

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

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The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.



United Way

Canada Citizenship and Immigration Canada / Citoyenneté et 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 CCVT Connection

Human Rights and Winter Fun

February 2011

## *Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani*

*By Jason Daniel Baker*

International human rights organizations have followed with interest the case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian woman convicted of adultery in May 2006 and received a sentence of 99 lashings carried out in front of her horrified seventeen year old son who was to watch.

Ashtiani was then sentenced to stoning in 2007 by the judge in her subsequent trial for the murder of her husband, a charge of which she was initially cleared. The brutal and grisly sentence has yet to be carried out but she remains incarcerated in what many see as an example of lack internationally recognized standards of jurisprudence.

In August of 2010, Ashtiani was forced under torture to confess, on Iranian television, to complicity in the murder of her husband. Her children were denied the right to visit and the home of her attorney was broken into and ransacked.

On September 8, 2010, European Parliament passed a resolution stating that 'a sentence of death by stoning can never be justified.' Initially Iranian authorities denied that Ashtiani was ever to be stoned but then made a public show of suspending the sentence that same month.

Imprisoned and severely tortured like countless other Iranian prisoners, her attorney, Javid Houtan Kian, has also been detained by Iranian authorities after they were each seen advocating on her behalf. Both were arrested on October 10, 2010.

News that Ashtiani has been freed in early December, now appear to be erroneous. Iran's Press TV website stated that Ashtiani was returned to her home with a film crew merely 'to recount details of killing her husband at the crime scene'. It appears to many, that the confession, among the others she has made claiming guilt in the murder, was improperly obtained.

As with many other cases which have been exposed, the barbaric tendencies of Iran's justice system, as well as the shadowy workings from which its verdicts are formulated, the government of Iran maintains that, whatever its excesses, are its own affair, despite breaching international law.

Iran, according to Amnesty International, ranked second in the world in 2009 in total number of state performed executions with 388, mostly by hanging. Only China carried out more death sentences.



**A Letter sent to the Right Honorable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada , from CCVT Executive Director Mulugeta Abai urging the Canadian Government to speak out against executions in Iran.**

The Right Honorable Stephen Joseph Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Langevin Block, 80 Wellington Street,  
Ottawa, ON. K1A 0A2

May 14, 2010

Dear Right Honourable Harper,

The Canadian Centre for the Victims of Torture is highly concerned over increasing number of executions in different countries around the world especially Iran.

It is a matter of pride that Canada is among the countries that have abolished death penalty in law or in practice. This is not, however, enough when we have a global picture of this extreme type of cruel punishment. It is unfortunate that a large number of people are being killed through judicial system around the world and a lot more are awaiting their fate in death cells particularly in countries with most of the executions like China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the USA.

According to the data collected by our sister agency Amnesty International, Iran has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. To date in 2010, over 80 people were executed in Iran, while 388 executions took place in 2009, which were over half of the total 714 people received death sentence around the world.

Most of the people who are sentenced to death in Iran are often accused of "enmity against God", a term used for the people who oppose religious tyranny of the Iranian fanatical regime. In a most recent incident, four political activists and an Iranian civilian were hanged on Sunday, May 13, 2010, at Evin prison in Tehran and among them was a woman and a prestigious young rural teacher. According to media reports, the victims have never been given opportunity of a fair trial and three of the victims were tortured to extract their confessions. They were executed even in violation of Iranian law which requires authorities to notify to the lawyers of the accused well before execution.

The Iranian authorities use different methods to execute people. Most cruel among them is execution by stoning. According to Amnesty International figures there are at least 11 individuals at risk of execution by stoning. The Iran's Penal Code imposes execution by stoning for "adultery while being married".

The agony of waiting in death row is alarming across the globe. Over 3,000 Afghans are presently waiting for implementation of their death sentence. The whole process of trial, conviction and implementation of capital punishment is torturous. It leaves traumatizing scars on the innocent members of the family of executed persons as well.

The methods of implementation of capital punishment (lethal injections, firing squads, hanging, stoning, beheading, etc.) are all cruel, degrading and inhuman prohibited under the article 5 of the UN Declaration of Human rights, article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 16 of the UN Convention against Torture, and Section 12 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.

Implementation of the death penalty in public, prevalent under some tyrannical governments, is extremely demeaning. It spreads a culture of revenge among the grassroot population or makes them feel intimidated and impotent. It produces a culture of extreme cruelty that can act as a green signal to the acceptance of

torture at the public level. The law-sanctioned violence resulting from capital punishment perpetuates the culture of violence itself.

Furthermore, implementation of death penalty requires an administrative apparatus – hangman, firing squad, gallows, execution site, etc. – all reminisces of our barbarous antiquity. It takes away our compassion and degrades enactors to the rank of death pawns. No decent human person wishes to be an executioner at any circumstances and for any cause whatsoever. As far as the CCVT is concerned, we are for life, not for death; we are for healing not killing.

We would also like to bring to your respected attention the fact that death penalty does remove the main witness to ghoulish tortures perpetrated against condemned persons before death. In case of political prisoners, it is often preceded by such ghoulish tortures as rape, mutilations, extracting victims' blood, etc. Under tyrannical regimes, death penalty can be used as an excuse to get rid of 'undesirable' personalities. Those who decide to take the life of another human being are positioning themselves on the same level as that of the person whom they sentence to death.

Apart from infliction of physical pain, capital punishment is combined with mental, psychological and emotional torment. Prolonged suffering of a prisoner under the cruel and inhuman condition of death row is nothing less than a severe torture. The phenomenon of death row may drag the victims to the point of paranoia and make them irreversibly incompetent to face the death sentence. Execution of an incompetent condemned person is act of cruelty.

Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has failed to go to the extent of abolishing death penalty. It has, however, subjected its use under certain conditions and has prohibited its use against children. Death penalty is prohibited under Second Optional Protocol to the above Covenant and is outlawed in Europe according to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The numbers of countries that have abolished death penalty are in the rise and international law is gradually moving towards abolition of death Penalty. So far, 72 countries have acceded to the Second Optional Protocol to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Canada is a great support of this marvelous piece of international law. The date of our ratification goes back to November 25, 1995. It speaks to the Canadian obligation as well as our global leadership to encourage other states to ratify the Optional Protocol.

Finally, you are well aware of the fact that life is the most sacred gift that no one can take it from us. The right to life is guaranteed under the Article 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Death penalty is prevalent in countries where there is no respect for life and the fundamental rights of humankind are at stake.

Canada has always remained at the forefront to protect human rights on its soil and around the world. In the present situation, the greatest responsibility is on the shoulder of Canada to play its global leadership role to ensure respect for the basic human rights. The cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment of death penalty should be erased from the surface of the globe. The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) strongly expects your government to protect Canadian values and play a leading role in this respect.

**With best wishes and hope for future cooperation,**

Yours sincerely,

**Mulugeta Abai**  
**Executive Director**

## Child Soldiers by Anne Pringle

Child soldiers. The term seems as though it should be fabricated. How can a child be a soldier? Unfortunately, it is quite real and far too common. Around the world, children are used to fight civil and international wars, fighting in battles for which they



are too young to understand the context and unable to fully form their opinion on who and what, if anything, they are fighting for and against. Currently there are an estimated 250,000 children acting as instruments of war (War Child). These boys and girls are brainwashed, beaten and drugged into becoming mindless fighting machines. Now the question remains, how can we stop the use of child soldiers and prevent the ongoing recruitment?

On the eve of the International Human Rights day, I sat in an auditorium at U of T filled with over 400 people to engage in a thought provoking evening where the tragic issue of child soldiers was discussed. Romeo Dallaire was present to launch his new initiative Zero Force: Even One Child is Too Many. Dallaire charismatically engaged with the audience, urging youth to take steps, to reach out, to be part of a movement to stop the use of child soldiers. After all, it is our peers who are the victims.

Accounts from former child soldiers like Emmanuel Jal's War Child website, book and documentary highlights and personalizes the account of the use of child soldiers. Mr. Jal was present at the event and was both captivating and poised in the telling of his journey and how he overcame the horrific experience imposed on him as a child by adults. Mr. Jal rapped and danced on stage and demonstrated a true sense of character and resilience. Despite being a child soldier for years he has a beautiful outlook on life. He moved with more freedom than any other speaker on stage that night and spoke to the tune of freedom and peace.

While still shocking and hard to believe, information on this extreme abuse of power has at times reduced these real, live children to mere statistics here in North America. By reducing the amount of children to numbers we 'other' the individual, making it easier to accept the blow of the horrors each child faces. Furthermore, by reducing children to statistics we dehumanize, and by that same token assume that some children are more human than other. This begs the question what criteria do we use to determine the amount of humanity? Should it not be implicit that each human is equal in his or her humanity?

The issue of child soldiers penetrates much deeper than it appears. They are used as instruments in war, to stop the use of child soldiers we must also engage in process to put an end to vicious wars. Children are used as they are the most readily available and cheapest way for armies to conduct themselves. The lives of children are deemed expendable. The use of children has further implications on those fighting against these armies, as how does one combat a child? Do you treat the child as if they are an adult? Do you stand back and allow them to attack? At what age does a child soldier cease to become a child? If they were recruited at a young age do they not then remain a child soldier the entire time in which they are engaged in the act of fighting?

Beyond the issue of how to interact with child soldiers, comes rehabilitation. Instead of focusing solely on the numbers how can we as individuals inform ourselves to engage on the daily atrocities these children face, the horror of which would force no other than their release and rehabilitation.

For more information on and solutions for the use of child soldiers go to the War Child website <http://www.warchild.ca/> or Romeo Dallaire's Zero Force Initiative and how you can get involved and learn more.

## 2010 Annual General Meeting and Holiday Party



**Knits for Sale at Holiday Party**

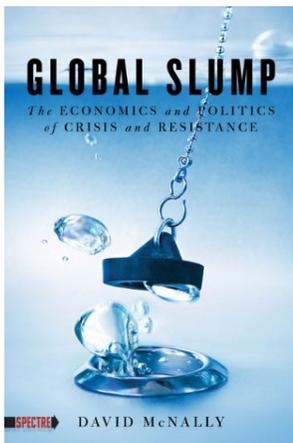
CCVT was pleased to host over 200 clients, staff, board members and volunteers at the **2010 Annual CCVT General Meeting and Holiday Party** Sunday Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> at the Bickford Centre. The event included the election of new board members, a delicious meal featuring food from all over the world, gifts for the kids and dancing. CCVT clients were also happy to display and sell the handmade crafts, jewelry and clothing. Thank you to everyone who donated food, gifts and their time to make this event a success. Hundreds of gifts generously donated in part by the CHUM City Christmas Wish and volunteers were lovingly wrapped by volunteers and brought smiles to the faces of the children.



*Left:* Volunteer and staff serving food to guests.  
*Right:* Volunteers and staff handing out holiday gifts.



## Featured Read:



### **GLOBAL SLUMP:** the ECONOMICS and POLITICS of CRISIS and RESISTANCE

~David McNally

“Investigating the global financial meltdown as the first systemic crisis of the neoliberal stage of capitalism, this analysis argues that—far from having ended—the crisis has ushered in a period of worldwide economic and political turbulence.”

#### *About the Author*

David McNally is a professor of political science at York University, Toronto. He is the author of *Against the Market*, *Another World is Possible*, and *Political Economy and the Rise of Capitalism*. He lives in Toronto.

### Featured Recipe– Moussaka (Sudanese)

- 2-3 eggplant
- 2 yellow onions
- 1 green bell pepper
- 1/4 to 1/2 pound minced meat
- 1 medium sized can of diced tomatoes
- 1-2 cloves garlic
- Parmesan cheese
- Spices to taste - salt, pepper and coriander
- Oil
- 3 tomatoes -beefsteak tomatoes are best

Fry eggplant after slicing into ½ inch slices  
Place on kitchen towels to drain excess oil  
Slice 1 yellow onion and bell pepper into rings  
Dice and sautee one onion and garlic

Add minced meat, diced tomatoes and spices  
one cup water when water in meat has nearly dried  
Cook till done - should have some sauce left in it

In baking dish layer eggplant, meat, onion & bell pepper in alternate layers with sprinkles of parmesan cheese in between

On topmost layer place slices of tomato and sprinkling of cheese. Bake uncovered till done - 30 to 45 min.



and

#### **For vegetarians:**

In small pot heat 2 tablespoons of oil (any kind), add tomato paste/diced tomatoes, stir, Add spices, mix Add two cups of water, bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes. Layer vegetables as above and add sauce -don't over saturate. Bake.

*Serve with white basmati rice - and a green salad*

**DO YOU HAVE** a story, poem, recipe, a review, picture or anything else you would like to contribute? We would love to **PUBLISH** it. Drop us a line at [connectCCVT@gmail.com](mailto:connectCCVT@gmail.com)

## ***Haiti: A Year After the Earthquake. Rebuilding From Within***

*By Anne Pringle*

January 12th, 2011 marked the one year anniversary of the 7.0 earthquake that shook Haiti, causing immeasurable damage. We know the statistics, and they continue to overwhelm. In a mere 35 seconds over 300,000 people died, 4,000 individuals became amputees and at least 1,150 refugee camps persist in Port-au-Prince alone, squeezed into any public space, including medians that divide the highway leading out of the city. Only 5 percent of the rubble has been removed, and with the squalid conditions in the tent camps the spread of cholera has become rampant.

Beyond the misery caused by the earthquake the first round of presidential elections which took place November 28, 2010 were wrought with allegations of fraud and ballot stuffing. Outgoing President Rene Preval is rallying behind his handpicked candidate Jude Celestine and plans to continue to stay in office beyond his term. The election, widely criticized by the international community and protested by many Haitians, is only adding insult to injury to the ravaged country. The elections are so vital to the country's rebuilding process as the winner will in essence 'inherit' the foreign aid money, deciding the course the country will take.

To further complicate the already fragile political terrain, Jean-Claude Duvalier— aka 'Baby Doc' returned to Haiti on Sunday after fleeing the country in 1986 following a popular revolt. Duvalier's 15 year rule, where he declared himself President for life, as predecessor to his father 'Papa Doc' was marked by human rights abuses, corruption, political repression and intimidation. While some in Haiti celebrated his return, human rights advocates are demanding he be held accountable by law.

With all the negativity, it is easy to look only to the strife and misery, yet there has been change, and slow moving as it may be, hope remains. From an outsiders perspective to look only to the stats of the earthquake reduces the human element. By doing so we diminish the importance of each individual life that has been affected by the devastating earthquake. In addition, by simply looking at Haiti in term to before and after the earthquake is to gloss over an incredible and often tumultuous but also equally triumphant history that is the story of Haiti.

Within the country there continue to be groups and people rallying together to create change. In many of the tent cities committees have been formed advocating for the rights of the internally displaced refugees. The committees are seeking ways to find new housing grounds, demand access to water and sanitation and protect women from rampant sexual attacks which have spread through the camps. Mario Joseph of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti has been advocating for the rights of the poor since 1996. Since the earthquake Mr. Joseph has been integral to the creation of these committees within the tent cities. Over the past year Mr. Joseph has called out for solidarity, wishing for international respect for the country.

Many international agencies, countries and NGOs are working in Haiti as we speak, and many are truly doing a good job. But there are many internal organizations which are also working to create the change needed and deserve to be recognized. An excellent example of this is the FAD: Fonds D'Actions Pour le Développement. A registered non-profit based in Haiti since 2005 have come together each week to run a program focused on social education, life skills and creative activities for Cite Soleil and Bas Delmas, some of the poorest neighborhoods in our country. They are a grassroots organization run by youth for youth and recently finished a fundraising campaign to build a community center. These are just two examples of work being done within Haiti, many more exist and deserve the same kind of recognition, respect and solidarity as the international NGOs working in Haiti.



## **Community Events and Winter Fun in Toronto**

***Dufferin Rink has two skating pads.***

### **About Skating at Dufferin Park**

- ◇ Dufferin Rink has two rink pads: One for Shinny Hockey everyday except Sunday , the other for Pleasure Skating all day everyday.
- ◇ Enjoy watching kids skating from the gallery
- ◇ If you don't have your own skates, you can borrow a pair.



For more information: [www.dufferinpark.ca](http://www.dufferinpark.ca)

**Front Row Centre Events presents the Great Digital Film Festival. Presenting classic and popular films shown in a digital format on the big screen.**

The Great Digital Film Festival 2011 will take place February 4 – 10, 2011 in the following cities: Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Check out the films and playtimes at:  
<http://www.cineplex.com/Events/DigitalFilmFest/Home.aspx>

### **Play OWARE**

Play one of the world's oldest board game. Brush up on your skills in preparation for 2011 Toronto International OWARE Tournament. Register for the tournament at [owarecanada@gmail.com](mailto:owarecanada@gmail.com). Register to play Oware at York Woods Library in person or call 416-395-5980.

Upcoming Dates: at York Woods from 2:00pm-4:00pm  
Sat. Jan. 29, Sat. Feb. 12., Sat. Feb. 19., Sat. Mar. 12., Sat. Mar. 26.



## **Black History Month**

### **BLACK HISTORY MONTH: 2011**

Black History Month is a month set aside to learn, honour, and celebrate the achievements of black men and women throughout history. Since its inception, Black History Month has always been celebrated in February. Find out how Black History Month originated, why February was chosen, and what the annual theme for Black History Month is for this year. For more information and a list of events in Toronto go to:

<http://www.toronto.ca/blackhistory/index.htm>

## ***Upcoming Volunteer Activities and Events:***

### **Tax Preparation Workshop and CCVT Tax Clinic– February 24th at 6:00pm at CCVT at 194 Jarvis Street**

CCVT volunteers will be assisting CCVT clients to file their tax returns again this year. You do not need to be a chartered accountant to help out. CCVT will be hosting a short workshop February 24th at 6:00 pm at the 194 Jarvis location to give you all the information you need to be able to assist as a tax clinic volunteers.

Starting Feb. 28 and throughout the month of March CCVT is looking for volunteers who are willing to put aside some time to help prepare tax returns. If you are interested in the workshop and or willing to volunteer your time please contact Angela at [awoodcock@ccvt.org](mailto:awoodcock@ccvt.org) or 416 363 1066 X 222 to register.

### **Orientation for New Volunteers- Thursday March 3 at 6:00pm**

CCVT will be hosting an orientation for all new volunteers. This orientation is a chance for new volunteers to meet one another, find out more about the work here at the Centre and a chance to learn more about the rewarding volunteer opportunities at CCVT.

### **Homework Club Volunteers Needed**

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) is gearing up for another semester of the Homework Club. The Homework Club is a vital program offered by CCVT to youth whose lives have been affected by torture and or war. We are looking for volunteers to assist youth between the ages of 6-13 with their homework. Many of the youth are new comers to Canada, and English may or may not be the first language or spoken in the home. The Homework Club provides an opportunity for one on one tutoring and is important in achieving academic success for many.

#### ***Homework Club details:***

Start Date: As soon as possible

Days: Tues- Wed-Thurs

Time: 4:00-5:30

Location: here at the CCVT office at 194 Jarvis Street

We are asking for a commitment of least one evening per week if possible to aid with the organization and consistency of the program.



Helping Survivors of Torture Since 1977

## CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

194 Jarvis St. 2nd Floor  
Toronto, ON, M5B2B7  
CANADA

Phone: 416-363-1066  
Fax: 416-363-2122  
E-mail: mabai@ccvt.org  
Website: www.ccvt.org

If you are no longer a volunteer at CCVT or do not want to receive the newsletter, please contact Angela Woodcock at 416-363-1066 ext. 22. If you would prefer to receive the newsletter by e-mail, please write to Angela at [awoodcock@ccvt.org](mailto:awoodcock@ccvt.org) from the account to which you want the newsletter to be sent.

# Welcome to CCVT

## New Volunteers

Adam Diamond  
Ali Jafri  
Andrew Gray  
Ann Davidson  
Anne Cassidy  
Carol Ward  
Carrie Kawahatsu  
Chris Yarnell  
Christina Rettig  
Christine Rickards  
Donna Nicoloff  
Emily Hostland  
Euna Son  
Gisele Gauthier  
Grace Willis  
Jayda Bubeloff  
Jennifer Lemanski  
Jennifer Renzulli  
John Sakeris  
Josh Tobe



Kathryn Teeluck  
Katy Smali  
Khozema Mansure  
Louise Eastman  
Mandekh Hussein  
Mehga Suri  
Michelle Dadachanji  
Monica Reilly  
Nadia Latifi  
Nelufer Lala  
Nelufur  
Nishayel Williams  
Peter Elliott  
Ramesh Kumar Prasi  
Rauel Shaulov  
Ruslana Sikorska  
Udi Blankstein  
Vanessa Herce  
Veronica McNamee

**"Unselfish and noble actions are the most radiant pages in the biography of souls" ~David Thomas**

**Befrienders:** Looking for something a little different to do each week? Each month we will feature a new spot to visit in the city.

### ***Spend the day in Havana!***

Every Sunday, Lula offers a salsa brunch party featuring live music by Luis Mario Ochoa's Traditional Cuban Quartet and a beginner salsa lesson by Miko Sobreira. The \$25 cover includes buffet brunch, coffee, dance lesson, live music, and tax. Kids 12 and under are free. Seatings at 11am and 1 pm. Born, raised and educated in Havana, Cuba, Luis Mario Ochoa is an accomplished singer, guitarist, composer, arranger, educator and bandleader.

<http://www.lulalounge.ca/>



## **The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture**

**Is now providing services in 3 locations!**

Downtown Toronto Location:

194 Jarvis Street, 2nd floor

Toronto ON, M5B 2B7

Tel: 416 363 1066

Fax: 416 363 2122

E-mail: [mabai@ccvt.org](mailto:mabai@ccvt.org)

<http://ccvt.org>

Scarborough Location:

2425 Eglinton Avenue

Scarborough, ON

M1K 5G8

Tel: 416 750 3045

Fax: 416 750 4990

E-mail: [mabai@ccvt.org](mailto:mabai@ccvt.org)

<http://ccvt.org>

The Hub at Victoria Park:

1527 Victoria Park Avenue, 2nd Floor

Toronto ON, M5B 2B7

Tel: 647 847 2334 - Teresa Dremetsikas

Tel: 647 847 2335 - Mohamed Ahmed

Tel: 647 847 2336 - Gabriela Agatiello

Fax: 647 847 2339

<http://ccvt.org>