapist and trainer at our Dadaab, Kenya, project where we are working in

the world's largest refugee camp.

"The aim of the gunmen is to kill citizens and to fight the government, but their main goal is to torture, leave citizens feeling helpless and vulnerable, to kill and disempower people," shared Oba.

Oba and his neighbors tried to flee but were thwarted. "The government officials traced us and after discovering where we had been held hostage, they threw explosives, and so many people died there," said Oba. "As I tried to escape, some of the explosives landed on my foot, and I got serious injuries. Most of us continued running for our lives regardless of the injuries [we] sustained."

On his way to seeking safety in Kenya, Oba was picked up by a good Samaritan, sparing him the long walk. When he arrived in Dadaab, a nurse referred him to CVT for counseling.

Since 2011, we have been helping survivors living in the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern

Kenya. While the vast majority of the 340,000 refugees are Somalis, others, like Oba, have fled violence in the Congo, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

During our time in Dadaab, we have trained 44 local counselors who have used their new skills to care for nearly 1,100 survivors. Counseling is provided in a complex on the edge of one of the refugee camps in Dadaab. It is a quiet and unusually shady corner of the overcrowded camps. Most survivors attend small group counseling sessions that meet for about ten weeks. Groups are divided into different populations of either adult men or women. Individuals with severe trauma symptoms receive private individual counseling, with many joining small group counseling when they are able.

The Dadaab camps are crowded, with tents just feet apart from each other. This closeness, however, makes the camp conducive for

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Judith Twala, psychotherapist and  
trainer in Dadaab, Kenya

PHOTO © CVT

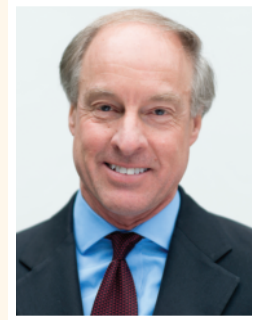
● Survivor's name has been changed to protect his identity.

Restoring  
the Dignity of  
the Human Spirit

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## Letter from the Executive Director



**Curt Goering**

As we begin the new year, we have much to celebrate and much more to do.

As you know, for more than four years, CVT organized and led meetings of a coalition of human rights and civil liberties organizations in Washington, D.C., working for the public release of the CIA torture report. Our leadership derives from our experience rebuilding the lives of 30,000 survivors worldwide, and the unique voice we bring to policy advocacy on torture.

On December 9, the Senate Intelligence Committee released the executive summary of its landmark report on the CIA's use of torture in post-9/11 counterterrorism operations. Within its 500-plus pages, it exposes a shameful chapter in American history by describing an unlawful and deceitful CIA torture program that was far more brutal and extensive than was previously disclosed.

The release of the executive summary is a partial victory for transparency, reform and accountability for the crime of torture committed in our names and in the name of national security.

We are grateful to you for supporting us as we sought the truth.

Yet, we know our work is far from over. Torture proponents and apologists, like former Vice President Dick Cheney, continue to try to discredit the report and, even more grotesquely, to defend torture and deny it ever happened.

This year, CVT will continue to pursue transparency, reform and accountability. We'll work for the full release of the 6,000-plus page CIA torture report. We'll work for legislation to strengthen Congressional oversight to make sure the CIA never uses torture as an interrogation tactic again. And we'll work for full accountability for those who authorized or ordered torture.

Your participation in our advocacy efforts is now as important as ever. Working together, we can undo some of the damage to U.S. human rights policy that has been shredded by the U.S. government's sanction of torture. Please take a moment to visit [www.CVT.org/TortureReport](http://www.CVT.org/TortureReport) to learn about ways you can be involved.

Our work in Washington is made possible by the generous contributions of people like you. Thank you for your continued support and your commitment to a world free from torture.

Sincerely,

Curt Goering  
Executive Director

P.S. Your support is critical to our ongoing work in addressing the United States' use of torture. I ask you to please renew your annual support today so that we can make sure that these brutal and unlawful acts are never repeated.

# A Journey to Hope

*From page 1*

counselors to visit survivors in their homes. “Some of the survivors in the counseling groups are quite vulnerable and alienated because of their traumatic pasts or the current social dynamics of the camp,” explained Judith. “The counselors can stop by their homes between group meetings to support them as needed. It’s also a good way to check in on other family members who might need care.”

The local counselors also organize and hold small and large outreach events. Through this outreach, men and women learn about the effects of torture and how they can better cope with their circumstances, or request help from CVT.

To connect with the younger population, we’ve worked with partners to hold soccer games. More than 800 young people have attended these games. “The young people really enjoy the competitions.

And it’s a time when we can reach them with basic information about managing emotions, the effects of torture and coping skills,” shared Judith.

Recently, the counselors began adding physical therapy into the group counseling sessions. “We’ve lengthened our counseling groups by 15 minutes to include some physical activity like stretches,” said Judith. “These stretches and exercises are helping the survivors with some of their physical pain and limitations. And the increased movement supports their mental health.”

For survivors like Oba, the counseling groups can change their lives. Through his group, Oba found a bit of peace. “I am happy I came to CVT where staff treat me so well and listen to me without hurrying me ... Since I joined the group, suicidal thoughts have gone, and I have learned from other group members to be hopeful and

“I have learned from other group members to be hopeful and grateful that I am alive.”

grateful that I am alive.”

“Every time I see and listen to Oba, I feel motivated to continue with this essential service of healing torture and war trauma survivors,” said Judith.

*CVT’s activities in Dadaab are financed by the United States Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. Additional funding is provided by the United Methodist Women. Staff residences and office facilities at CVT’s Dadaab healing center were constructed, in part, through a generous gift from Al and Diane Kaneb.*



**Dadaab counseling staff take a break between trainings and group therapy.**

PHOTO © SARAH FARAH



**Michael Kamau, mental health supervisor and trainer in Dadaab, Kenya.**

PHOTO © CVT



# Warming the Hearts of a Volunteer and Children

For more than 20 years, Dick Woolf has been building dollhouses and toys for the people in his life, including his former neighbor, CVT volunteer Cynthia McArthur. When the request for a dollhouse in our healing center arose, Cynthia contacted Dick.

Dick readily agreed, first building a house with a peaked roof, and then one with a flat roof to resemble homes in the Middle East. The houses were transported to Jordan with our staff and are now used regularly at our two centers.

The local counselors use the

houses with children in both group and individual counseling sessions. The children whose parents are receiving counseling enjoy them as well. "The houses make the children's rooms feel more welcoming and comforting," said Sarah Trevathan, clinical services manager. "The therapeutic rooms can feel a little stark, and the houses help to put the children at ease."

"I'm just thrilled to pieces that someone could make some good of it," said Dick. Dick was an over-the-road truck driver for most of his career but learned his wood-



PHOTO © AMY-JO VERSOLATO

working skills while working in a family-owned cabinet shop. He and his wife, Mary, raised seven children, and now have seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

"It just warms my heart that the dollhouses can be used for therapy for the kids," said Dick.

## Annual Renewal Brings Hope and Healing

For many people, the beginning of the year is a time for renewal and planning. With countless torture survivors around the world, we've been planning our work to broaden our healing care and bring an end to torture worldwide. And we're hoping we can rely on your early renewal of support to help us do this.

In the coming year, we expect to bring hope to thousands of survivors and their family members around the world. We'll continue caring for survivors of the Syrian crisis who now live in Jordan and those in Ethiopia who fled from abusive and repressive regimes. In Kenya, we're bringing healing to survivors from several regions of Africa who now live in Dadaab and Nairobi. And in Uganda, we'll be broadening our work with survivors of the war with the Lord's Resistance Army.

In the U.S., your renewal supports our work to bring transparency and accountability to the horrific acts

documented in the CIA torture report, provides care for local survivors and allows us to share our expertise with professionals around the world.

Your early support provides the financial foundation we need for our work throughout the year. So when you receive your renewal request, please don't hesitate. Your gift is urgently needed to heal lives and send a message of hope. You can also renew your annual support online via our secure server by visiting [www.CVT.org](http://www.CVT.org) and clicking "DONATE NOW." Our Web site also makes it easy for you to become a member of our monthly giving program, the *Circle of Hope*.

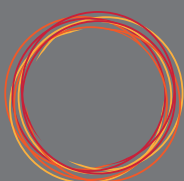
Please feel free to call us toll-free at 1-877-265-8775 if you wish to use your credit card or if you have any questions. And thank you, once again, for your generous partnership with CVT.

## Make a Difference in the Life of a Survivor

Your generous support brings healing to torture survivors worldwide. CVT welcomes all types of donations.

- **Monthly Sustainers** allow for ongoing planning and delivery of healing services.
- **Planned Giving** continues your legacy of support.
- **Gifts of Stock** support survivors while offering tax benefits to donors.
- **In-Kind Donations** of specific items improve the lives of survivors.
- **Tribute Gifts** celebrate events or memorialize loved ones.

Donate online at [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org), send a check to 649 Dayton Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104, or call 1-877-265-8775 for other ways to give. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.



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