



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

CVT 30th Anniversary

History & Milestones

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CONTACT: Betsy Brown
612.436.4867
bbrown@cvt.org

Beginning in May 2015, the Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) commemorates 30 years of helping torture survivors rebuild their lives and restore their hope. In 1985, CVT set forth its mission to extend psychosocial, medical and physical therapy care to torture survivors in Minnesota. Over the years, the work has grown to include training professionals around the world in the specialized rehabilitation practices and skills needed for people suffering these extreme traumas, and also to advocating for human rights and an end to torture.

In 30 years, CVT's work also expanded far beyond Minnesota, with a presence today in many countries and direct rehabilitative services in Jordan, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda.

Below is a summary of CVT's history and key milestones in its 30 years of healing, training and advocacy work.

1985

- Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich is prompted by his son to take action for human rights on a scale that would reach beyond state borders. Governor Perpich responds by investigating human rights work and visiting the first torture survivor rehabilitation center in the world in Copenhagen, Denmark. Inspired by the work he observes, Gov. Perpich sets the wheels in motion to establish a similar center in Minnesota.
- On May 14, the Center for Victims of Torture is founded as an independent nongovernmental organization.
- For the first two years, care is provided at the International Clinic of St. Paul Ramsey Medical Center (now Regions Hospital).

1987

- With generous assistance from the University of Minnesota, CVT opens a healing center in a small house located on the campus at 722 Fulton Street in Minneapolis. This house offers a less institutional environment than the previous hospital setting, and its welcoming and home-like atmosphere is embraced by survivors. Because of the demand, CVT establishes a waiting list for enrollment in its program of care.

1988

- On a pro-bono basis, Kauffman Stewart Advertising creates a logo for CVT. The eclipse image is intended to convey the journey undertaken by torture survivors out of the darkness of trauma into the new light of rehabilitation and the rebuilding of a life. It is meant to be a symbol of hope against the evil of torture.
- Douglas A. Johnson is hired as executive director of CVT, a role he held for 23 years. Under his leadership, CVT establishes itself as a leader in torture rehabilitation and expands into international healing and training services and advocacy for global survivors of torture.
- President Ronald Reagan signs the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



1991

- With continued support from the University of Minnesota, CVT moves its healing services into a nearby and larger house at 717 East River Road in Minneapolis.

1992

- CVT opens an office in Washington, D.C. to give voice to people purposefully silenced by the perpetrators of torture. A key focus of the advocacy work is on developing the Torture Victims Relief Act, later passed in 1998.

1993

- During the war in Yugoslavia and in its immediate aftermath, CVT clinicians travel to Zagreb, Sarajevo, Tuzla and other towns to train health care providers in the specialized field of torture rehabilitation.
- Secretary of State Warren Christopher visits CVT.

1994

- The first Torture Victims Relief Act is introduced by U.S. Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota. CVT plays a key role in developing the legislation.
- The United States ratifies the Convention Against Torture.

1996

- Working with the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey and the Turkish Medical Association, CVT initiates a project to expand the capacity of Turkish medical professionals and nongovernmental organizations to help survivors of torture.

- New Tactics in Human Rights project is initiated to promote tactical innovation and enhanced strategic thinking within the international human rights community – broadly defined to include economic, social and cultural rights in addition to civil and political rights.

1998

- The Torture Victims Relief Act is approved by Congress with bipartisan support and signed into law by President Bill Clinton (Public Law 105-320). Since its passage, TVRA has provided millions of dollars in federal funding for torture survivor centers in the U.S. and abroad and vastly increased the U.S. contribution to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.
- CVT marks the occasion of the first UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
- UN Secretary General Kofi Annan visits CVT, with introductions by Minnesota Senators Rod Grams and Paul Wellstone. Annan told the audience gathered in the Minneapolis house, “Now I know where to send people if they want to learn how to deal with this problem.”
- CVT hosts the first meeting of U.S. torture survivor centers, marking the origins of the National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs.

2000

- CVT begins providing care to refugees who fled to camps in Guinea after escaping violent civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia.
- CVT provides training and technical assistance to the emerging network of U.S.-based torture survivor centers. This program establishes CVT’s National Capacity-Building Project.

2001

- U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft presents CVT with the National Crime Victims Service Award, which is the Department of Justice’s highest civilian honor.
- CVT capacity-building work goes international, expanding its training and technical assistance to torture survivor rehabilitation centers in multiple countries where human rights violations are routine.

2002

- CVT launches community-based mental health care programming in Sierra Leone. Many Sierra Leonean mental health paraprofessionals trained in Guinea move with the project.

2004

- CVT adds a second healing center in a restored Victorian house located at 649 Dayton Avenue in St. Paul. The opening of the house gives CVT the chance to pilot a new group therapy initiative.
- CVT's New Tactics in Human Rights project hosts an international symposium for 450 people from 89 countries in Ankara, Turkey. The symposium culminates a series of regional training workshops and provides a springboard for further work, including collaboration among diverse groups of human rights advocates.

2005

- CVT opens community-based mental health programming in Liberia to serve returning refugees there.
- CVT launches a campaign to stop the United States' use of torture in counterterrorism operations, calling on President George W. Bush to issue an executive order providing clear, detailed guidance to all U.S. personnel on acceptable interrogation procedures and stop the practice of sending prisoners to countries that use torture.

2006

- CVT opens offices in the Democratic Republic of Congo to provide community-based mental health programming to torture survivors and build resources for healing.
- The CVT Guinea team is awarded the American Psychological Association 2006 International Humanitarian Award for its work with refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia.

2008

- CVT begins providing community-based mental health care in Jordan to Iraqi refugees who suffered torture and war-related atrocities. This work later expands to serve Syrian refugees fleeing the crisis in their home country.
- CVT, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and Evangelicals for Human Rights launch the [Campaign to Ban Torture](#), a national effort calling for a Presidential Executive Order to end torture and cruel treatment of prisoners captured in U.S. counterterrorism operations. The bipartisan effort is endorsed by hundreds of retired military leaders, foreign policy and national security experts and religious leaders.

2009

- President Barack Obama signs [Executive Order](#) banning torture. The Campaign to Ban Torture, above, was instrumental in the president's decision.

2010

- CVT begins organizing and leading meetings of a coalition of human rights and civil liberties organizations in Washington, D.C., working for the release of information on the CIA's rendition, detention, and interrogation program post-9/11.
- CVT launches community-based mental health care programming at camps in Dadaab, Kenya for Somali and other refugees who suffered torture.
- The U.S. Agency for International Development selects CVT to organize an intensive training program for ten independent foreign torture survivor rehabilitation centers. This is a continuation of CVT's work begun in 2001.
- CVT consolidates all Minnesota-based rehabilitative care into the center in St. Paul.

2011

- After 23 years at the helm of the organization, Doug Johnson announces he will step down from his role as executive director. Under his leadership, CVT was established as a leader in the torture rehabilitation field and achieved notable growth around the world in enabling torture survivors to heal and rebuild their lives.
- CVT introduces a new logo which updates the earlier eclipse image with an open graphic and the powerful colors of the sun to suggest the strength and resilience of torture survivors as they move from the darkness of trauma into the light of healing.



2012

- Curt Goering is hired as executive director of CVT, coming to the organization after nearly 30 years with Amnesty International U.S.A., most recently in the role of chief operating officer. His leadership role with this global human rights organization allows him to bring extensive experience with advocacy, strategy, operations and implementation of missions throughout the world to CVT.

2013

- CVT opens an office in Nairobi, Kenya, providing mental health and physical therapy to refugees living in several neighborhoods in the city.
- CVT partners with HealthEast Care System's Roselawn clinic in St. Paul for the Healing Hearts project, a three-year collaboration to provide on-site mental health care and case management to refugees, many of whom are Karen from Burma.

- CVT opens an office in Ethiopia to provide community-based mental health counseling to Eritrean survivors of torture and war-related atrocities living in refugee camps near Shire in the northern part of the country.
- Perkins+Will architects donate design services to renovate and expand administrative offices at 2356 University Avenue West in St. Paul. All Minnesota-based non-clinical staff move into this new headquarters facility.

2014

- Largely as a result of pressure applied by CVT, Dean Baquet, *New York Times* executive editor, [announces](#) the newspaper will use the word “torture” in its coverage of “incidents in which we know for sure that interrogators inflicted pain on a prisoner in an effort to get information.”
- On Dec. 9, as a direct result of CVT’s work with the Washington, D.C.-based accountability coalition, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence releases the executive summary, findings and conclusions of its landmark and bipartisan report on the CIA’ post-9/11 torture program.
- The Healing Hearts project expands to the University of Minnesota Physicians Bethesda clinic.

2015

- CVT commemorates its 30th anniversary of providing hope and healing to torture survivors and their families, of training colleagues around the world, and of advocating for an end to torture.

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The Center for Victims of Torture is an international nongovernmental organization based in St. Paul, Minn., and dedicated to healing survivors of torture and violent conflict and to advocating for human rights and an end to torture. Visit www.cvt.org.