

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/HealingTorture>

Policy Issue Resources

We rebuild lives by extending healing care to survivors of torture. Our healing care in Minnesota, Georgia, Africa and the Middle East restores hope so survivors can once again live healthy, productive and peaceful lives.

Torture has profound long-term effects. Physical reminders include headaches, chronic pain, respiratory problems and a host of other symptoms. The psychological damage is often worse. Living with constant fear, debilitating depression and regular panic attacks prevents survivors from caring for themselves, their families, and contributing to their communities.

But healing is possible. We help survivors rebuild their lives so torture is in their past and not something they re-live every day.

[Minnesota Healing Services](#)

[Georgia Healing Services](#)

[International Healing Services](#)

In Minnesota, CVT extends care in St. Cloud, St. Paul, and in primary care clinics through our Healing Hearts program. In our center in St. Paul, healing services are extended to torture survivors on an outpatient basis in a renovated Victorian home to create a comfortable and welcoming environment.

Each survivor works with a team of specialists who provide
Medical treatment, including psychiatric services and referrals to specialists as needed
Nursing care to help monitor physical conditions and facilitate referrals to specialists
Psychotherapy with a psychologist, marriage and family therapist or clinical social worker
Social services to connect survivors with other organizations and basic needs, and to provide case management to reduce the need for more intensive interventions such as hospitalizations.
Massage and physical therapy to increase mobility and relieve physical pain

For survivors who don't speak English, interpreters play an integral role in the healing process.

Support Services

When a survivor is ready to reconnect with the community, volunteers provide important support services such as teaching survivors how to read a bus schedule and navigate public transportation, tutoring survivors in English, or accompanying survivors on visits to a museum, library, concert, coffee shop or grocery store.

Download our [Becoming A Client Brochure](#).

[Click here](#) for information about all our Minnesota locations.

We extend mental health and, where possible, physiotherapy care to survivors of torture and war in areas of the world where few mental health resources are available. We currently work in Gambella and Tigray, [Ethiopia](#); in [Amman](#), Jordan; in Kakuma, [Dadaab](#) and [Nairobi](#), Kenya; and in Bidi Bidi and Gulu, [Uganda](#).

CVT provides counseling and community mental health activities to adults and children who suffered torture and war trauma. Most survivors receive small group counseling. These small groups meet weekly for about ten weeks, and depending on the nature of the trauma, might be divided into different populations including adults, children, men and women, girls and boys. Survivors with severe trauma symptoms receive private individual counseling, with many joining small group counseling when they are able. In Kakuma, [Jordan](#) and [Nairobi](#), we provide physical therapy to help survivors decrease the pain and disability of torture.

Training Local Communities to be Healers

In addition to providing direct mental health services, CVT trains members of the community and refugee population to be skilled group counselors, physical therapists, advocates, educators and trainers. Our goal is to develop mental health and physiotherapy resources where none existed before.

The paraprofessional mental health counselors undergo an intensive orientation and basic training period. Then they participate in small group counseling sessions with a professional psychotherapist experienced in torture and trauma recovery. Throughout their work with CVT, they receive ongoing professional training and daily mentoring with a professional psychotherapist modeling, observing and giving feedback after every counseling session and activity. Physical therapists engage in a similar orientation with an experienced trauma physical therapist, learning alongside them and receiving ongoing supervision and mentoring.

Former mental health counselors trained by CVT have been hired by the [International Criminal Court](#), the [Special Court for Sierra Leone](#) and other organizations where mental health expertise is required.

[Monitoring and Evaluation](#)

Survivors receiving care at our St. Paul Healing Center or any of our international healing initiatives are followed closely to measure their healing. Survivors consistently report significant decreases in mental health symptoms such as anxiety and depression, as well as decreases in somatic (physical) symptoms.

Photo: CVT's healing team in Amman, Jordan

In this video, CVT Counselor Catherine Nyaga describes how survivors are guided through the

healing process through group counseling at our international healing sites. In Minnesota and internationally, survivors of torture and war receive individual and group counseling. CVTs healing teams guide survivors through three stages of healing:

Safety and Stabilization -- Re-establishing health and trust; discussing legal resources and processes; ensuring clients have housing, clothing, food and medical care.

Grief and Mourning -- Working through what happened.

Reconnection -- Getting back to community and life purpose; developing and repairing relationships with friends and family.

If you are in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area, visit us and see how we're helping men and women around the world rebuild their lives. This one-hour tour includes visits with CVT staff to learn about the sanctuary and healing we provide torture survivors. [View dates for upcoming tours here.](#)

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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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