



Helping Survivors of Torture Since 1977

**The CCVT Connection**, which is published monthly, is intended to inform and engage the Centre's volunteers in important events, news, and meetings, and in doing so, to acknowledge the vital role they play in fulfilling the CCVT's mandate.

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Citizenship and Immigration Canada



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The information provided in this publication is not controlled by the CCVT, and therefore may not reflect the Centre's views

## The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

### Poverty & Torture: Cause & Effect, By Jason Daniel Baker

Poverty and torture are social ills which understandably go together to the point of being interdependent.

This month's issue on the CCVT features articles which relate to the situation in Ivory Coast. This country is plagued by the scourge of poverty and torture.

Poverty in the West African country of Ivory Coast has soared in the past 25 years and statistics which measure the standard of living and average wages show that where 1 in 10 lived in poverty in 1985, the number is now half and deteriorating at an alarming rate particularly in rural areas of the country having worsened coinciding with a prolonged political/military conflict.

"The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is an occasion to underscore the internationally recognized right of all men and women to live free from torture. It is an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to prohibit torture and all cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment."

*United Nations Secretary-General  
 Ban Ki-moon*

### CCVT Celebrates June 26: International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

The United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is held annually on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June to speak out against the crime of torture and to honour and support victims and survivors throughout the world. As such, The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture celebrated this day by paying our respects and celebrating with those who have endured the worst treatment/conditions possible. It was also an occasion when the CCVT highlighted the atrocities suffered by survivors. This year, the CCVT joined other organizations around the world, members of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, in celebrating June 26<sup>th</sup> by adopting their worldwide theme of poverty, both as a cause and effect of torture. To that end, CCVT held a panel discussion around the theme.

Professors Susan McGrath, Chair of CCVT's Board and Director of the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University moderated a panel of: John Duncan (Centre of Ethics, University of Toronto), Marina Nemat (author of Prisoner of Tehran), Natalia Durango, a Columbian journalist specializing in human rights and Augusta Dwyer, author and winner of the Independent Journalist Award through a discussion of Poverty, cause and effect of torture.



The discussion was quite animated and participation from sector and client was great. The issues spoken to were attacking the root causes of torture: poverty, inequality and violence"; it has long been recognized that victims of torture are not well off socio-economically, however the concept of poverty as the cause of torture is new. The report, above as published by the World Organization Against Torture in September 2006, revealed that the majority of those who are tor-

tured are among the poorest strata of society. Torture is used as a strategy to control finances and to maintain or gain power.

Policies on human rights standards do not necessarily prevent torture –countries that practice torture have also signed such policies.

*If everyone howled at every injustice, every act of barbarism, every act of unkindness, every we would be taking the first step towards a real humanity.* ~ Nelson DeMille

*If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.* ~Charles Darwin

## 2011 Uprising in Syria Met With Brutal Crackdown: Zeeshan Esack

The recent sweep of protests across the Middle East not only exposed many realities about undemocratic nations, but what power the people of a nation actually hold. Syria's harsh and stagnant dictatorship at first seemed immune to the wave of unrest that swept through most of the Arab world after the revolution in Tunisia in January 2011.

The Assad regime has massacred many Syrians since 1982, and has poisoned and tortured thousands during its rule. The whole situation of the senseless killings is the subjectivity of the brutal regime. Assad was following some rule of law that was just a little different from our concept of rule of law. The most recent violations of Syria's security forces bring to light the risks involved when a country is on the verge of political transformation. A handful of demonstrations were called in Syria, however the demonstrators were always outnumbered by the police, and demonstrators were fired upon, arrested, or dispersed.

Syria's human rights situation is among the worst in the world, according to human rights organizations such as the Human Rights Watch. There is a call from the international community as well as human rights groups for the US and European Union to implement sanctions against Syrian officials involved in the killings. The authorities arrest democracy and human rights activists, censor websites, detain bloggers, and impose travel bans. Arbitrary detention, torture, and disappearances are widespread. Although Syria's constitution guarantees gender equality, critics say personal status laws and the penal code discriminate against women and girls. Moreover, it also grants leniency for so-called honor crimes. Syria's opposition crackdown has left more than 120 people dead. A conservative estimate is that at least 300 people have died since the uprising began. These figures are unofficial as Syria has expelled journalists from access to troubled spots.

On April 17, rejecting the Syrian president's latest effort to mollify them, thousands of protesters took to the streets in cities and towns, using a national holiday commemorating the end of French colonialism to widen their challenge to his family's iron-fisted autocracy. Security officers responded with deadly force, including live ammunition fired at a funeral and the seizure of critically wounded demonstrators from a hospital.

The importance of democratization of Syria will greatly impact that of other countries in the region. The issue of democratization in Syria lies not solely with its people; the issue is far more complicated. Syria, the only ally of Iran, is a dictatorship where power is inherited. If Syria becomes democratic, it will be as if the arms of Iran are cut off.

Given the current political administration in Iran losing its only ally will have detrimental effects, on their states political affairs. In 29 March, the entire Syrian cabinet was asked to resign by the president. Adel Safar was named the new prime minister and his new cabinet was sworn into office on 14 April 2011. The Emergency Law was rescinded on 21 April 2011.

## June 20th: World Refugee Day Celebrations: Yonge/Dundas Square,

CCVT, along with the Canadian Red Cross, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, COSTI, Sojourn House, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office and UNHCR celebrated June 20 which marked the World Refugee Day, an internationally recognized day, to salute the indomitable spirit of the world's refugees. On the day organizations organized a celebratory event at Yonge/Dundas Square.

The celebration commemorated the positive contributions that refugees

make to their host society and saluted refugees as ordinary people who have found themselves in extraordinary circumstances.

World Refugee Day is a great occasion to celebrate the resilience of refugees, many of whom call Toronto their new home. The day was also a good opportunity for all those concerned with refugee issues to come together and celebrate not only the refugees, but the organizations that support them.



Sashar Zarif Dance Performers, York University—Yonge/Dundas Square



**Stories from the Road: Max Dismukes**

Greetings from China, CCVT! As I write this, I am set to leave Shanghai tomorrow morning for Beijing. Unlike the sort of Orwellian metropolis that some might expect to see here, much of this city has a vibrant, cosmopolitan character. The streets are alive with vendors selling everything from counterfeit sneakers to a colorful array of foods representing every corner of China and the world. I have even been able to rock climb here, at the Hengyi Gym, where a somewhat unsettling lack of safety regulation goes hand in hand with a warmly inviting atmosphere. Language barriers are easily dismantled by a common love for the sport.

If not an authoritarian regime that stifles freedom, then Western media would have us expect a distinct anti-

American sentiment at the very least. It is also to be expected that these feelings of animosity would be strongest in impoverished communities that have missed out on the benefits of China's economic growth. To counter this, I would like to tell a story that shattered any notion I had that I would experience hostility. During my first week here, two friends from my U of T class and I decided to go visit a slum that one of them had seen pictures of online. When we arrived, we found instead a brickyard and twisted pieces of sheet metal. Disheartened, we entered the ruins of what had once been a traditional Shanghainese neighborhood, and to our surprise found that in the midst of the rubble, tin-roof shacks



had been constructed. As we approached, we were again shocked to see that a number of people appeared to be living there, along with their dogs, chickens, and ducks. Two children were playing in a small area where the bricks had been cleared and began to giggle madly as we walked towards them, two tall white men and a Chinese girl in distinctly Western dress.

A woman came out of a door, and warmly welcomed us into her small home, where four people sat eating lunch. We began to talk, while the children ran around calling us da xiong ("big bear") and lao hu ("tiger"), with enormous grins plastered on their faces. We soon found ourselves smiling too, and enjoying

food that they offered us. It was rice with a number of spicy dishes from their home province of Anhui, one of the very poorest in China. They told us that they had come to Shanghai for work, but that they had difficulty selling dumplings in the scorching summer heat, and that sometimes they did not make enough money to eat well. It is impossible to describe how this made me, who has never had to struggle for a meal, feel about eating the food that they shared with us.

In those two short visits I learned much about the kindness and generosity that the poorest of the poor can share with complete strangers. In one lecture this week by a Fudan University professor, Bo Yan, she encouraged us to go visit the "real China", where we might gain an understanding of more than we ever could in a classroom. She could not have been more right.

**Interview: Jen-yii Liew**

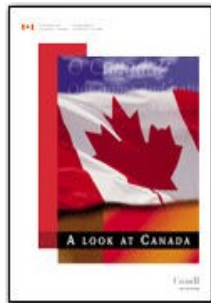
**Volunteer Teacher: Citizenship Classes**

I have been teaching citizenship classes at CCVT since May of this year to students at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.

I teach these classes once a week for around an hour and a half.

Most of my "students" are very eager to learn of the various components of the citizenship sections, which include geography and history of Canada. I must admit that I, personally have learned much.

There has been much interest in this class and I get asked all sorts of questions by my students.



**Monthly Recipe: Ethiopia**

**Lentil Salad**

- ½ lb Lentils
- ½ Cup shallots -- chopped
- 3 Fresh chilies -- thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp fresh basil -- chopped
- Salt -- to taste
- 3 tbsp wine vinegar
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 diced tomato (garnish)

Cook lentils until soft. Drain and rinse and place in bowl. Combine lentils remaining ingredients but tomato. Toss gently. Place in refrigerator. Stir occasionally while salad is chilling. Add garnish and serve. Enjoy!



*There will be a recipe from each of the countries that we assist every month.*

## The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture

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## Welcome to New Volunteers—April—July 2011

Adriana Wilson  
Alberto Munoz  
Aman Gill  
Andrea Lagios  
Andrea MacDonald  
Anmar Salman  
Arabhi Nirmalan-Nathan  
Arvin Arjomandi  
Azin Emami  
Caitlin Newberry  
Camille Dumond  
Caroline Duncan  
Casey Anderson  
Christine Savarey  
Claire Larson  
Deeqa Ahmed  
Emily Hemlow  
Emily Jones  
Fatimeah Alzubairi  
Fatima Khan  
Geordie Kenyon Sinclair  
Gregory Johannson  
Hodo Ahmed  
Ian Carpenter  
I-Chun Ho  
Iqura Tarannum

Jen-Yii Liew  
Jenny Christian  
Jonathan Ndururutse  
Julia Porter  
Kathleen Favila  
Khalid Mahdi  
Kim Becker  
Laurel Reid  
Lora Malile  
Manijeh Nouri  
Marysia Jekielek  
Meera Malik'  
Mena Bal  
Michael McClurg  
Miranda McKie  
Mita Patel\*  
Mohanarel Kharel\*  
Nadia Radovski  
Nadiejda Silvania  
Nathalie Sheppard  
Navneet Marwaha  
Negar Jafaari  
Neusa Saldanha  
Neveen Danial  
Nhooph Alareepi  
Pelin Gul

Renu Sethi  
Sahra Togone  
Sara Akrami  
Sarah Abdi  
Sarah Molyneaux  
Scott Kilian-Clark  
Simon Adam  
Simon Okurut  
Simone Brown  
Sophia Torkos  
Steven Theobald  
Susan Thomas  
Yasir Alobaidi  
Zenawit Birhany  
Zohra Ghaziyar  
Zohra Goawala



## WELCOME: FUTURE CCVT VOLUNTEERS

\* Henry Sparkman Zylstra, born April 6, 2011, 9lb 12 oz. Mother, Amanda Sparkman

\* Maya Sophia Malik Cassan, born 11:04am on Tues Jul 5<sup>th</sup> 2011, 6lbs 2 ounces. Mother Meera Malik.

## Welcome: Huda Bukhari and Alison Mills

I wish to welcome all new and existing CCVT volunteers, having taken over the Volunteer portfolio as of April this 2011. I am available to you at all times at:

hbukhari@ccvt.org or at 416-363-1066 extension 241.

Alison Mills, at amills@ccvt.org and at 416-363-1066 extension 246, has kindly been assisting with this program and is available as well in regards to any requests from all volunteers.

### Needed for the near future:

- Tutors at the Home-work Club, starting September 2011. Must have police check. (pickup form from Huda)
- Those interested in fundraising.
- Volunteers to be on the Volunteer Committee
- Volunteers to submit articles for publication in the CCVT Connection
- Volunteers to sit on the Volunteer Advisory Committee

### Job Postings at CCVT (details on website):

French language Settlement Counselor.

**Deadline July 30, 2011.**



CCVT Tamil Seniors performing at the June 26 Celebrations