

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

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

Policy Issue Resources

Countries in the Middle East are home to hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing wars and violence in Iraq, Syria and other countries in the Middle East and Africa. The refugees men, women and children have experienced tremendous suffering, including brutal torture and other terrible human rights abuses.

CVTs work in Iraq is centered around improving individual, family and community resilience through trauma-informed protection activities and trauma-focused mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) services. In the aftermath of conflict, and even while it may continue, these are two important methods of supporting the healing and resilience of people and communities that have been impacted. The CVT Iraq team works closely with local implementing partners in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Federal Iraq, engaging in capacity development of local providers, as well as a collaborative process to help heal the wounds of torture, human rights violations and violent conflict.

Capacity Development & Sustainability

In Iraq, qualified teams specialized in the intersections between mental health, psychosocial support, physical rehabilitation, protection and social cohesion, are scarce. Despite the reports of systemic social stressors, historical trauma and intergenerational violence, there is limited emphasis on child and family dynamics or trauma-focused care. CVT Iraq works to strengthen capacity of local providers in four communities across Iraq to sustainably deliver appropriate MHPSS and protection services, an important aspect in promoting the long-term delivery of trauma-informed services to conflict-affected populations.

Community Engagement

CVT Iraq and partners work to increase knowledge among conflict-affected populations through conducting outreach including awareness raising sessions. The teams strive to be continuously responsive to community needs by holding stakeholder consultations and incorporating beneficiary feedback.

Trauma-Informed Services

CVT Iraq and partners extend mental health and psychosocial support, physiotherapy and protection services to individuals and families who have been impacted by torture human rights violations and violent conflict. Specialized mental health care that has been adapted to the local context improves clients symptoms, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). CVTs trauma-informed physiotherapy interventions help clients manage pain and improve mobility, and the clinical teams work in a multi-disciplinary process to ensure healing is effective and clients begin to rebuild their lives. The teams strengthen social support and connections to resources for children and families through facilitation of referral services as needed.

CVT Jordan was established in Amman, Jordan, in 2008 to help highly traumatized Iraqi refugees suffering from the effects of torture and war. The work expanded to care for Syrian refugees who started arriving in Jordan when the conflict began there. And expansion continued over the years. Today, CVT Jordan extends rehabilitative care to refugees from multiple additional countries, including Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

Torture and war affect all aspects of a persons life and go beyond the individual to the family and the community. As part of the holistic healing approach, CVT Jordan provides mental health, physical therapy and social referrals and case management. Our healing services are provided by professional, local, clinical staff.

Psychotherapeutic services help survivors reduce very high levels of distress and improve their ability to function effectively within their families and communities. **Physical therapy** helps survivors decrease the pain and disability of torture, increase body awareness and self-regulation, and regain function in daily living by learning techniques to self-manage their conditions over time. **Social services** provided by social workers ensure refugees needs are being met.

Follow-up assessments are conducted at regular intervals to monitor and track progress. Improvement is both statistically significant and meaningful with reductions in depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, somatic, and behavioral symptoms, and an increase in the number of supportive relationships. After receiving care from CVT, survivors consistently report increased hope, better coping skills and improved relationships.

CVT Jordan also builds local mental health and physical therapy resources by developing specialized trauma treatment skills for mental health and physical therapy staff. Our intensive training is focused on trauma treatment, with staff learning alongside experienced trauma psychotherapists and physical therapists. The counselors, physical therapists and social workers provide culturally appropriate care and continue to act as mental health, physical therapy and social services providers, advocates and educators long after our work in Jordan is completed.

CVT also provides training for the staff of other organizations, including health and social service providers, university students and others to increase their understanding of the effects of torture and war trauma and the benefits of mental health and physical therapy within a multidisciplinary approach.

Read more about CVT Jordan clients and work over ten years [here](#).

Read more [here](#) about the many firsts that CVT Jordan experienced in its first ten years.
Read the [press release](#) commemorating CVT Jordans 10-year anniversary.
Read about CVT Jordans counseling cycle [here](#).

Photo: [Agnes Montanari](#)

Our Syrian family walked into the CVT office one day full of concern about their three children. They told us their children were terrified of just about everything noise from planes, celebrations and fireworks, even people. We were told the children attended school, but spent the rest of their time indoors, in their one room home, refusing to go outside and play with other children. [Read the rest of this moving story of one Syrian family.](#)

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