

Center for the Victims of Torture

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.cvt.org/what-we-do/survivor-stories/yonas-story>

Campaign and Advocacy

The Eritrean military tortured Yonas after he tried to escape.

My name is Yonas*. I was a student back in my home country of Eritrea, but the government wanted to send me to the military service. They were coming after me, so I went into hiding. They hunted for me and threatened my family to force me to turn myself in. Then they took one of my family members to prison. They said I must come back or they would hurt this person.

So I gave my hands over to the government. My family member was released, and I was taken to the military. But then I escaped. I walked for seven days, far from home. But they went after my family with threats again. This time, however, my family committed. They didn't want to make me come back. My family sold their belongings to give me money to flee.

I ran, but I didn't make it to Ethiopia. I was caught again at the border and beaten with heavy sticks. I was put in prison for many months and beaten repeatedly. I have scars all over my body from the torture.

Once I was out of prison, I made it across the border to Ethiopia. After I settled into the refugee camp, I began having a difficult time. I was struggling with everything I had been through. It was too much. There were times when I was hurting myself. I wanted to kill myself. I had no person to talk to.

People saw what was happening to me and brought me to CVT. Now, CVT is everything to me. My dad, my mom, CVT: these are my backbone.

Before CVT, I had no hope at all. I was planning to end my life. CVT has given me life. CVT shows me that I have dignity, that I can still live.

Now, I help people to come to CVT. I tell them there is life in CVT. Doctors may give you medicine, but help is here. Everything is here.

**Name and some details have been changed for safety and to protect confidentiality.*

CVTs work with Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia is funded by a grant from the U.S. State Departments Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Photo credit: Dreamstime

We **heal victims** of torture through unique services and professional care worldwide.

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We **strengthen partners** who heal torture survivors and work to prevent torture.

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We **advocate** for the protection & care of torture survivors and an end to torture.

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