

Center for the Victims of Torture

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

<https://www.cvt.org/news-events/press-releases/cvt-welcomes-important-step-toward-increased-funding-torture-survivors>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

ST. PAUL, Minn. & WASHINGTON The Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) today welcomed the Senate Appropriations Committees decision to increase funding to the Office of Refugee Resettlements Services to Survivors of Torture (SOT) program.

This is a great step forward. Far too many torture survivors living in the United States don't have access to the rehabilitation services that they desperately need. The additional funding Senate appropriators just approved is both a moral imperative and a smart investment, said Scott Roehm, CVT's Washington office director. It's not too late for House appropriators to get behind this effort, and we urge them to.

SOT funding is provided each year through the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (Labor-HHS) Appropriations bill. Unfortunately, the funding level has not meaningfully increased in more than a decade, and the appropriation has remained flat at \$10.735 million since FY2013. The Senate Appropriations Committee's FY2019 bill funds the SOT program at \$14 million. The companion House committee bill currently maintains funding at \$10.735 million. That discrepancy will need to be reconciled before Congress votes on a single bill.

To be sure, even more resources are necessary to fully address the current unmet need, but Senate appropriators' recognition of the problem and willingness to begin tackling it is an important start. We're especially grateful to Senators Murray and Blunt for their strong, bipartisan work on this issue at the subcommittee level, and to Senator Leahy for continuing to serve as a tireless champion for CVT's clients, Roehm continued.

The need for torture treatment services in the United States is extraordinary. According to CVT's research, there are as many as 1.3 million refugee torture survivors already living here. In other words, at minimum, approximately 1 in every 250 people in the United States is a torture survivor. And while overwhelming on its own, that statistic does not account for asylum seeker torture survivors, who make up a significant portion and in some cases the vast majority of clients at torture treatment programs throughout the country.

CVT provides care to thousands of survivors every year. They include doctors, nurses, lawyers, legislators, educators, scientists, financial managers and others who worked for democratic change. Survivors are often resilient and driven to succeed; they want a stable job, to support their families, and to be a part of a community. Indeed, when torture survivors receive rehabilitation services, the results are undeniable: clients regularly experience a significant reduction in symptoms (like depression, pain, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and corresponding improvements in social functioning, employment, and community integration. In sum, they reclaim their lives.

UPDATE: On September 28, President Trump signed a spending bill for Fiscal Year 2019 that included the increased funding for the SOT program described above.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN, with offices in Atlanta, GA, and Washington, D.C.; and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit www.cvt.org

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

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