

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

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

Campaign and Advocacy

After losing his teeth during torture, Nabil was too self-conscious to speak.

A Syrian man was quiet and withdrawn for the first two weeks of group counseling sessions in Jordan. Nabil* lost his teeth during torture, so he was very self-conscious about speaking. His three children had been killed in the war. He was devastated, unable to find his voice. Faced with the distress of displacement and increasingly limited resources for refugees, Nabil was extremely discouraged.

In the third of ten counseling sessions, CVT Jordan counselors work on mind body awareness. As noted by Veronica Laveta, CVT clinical advisor, with trauma we often lose touch of our bodies. Our breathing and body movements contract, which reduces our ability to cope. With a focused-attention breathing exercise during the session, torture survivors learn how to calm their thoughts and emotions by paying attention to their breathing. Participants create body maps to deepen their awareness of where trauma resides in the body and practice using coping strategies and strengths to help counteract the physical and emotional pain.

When this group broke into pairs to share their body maps, Nabil finally felt safe enough to tell some of his story to another survivor. When they returned to the big group, he was active in the discussion for the first time. His body language had changed. He leaned forward and spoke with confidence. Nabil had found his voice.

The other men showed deep compassion towards him and many remarked that they gained strength from hearing his experiences. One survivor said, Our stories are nothing compared to his. If he can survive and move forward, so can we.

*Name and some details have been changed to protect anonymity.

Read the CVT Jordan 10-week group counseling cycle series by Veronica Laveta [here](#).

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