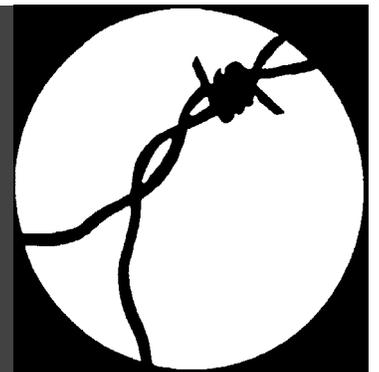


Photos of seated women and burned house courtesy of AllAfrica.com (website: www.allafrica.com)
Photo of children courtesy of Zoie Rutledge

First Light



A Quarterly Publication of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT)

Spring/Summer 2001

First Light, which is published semi-annually, is intended to inform the interested reader about torture, its effects and what we can do in aiding survivors to overcome their experience of torture and war. CCVT views itself as part of a larger global community and is committed to the struggle for human rights, justice and the end of the practice of torture.

We chose to call this publication *First Light* because as the first light before true dawn, it symbolizes the first ray of hope for survivors of torture.

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We need your words!

We welcome your submissions to this publication. Send your writing to:
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Mandate

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.

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Africa: A Continent in Turmoil

**By
Mulugeta Abai**

Africa is an extremely heterogeneous continent, and human rights violations come in many forms as well. From genocide, slavery, mass disappearances and torture, to denial of freedom of speech or of the press, there is little that will not be found in Africa. Destructive conflicts have turned Africa, into a continent unable to turn its strength of diversity into opportunities for development.

Africa is a continent in turmoil. It is a ravaged by repression, social violence, armed conflict, poverty and forced displacement. This has resulted in massive displacement, disappearance, torture, extra judicial execution, and imprisonment. Though rich in resources, the population is also exposed to hunger. It is estimated that more than 20 million Africans are forcibly displaced from their homes and more than five million African men women and children are refugees. This is one-third of the total world population of world refugees.

In the past 15 years, millions of Africans have lost their lives in wars. Many have died in famines brought about by the actions of governments and armed opponents. Many others have been killed indiscriminately or have been victims of extra judicial executions. It is to avoid this fate that millions more have fled. Every individual refugee or internally displaced person is the consequence of a failure to respect or protect human rights by governments in Africa. This is not accidental. It results from political and military decisions, especially in the wars that are currently raging in parts of Africa, and from high levels of repression and sustained annihilation of the population at large.

Sudan has been engaged in a civil war for the past 17 years, which has resulted in nearly 2 million deaths from war related famine and disease. Four million (nearly 80%) of the Southern Sudanese population has been forced to flee their home at one time or another. (2) Sudan's civil war is the longest ongoing war in the world. There has also been a resurgence in slavery since the war erupted in 1983. Both the previous and current government alike have armed tribal militias that their Dinka neighbors as a form of counterinsurgency proxy warfare, because the Dinkas are believed to be supporters of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Raiders loot and burn cattle and take women and children to work as forced unpaid labour in their households and fields or to sell them off. Many are beaten and sexually abused and some girls have been subjected to female genital mutilation.

The history of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been characterized by instability, conflict, dictatorship and massive plunder of its resources. Despite being endowed with vast mineral resources and being potentially one of the richest countries in the world, it is in fact one of the poorest. The country has been grossly mismanaged by the various rulers it has had the misfortune to be saddled with since colonial times.

The history of Liberia is a catalogue of brutal abuses, the full extent of which may never be known. The conflict in Liberia has been marked by a blatant disregard for international human rights and humanitarian standards by all parties. The population has been terrorized, captives have been mutilated and their body parts scattered throughout the villages.

Civil war between the Angolan government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola has raged almost non-stop since 1975. The death toll is estimated at well over a million, while hundreds of thousands are displaced or starving.

Burundi is currently in the grip of a bitter civil war. Since 1993, a persistent cycle of ethnic violence and impunity has led to over half a million displaced and more than 200,000 dead out of a total population of 5.5 million. In Chad, rebel forces have battled government troops since 1998. In Rwanda as many as one million people were murdered in the 1994 genocide. In the months before the outbreak of genocidal violence in Rwanda, the international community was repeatedly urged by senior UN human rights experts to take action to protect civilians from massacres. The appeals were not heeded. Far from intervening to prevent the calamity, UN forces were withdrawn. In Nigeria, the introduction of the Islamic sharia code in some states of the country has proved a flash point for violence, leaving more than 2,000 dead. In Senegal separatists have been conducting an open rebellion for 18 years. Sierra Leone is devastated by civil war, with massacres and other atrocities occurring regularly. Somalia has been in conflict since 1991, carved up among clan warlords. Ethiopia and Eritrea fought two year war which began over a border dispute and has left tens of thousands dead and more than a million homeless. In Kenya human rights violations have been a constant feature of the government who has responded to calls for political liberalization and the rule of law with heavy-handed brutality, all the while making empty promises to bring about change.

In almost all African countries torture, extra judicial execution, disappearance, secret detention, and rape is widely practiced either by rebel groups, the government in power or by both. This has created a generation of traumatized youth, terrified communities, and in the process has created a culture of fear.

The origins of the conflicts are manifold and complex, rooted in international and national arenas, and encompassing economic, political, cultural and social parameters. Among the international factors, particularly noteworthy are the consequences derived from the end of Cold War and its aftermath, as well as the liberalization of the world economy-which have generated a sense of political and economic insecurity.

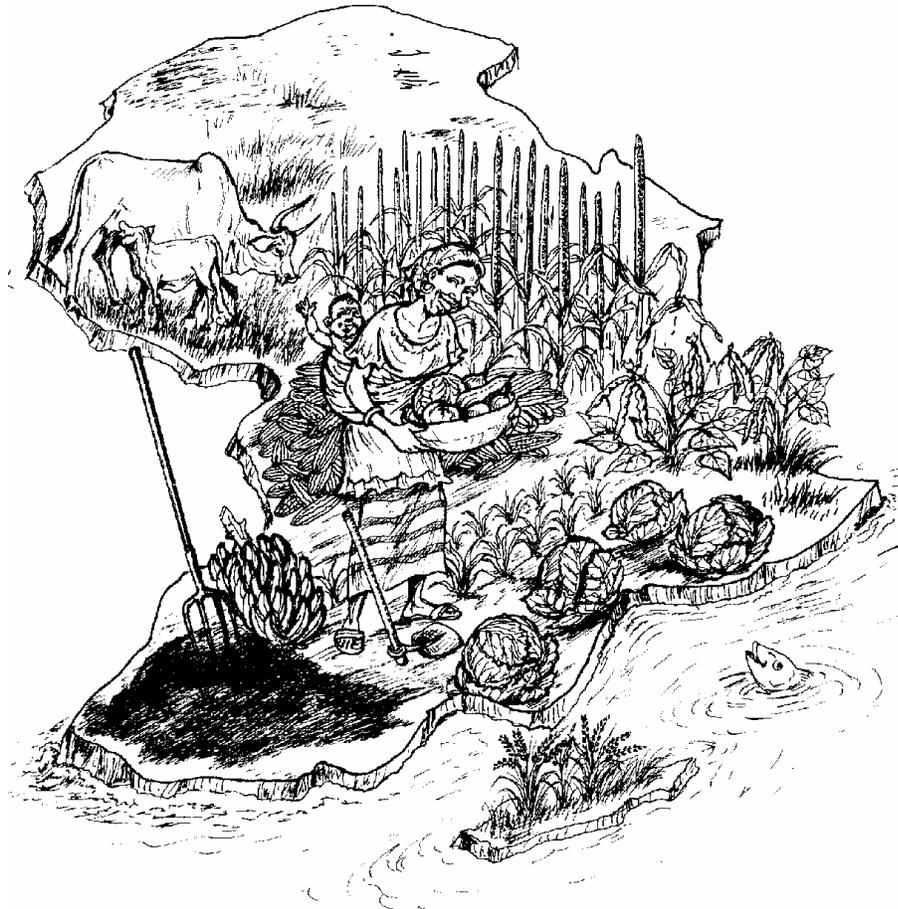
During the Cold War the ideological confrontation between East and West placed a premium on maintaining order and stability among friendly states and allies. Undemocratic and oppressive regimes were supported and sustained by competing superpowers in the name of their broader goals but, when the cold war ended, Africa was left to fend for itself.

While not underestimating the international aspects of the African conflicts, internal factors have also been important factors in igniting conflicts and these conflicts are directly related to the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of independence and the multi-ethnic composition of the independent states. What emerges from these factors and is often cited as cause is “governance”, which includes exclusion (real or perceived) from the political process for reasons of personal, ethnic or value difference, lack of socio-political unity, lack of access to national institutions of governance, reliance on a centralized and highly personalized form of governance, inequality and discrimination. As long as political leaders continue to demand personal loyalty and block institutional development needed for a democratic culture, including mechanisms for conflict resolution and for peaceful transfer of power, the fate of Africa and Africans will remain bleak, marred by violence, repression, torture, and extra judicial executions.

While many of the causes may be historical in nature, the problems are compounded by the quality of leadership and lack of political alternatives. There is a general agreement in most African countries that coups must end, corruption must be rooted out, and economies must be restored. There is also agreement that a democratic government is a prerequisite for the observance of the rule of law and human rights. But a government cannot be democratic unless it is, in the first place, legitimate. To promote and safe-

guard legitimate government, different forms of checks and balances are needed. The first guarantee must, of course, be contained in the government body itself. Democracy also should not be regarded as an easy panacea for all the problems and challenges that face Africa – certainly not the narrow conception of democracy which some people understand to mean simply the periodic ritual of going to the polls and casting a vote for a party or political group. Reforms to improve the governance are essential, both for sustainable economic growth and political stability. Conflicts are a result of violations of human rights, and in conflict situations violations of human rights occur on a larger scale. The situation is unacceptable as no reason could justify the violation of basic rights of the people. Clearly, governments must exert more effort to address the current problems, which are quite complex and are of various dimensions, including those of a political, socio-economic and legal nature. African leaders and the elites must learn to practice the politics of inclusion and build popularly based political processes that ensure the participation of Africans in all aspects of governance and development. Africans must strive to overcome the scourge of conflicts, which has resulted in unbelievable pain and suffering, death and destruction. Governments should act on their responsibilities under international law to prevent human rights abuses. This is particularly important in ensuring the protection of vulnerable groups such as women and children from forceful abduction, sexual assault and exploitation.

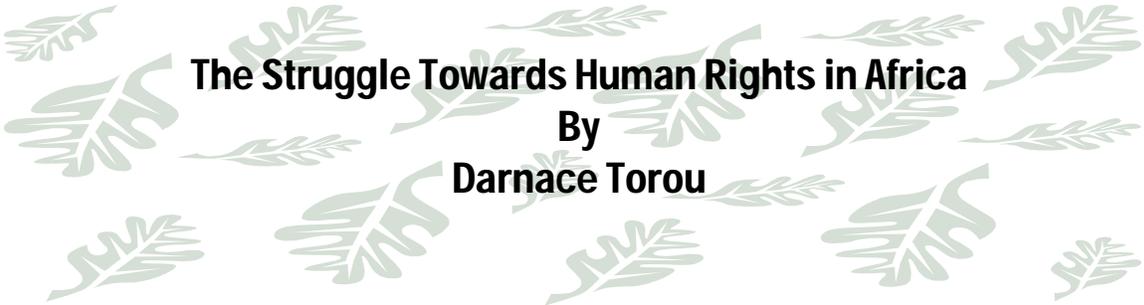
Mulugeta Abai is the Executive Director at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.



"Vision"

Artist: Lamine Dramé

Source: Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN)



The Struggle Towards Human Rights in Africa

By Darnace Torou

Africa makes headlines with events related to wars, either internal or interstate, with all the consequences in terms of refugees, coup d'États, rigged elections, famines, and diseases. All these elements violate the basic human rights of peoples in the African continent.

Africa is a continent of 30.3 million square kilometers and almost 700 million inhabitants. Since independence, one can speak of 54 African states, each one having its own legacy and its own internal dynamic. Human rights exist in society as represented by governments and its officials, elected or not.

When the new African states emerged from colonialism from the mid fifties to the mid sixties, hopes were high that finally, the era of liberty has come. For example, at the All African Peoples Conference in 1958, Kenyan trade union leader Tom Boya* stated “civilized or uncivilized, we the African States deserve a government of our own choice. Let us make our own mistakes.” He was subsequently assassinated in 1969. Addressing the UNGA in 1961, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah**, recalling the days of imperialism, exploitation and degradation said “These days are gone forever – and now...I am speaking with the voice of freedom proclaiming to the world the dawn of a new era...”

Background

The newly independent African states inherited the colonial states’ structures that were geared to expanding export production and taxable primary crops and minerals. For political support, the new leaders had to rely on the same mechanisms: The constitutions were modeled after those of the West.

The main objectives of the leaders were to shape the nation. One of the consequences of the colonial system was putting together various peoples who had little in common with each other (lack of inter-communal coherence), and maintaining control through policies of divide and conquer. The pillars of the Organization of the African Unity Charter were the intangibility of borders, and the non-interference in internal affairs of member States.***

In the mid 1960’s and 1970’s, the system became unstable and centralized bureaucratic regimes were created in which the all-powerful President, with the help of the bureaucracy, police and the army, controlled all the machinery.

The new African states were born during the worst period of the Cold War: the West generally supported any president who was anti-communist; issues of competency were left aside. (Example : in the former Zaire, support given to Jonas Savimbi in Angola against the Marxist regime since 1975, etc.)

In most cases, the African states failed to realize the desirable connection between the people and the State because, again in most cases, they behaved exactly like the colonial powers. The negation of human rights was not effected by force, but through instrumentalism and through legislation. As a result, many draconian laws were promulgated (or kept): for example, emergency regulations, detention without trials, provisions of compulsory labour, and proscription of public meetings. In other words, the colonial modus operandi was well suited for post-independence governance.

Consequently, right from the beginning, most of the African Administrations failed to:

Inspire loyalty in the citizenry

Produce a political class with integrity

Inculcate in the military, police and the security forces an understanding of their proper role in society

There were also external factors: the Cold War, economic interests, etc.

The General Causes of Human Rights Abuses

According to the first comprehensive OAU report on 1999, some of the causes of human rights abuses included:

Racism (tribalism, ethnicism), migration

Post-colonialism

Poverty

Ignorance

Religious intolerance

Monopoly of power

Mismanagement

Lack of judicial and press autonomy

Border conflicts

Economic, cultural and political rights are badly affected by these elements.

Extent of poverty: 2/3 of the entire population of Africa lives in absolute poverty, on one dollar a day.

Education: the adult illiteracy rate is almost 50% in Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Liberia and the Sudan, to give a few examples. Women's illiteracy reaches levels of 60%.

Health: Africa's statistics on health care are grim – life expectancy in many countries range between 41 and 69, infant mortality between 23 to 169 per 1000 live births. Malaria, cholera and meningitis are still destroying large portions of the population. Today, AIDS is taking a heavy toll: 24 million Africans are infected with the virus as of October 31, 2000 and nearly all will die before 2010. Each day, 6,000 Africans die of AIDS and an additional 11,000 are infected.

Brain drain: created by a conjunction of negative factors

Let us also add the culture of impunity that is well developed in African States until recently – perpetrators often go unpunished for reasons of national unity, reconciliation, etc.

The Legal Frame of Human Rights in Africa

At the international level, several instruments have been adopted to give effect to the demands made in the name of human rights. The most important are:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty

These constitute the International Bill of Human Rights added to the United Nations Charter.

Regional organizations were encouraged to develop their own human rights regimes. After Europe in 1950 and the Americas in 1969, Africa adopted its own Charter on Human and Peoples Rights in 1981. It is also called the **Banjul Charter** (Banjul is the capital of Gambia), which entered into force on October 21, 1986.

The African Charter makes a significant contribution to the human rights body; the most notable being the “three generations of rights” including the concepts of people’s rights and the imposition of duties on individuals. Furthermore, the Charter added ethnicity to the prohibited grounds of differentiation. This provision intended to reflect the central importance of ethnicity in Africa.

The African Charter was adopted in 1981, at a time when no African state except for Gambia, Senegal and Botswana could be considered a democracy. The Charter was certainly important because it represented an acknowledgement by African states that human rights had become an inescapable element in the international landscape and it represented an effort to adapt international human rights standards to the specificities of the African context.

In 1987, as a result of the Charter entering in to force in 1986, the African Commission of Human and Peoples’ Rights began its continental oversight role for human rights. Finally, in June 1998, the African states adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on the Establishment of an African Human Rights Court.

However, in spite of this progress, the human rights situation in the African states has remained bleak for the last 15 years. In June 1999 the then-UNESCO Director General expressed his deep concern over the ever-increasing number of African countries affected by war and associated with human rights abuses. Amnesty International reported that 24 states had serious, widespread human rights violations and that armed conflicts, social and political unrest continued, leading to appalling human rights abuses throughout the continent.

In May 2000, UNHCR estimated that there were about 3.5 million refugees in Africa, 80% of them women and children under the age of 5 (1998). In 1999, Human Rights Watch indicated that this population had increased to 6.3 million and that the top ten producers of refugees in the world were African (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan).

On October 20, 2000, to mark the launching of the Campaign Against Torture in the African regions, Amnesty International said that torture is widespread across Africa in a variety of different contexts: in police stations, on the street, in the home and in conflict zones. According to the 2000 Annual Report:

Confirmed or possible extrajudicial executions were carried out in 17 countries in the region in 1999

People “disappeared” or remained “disappeared” in 10 countries

Confirmed prisoners of conscience were held in 15 countries

Political prisoners received unfair trials in 15 countries

People were arbitrarily arrested and detained without charge or trial in 24 countries

Executions were carried out in 6 countries

Prisoners were under sentence of death in 18 countries

Armed opposition groups committed serious human rights abuses such as deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians, torture and hostage taking in 18 countries

The Human Rights Movement in Africa

African human rights organizations vary enormously in their origin, history, structure and objectives. They grow in a very challenging context although, in South Africa for example, one such organization has existed since 1955. For decades, individuals, generally lawyers, journalists, teachers, trade unionists, members of religious organizations (mostly within churches) have monitored and reported human rights violations, often in very hazardous circumstances. Some organizations officially exist with different mandates, but do human rights activities.

Amnesty International has been on the African scene for over 30 years. Its main focus has been on the release of prisoners of conscience, the abolition of the death penalty and an end to torture. Amnesty and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have several sub regional offices in Africa, but their work has not been easy because the majority of African governments considered the organizations to be alien.

Most NGO's in Africa began to mushroom in the 1980's, with stated objectives towards social justice and the rights of the individual (Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe), with the Law Societies and Catholic Peace and Justice Commissions playing a great role in many countries. In many cases, local activities undertaken by grassroots groups to face the adversarial economic context gave birth to a vibrant civil society: craft centres, rural credit unions, farmers' associations, community-run skill development centres, community banks, cooperatives, community-financed schools, etc. But these are almost children of necessity, created to fill the gap left by the failure of the state.

By mid 1999, and according to the African Directory of Human Rights Organizations, a cooperative effort of Human Rights Internet in Ottawa and the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, 750 NGO's existed in 53 African countries, concerned with human rights and social justice.

- 250 have a broad generalized concern for all human rights, with almost 100 located in South Africa;

- 200 are either women's organizations or have specific concerns for women's rights as human rights;

- 70 are looking after the rights of children;

- The remainder share legal orientations, peace and non-violence or are affiliated to a church or to another religious body.

By comparison, in 1989, only 125 human rights organizations existed in 33 countries, and they had limited freedom.

The international context in the early 1990's was favourable to the growth of human rights organizations in Africa. It included:

- The fall of the Berlin Wall

- The collapse of the Soviet Union

- The freeing of Nelson Mandela (who took the lead against human rights abuses. For example, South Africa initiated the draft resolution before the United Nations condemning the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa by the Nigerian authorities).

However, most of these organizations had and continue to have significant problems to overcome in

order to strengthen the movement.

1. Lack of regional coordination, internecine rivalries among the organizations
2. Lack of coordination and collaboration at the national level
3. Urbanization of the organizations – most organizations operate in cities, with little rural contact or context
4. Societal/ethnic/ tribal divisions
5. Undemocratic organizational structure and the use of the organization as a stepping-stone
6. Funding

Women's Rights

“I know of no inherent reason why social change, industrialization and modernization has to negatively affect the status of women; the African woman increasingly is falling backward to a position similar to that of Western women in the early stage of the industrial revolution,” wrote an American sociologist working with the Kenyan government in the 1970's.

Despite many legal instruments adopted at the international level, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women and the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, it is clear that much remains to be done. The African Women's Movement has continued to grow since the 1985 United Nations Conference on Women in Nairobi. Five years ago, in preparation for the Beijing Conference, the African Women's NGO identified some of the areas of critical concern:

Alleviating women's poverty (access to credit, agricultural training, ending unequal access to education, ending discrimination in family law).

Improving women's health, ending violence against women and ending practices negatively affecting women and girls

Protecting women's legal and human rights and empowering them politically at all levels

Ending the violence women suffer in armed conflict and protecting women refugees.

The discourse remains varied and diverse; positioned in urban and rural contexts.

What has to be in place for a successful human rights movement

As mentioned earlier, African human rights organizations are young, experimental and divided. However, some positive steps were taken in order to reinforce the movement.

Harare, Kenya January 21-24, 1999: the Commonwealth human rights initiatives on pan-Commonwealth advocacy for human rights, peace and good governance in Africa;

March 4-5 in Maputo, Mozambique: the second annual general meeting of the General Assembly of the Southern African Human Rights NGO Network

March 30-April: West African Human Rights organized a meeting under the platform of the West African Human Rights Forum, in **Abuja** (capital of Nigeria) – It was important because NGO's, the National Human Rights Commission, governments and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Secretariat got together to discuss a variety of human rights issues as they affected the people of West Africa. (Note: ECOWAS was created in 1975)

April 12-16 1999, Mauritius: the first OAU Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Africa took place (and the Secretary General Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim was quite frank and critical about the disastrous

record of human rights in Africa).

The most important thing to do is to correct the causes of the weaknesses mentioned earlier and to develop real cooperation.

In this sense, the collaboration shown between African, European and US-based organizations leading to the indictment of President Hissein Habré (former Head of State of Chad who fled the country in 1990 and has lived in Senegal since then. He was indicted in January 2000 under human rights violations and the charges were dropped in June 2000 for “technical reasons”) is a tremendous example.

Existing grassroots organizations need more education and everyone needs to be more involved – they *must* be involved.

Human rights should be part of adult literacy classes

Human rights educators must persuade governments to include human rights education in the police training, international humanitarian law in the training of the army – the greatest abusers of people’s rights

Human rights should also be taught in the school as part of the regular curriculum

The role of NGO’s from outside

Most of the African NGO’s in Africa seek funding from external sources, and most of the time, donors dictate how the local NGO’s should function. Northern NGO’s should reinforce the work of African NGO’s in bringing local issues to the attention of the wider population in the international community. They could offer technical expertise, consultancy services for training, monitoring and evaluating human rights projects and activities.

They can also:

Pressure their governments and multinational corporations to bring an end to the selling of arms to Africa

Pressure to get Western banks to repatriate money sent outside by leaders

Assist in getting educational materials for schools and local communities

Mobilize support for crises such as famines, natural disasters, refugees, etc.

I will conclude with the words of Issa Shivji: “Human rights activity cannot be separated from the general struggle of the people against oppression. Human rights struggles are an integral part of social movements and that is where human rights activity should be presently located.”

=====

*Assassinated in 1969

**Overthrown in 1968 and finally died in exile in Romania

***Those principles embodied in the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) were considered sacrosanct by the African states until Ethiopia allowed Eritrea to become independent, after more than 30 years of conflict

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Journey to Rwanda: The Hope after the Horror

By Susan McGrath

The invitation came as a surprise. The Forum for Activists Against Torture (FACT) was asking me to present on the work of the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) at a one day conference marking the June 26 United Nations Day for Survivors of Torture. FACT, a small non-governmental agency, is located in Kigali, Rwanda. Rwanda is a relatively small country of approximately eight million people located in East Africa. Davis Kashaka, FACT's Secretary General, included the agenda for the day. There was my name along with the names of three medical doctors from Uganda, Kenya and South Africa.



From left: Charles Ntare, Dr. Jeanne d'Arc, Davis Kashaka of FACT

I had met Davis at an international conference on torture in India in 1999 and we had been in contact by email and telephone. I had been struck by the similarities in the philosophies of FACT and CCVT and we had been working on a funding proposal to enable an exchange between the two agencies. The expertise CCVT had developed over 25 years of working with survivors of torture could benefit the fledgling Rwanda agency, working to develop services for survivors of the 1994 genocide and of ongoing civil strife. The practice would have

to be adapted for the unique experience of Rwanda, particularly for the challenge of creating support networks within the setting that the torture and trauma had occurred. Like all NGOs in Rwanda, FACT relies on international funding. They had no money for travelling expenses and our joint fund raising activities had not yet been successful so chances of going seemed remote.

Three weeks later I was on a plane beginning the 25-hour flight to Kigali. The Dean of my faculty, Atkinson, had agreed to pay for the ticket and I emptied out my savings account for the rest of my expenses. I was off to Africa - but not just Africa, Rwanda. I was excited and anxious. In Rwanda, in 1994, almost one million people had been slaughtered in less than three months at the hands of their neighbours because of their ethnicity. The issue was more complex than ethnic strife. The list of contributing factors was long and included the impact of colonization, a poor country not endowed with the rich minerals of its neighbours, years of civil strife, the refusal of the United States to support intervention by the United Nations. Rwanda was a country whose earth had been recently soaked in the blood of its own people and the Canadian government was advising people not to travel there. I was afraid.

At the Kigali airport I was warmly greeted by the core members of FACT: Dr. Jeanne d'Arc Kabagema, a medical doctor, and Davis, along with Charles Ntare and James Humuza, all three medical students at the National University of Rwanda (NUR). They are aware of the anxiety of visitors and during my stay one or more of them was always with me. I felt safe and enjoyed the constant companionship of such an amazing group of people. Despite demanding jobs and family responsibilities, each of them dedicates a

considerable amount of time to support the work of FACT. Davis and his partner Remie welcomed me into their home with the thoughtful hospitality that I learned was part of African culture.

During my one-week stay, I was struck by the constant contradictions. Rwanda is a beautiful country with a temperate climate despite its proximity to the equator. It is called the country of a thousand hills. In Kigali, the hills are terraced with homes on narrow ribbons of red dirt roads and in the rural areas with fields of bananas, sugar, onions, tomatoes and sunflowers with small herds of goats and cows tended by young children roaming about. Amidst the beauty, there are the memorial sites such as one we visited in the town of Kytarama, about an hour's drive from Kigali. It was quiet when we arrived at the brick church with its tin roof. A tall, thin man with bushy unkempt hair and worn clothing showed us around. He pointed out the multiple small holes in the roof. During the genocide, the Tutsis from the village (men, women and children), fled to the church for safety as they did in most communities. The Hutu militia surrounded the church, killed the nuns who tried to stop them, and tossed grenades into the packed building, killing many of those inside and perforating the tin roof. Those who survived the grenade attack were slaughtered with machetes. Most of the churches in Rwanda were the scenes of such bloodshed.

In the yard next to the church are two large tombs dug into the ground. Here are 68 cubicles each with a large wooden shelf on top and a deep wooden drawer on the bottom. The shelves are lined with rows of the skulls of the 7,000 people who died here, and the drawers hold the rest of their bones. The remains include those of the wife and children of our frail guide and the aunt of James. Children from a local school came by, curious to see the visitors and we are told that many of them have family members buried there. We later stop at another memorial site along the road from Kigali to Butare that



Mass grave site at Rusatira, Rwanda. Twenty thousand people are buried here.

marks a mass burial of 20,000 people. The grave is divided into three sections each with its own small, white cross and all covered with colourful flowers. Death and life, horror and beauty, all are present.

The lushness of the countryside obscures another atrocity, poverty is rampant in Rwanda. Amidst the crowded Kigali market abounding with fresh vegetables, fruits and meats, young children with plastic green bags scurry about competing with each other to carry the shoppers' purchases for a small fee. Many families rely on the labour of their children, keeping them out of school. Many of the children are street kids, orphaned and/or abandoned by families. After the devastation of the genocide, families continue to struggle with high rates of death, particularly among young adults and children as a result of AIDS and malaria. Everyone I met had lost family members to either the genocide, AIDS and/or malaria, and often all three. Most families are also caring for the orphaned children of deceased relatives. Fewer breadwinners must provide for more people.

In the face of the horror, there is also hope for a better future. The very presence of FACT and the efforts of its volunteer members reflect a commitment to the country and people of Rwanda that I encountered over and over again. There is a cautious optimism with some acknowledging fear of a reoccurrence of the genocide. Tensions persist, particularly as plans for gacaca unfold. Gacaca is a traditional, community based justice system being adapted to re-integrate some of the over 100,000 people in the prisons charged with acts of genocide back into their home communities. I met a young woman

First Light

lawyer working for the justice department on the gacacca plan. She spoke of concerns that the re-telling of the stories will stir up past hatreds and re-traumatize survivors. She and her colleagues are looking for support from outside the country.

The Rector of the University, located in Butare, a two hour drive south of Kigali, described Rwanda as a traumatized society where everyone is either a perpetrator or victim. He endorsed our preliminary proposal for a collaborative project involving CCVT, FACT, NUR and York University. He and his colleagues are working to re-build the University that closed down after the genocide and to set up programs to address the extensive social needs. The Faculty of Medicine was almost wiped out by the genocide, guest lecturers from other African countries and from India have been teaching the classes. The head of the psychology department spoke about the programs for survivors, particularly for women and children, which he is trying to coordinate, in addition to his teaching responsibilities. With tears in his eyes, he said telling us about his work was therapy for him. A sociology professor is heading up the new school of social work. He spoke of the need for books and teachers. Both are interested in a collaborative program with Canadian colleagues.

The motto of CCVT is hope after the horror. The people of Rwanda are in need of support to maintain their hope after the horror of the genocide. CCVT along with colleagues at the University of Toronto and York University including the Centre for Refugee Studies is exploring funding to enable an exchange program with FACT and NUR. FACT's plans include a public education program on torture and its impact, a study of the incidence of rape, a training program for the police, and the establishment of a clinic for the treatment of survivors. Our colleagues and friends need our support to accomplish their goals. The world abandoned Rwanda in 1994, we must not do so again.

Susan McGrath is a board member of CCVT and Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at York University, Toronto. All photos in this article courtesy of Susan McGrath.



Davis Kashaka shopping in Kigali market with young street child waiting to help



Forum des Activities Contra la Torture (FACT)

FACT is a local non-profit human rights organization in Rwanda. It was formed in 1999 by 12 founding members with the mission to fight against torture in Rwanda as well as to contribute to the recognition, defence and rehabilitation of victims of torture in the region. FACT was formed through the initiatives of human rights activists, lawyers, physicians attending to medical and trauma problems and students from the National University of Rwanda. The majority of the founders had the opportunity to take part, to work with or to keep in contact with important organizations that have similar interests in the field of torture rehabilitation. These organizations include the International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (IRCT), the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) and the African Centre for Torture Victims (ACTV) Uganda.

The organization has over 60 members and is made up of four commissions that form its structure. These are:

- Legal commission
- Psychosocial commission
- Medical Commission
- Information/education commission

Objectives

General

1. To fight against torture in Rwanda
2. To contribute to the recognition and rehabilitation of torture victims

Specific

1. To sensitize the population against torture
2. To identify and make known victims of torture
3. To contribute to the rehabilitation of victims of torture
4. To collaborate with other organizations in the prevention of torture

Current Activities

FACT has embarked on a campaign and advocacy to raise public awareness of the organization. The following are current activities at the secretariat:

Commemoration of June 26th International Day in Support of Torture Victims

- Publication of vademecum in prevention of rape in Rwandan society
- Micro survey on the situation of torture and violence in Rwanda
- Training in victim's assistance programs
- Sensitization of the judicial police and prison warden in the prevention of rape

Future Plans

- FACT being a young organization, there is a lot to be done to achieve its objectives. The planned activities include:
- To set up a rehabilitation centre in Rwanda to assist victims of torture and organized violence
- Start a Victims Assistance Program
- Publication of a monthly newsletter on torture issues in the region
- Conduct training or workshops on the prevention of torture to police, medical personnel and other law enforcement officials
- Create FACT website and network with other organizations
- Management of torture victims by health professionals
- Exchanger program with other centres for capacity building

Resources

Human resources

FACT members work as volunteers to supplement the three permanent staff, the coordinator, the secretary/accountant and the messenger. The secretariat is located in the capital city Kigali in the same building as their partners, Norwegian Peoples Aid.

Source of Funding

FACT's main source of funding is from international donor agencies or organizations working with human rights.

Their main financial donor is the Norwegian Peoples Aid in Rwanda, who fund almost 45% of the annual budget, and IRCT Denmark. Almost 55% of the planned activities in 2001 have no finding. Other sources of funding come from member contribution, representing almost 2% of the annual budget.

FACT Organogram

FACT is comprised of the executive committee headed by the President and the administrative committee headed by the General Secretary.

The following are members of FACT's executive Committee

Mr. Noel Twagiramungu, President and Legal Representative
Mrs. Abatoni J. Gatete, Vice President and Assistant Legal Representative
Mr. Kashaka Karegeya Davism General Secretary
Mr. Humuzu James, Treasurer
Dr. Jean D'Arc Kabagema, Head of the Medical Commission
Mrs. Yvonne Kayitishonga, Head of the Psychosocial Commission
Mr. Alloys Habimana, Head of the Information and Education Commission
Mr. Isaac Mockey Bizimulemye, Head of the Legal Commission

Contact Person

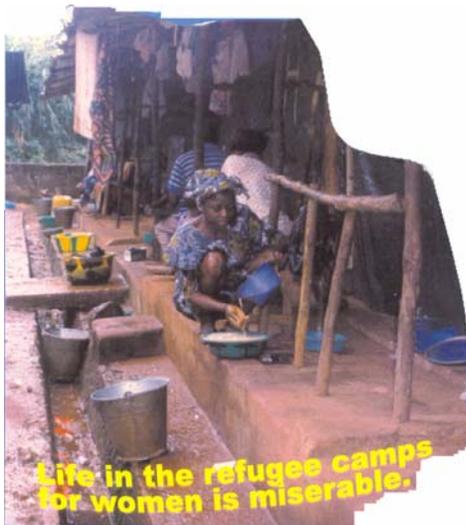
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Effect of War on Women in Sierra Leone

Apart from children, women are the most vulnerable group to rebel atrocities. They have been physically, mentally and psychologically traumatized.

They have been raped, harassed, amputated and killed in this war. Many are now widows as their husbands have been killed as a result of war. Added to all that, some of their sons and daughters have been turned into rebels.

These women now live in displacement/refugee camps and big towns. Their lives have become miserable that they do everything possible to survive. They have become beggars on the streets of Freetown and in Guinea, while the much younger ones embark on prostitution. The conditions in the over-crowded camps are not congenial to good living standards. Women have given birth to babies under very deplorable conditions and they have not been getting the required diet for pregnant women. No medicines or trained nurses exist in most of the camps.



Some women are also abducted and used as cooks and nurses for baby-rebels. They do all sorts of domestic work, especially for rebel commanders. They are not spared from the rebels' sexual assaults. The act of raping women has led to the birth of fatherless children. Today, the population of women has almost doubled to that of men and this has greatly increased the number of unmarried women in the country, making prostitution a necessary evil.

Can you please support Sierra Leone Canada Watch to promote and protect the rights of women in Sierra Leone.

For more information contact:
Tel: +1 416 345 8690
E-mail: slcw1@yahoo.com

Sierra Leone Canada Watch
Fax: +1 416 345 9044
Website: home.istar.ca/~slcw

Use of sexual abuse as a means of political suppression in Africa

By Dr. Abbas Azadian, MD

According to recent reports, 150 countries continue to use torture and ill treatment as an instrument of political pressure and repression against those who challenge the prevailing order. In Africa, inter-ethnic and armed conflicts have been ongoing struggles over last few years. These conflicts continue to fuel human rights abuses. People are caught in the conflict between governments and rebel forces and suffer appalling atrocities such as abduction, rape, amputation, torture and death. According to the most current Amnesty International report, human rights were violated and detainees were tortured and ill treated (1) in at least 32 African countries.

Sexual Abuse as an Instrument for Political Suppression

Sexual abuse and rape have been frequently used as a means of suppression. In many African countries, rape, mutilation and other forms of torture have been used as weapons of war in recent conflicts and in particular when ethnic issues were prominent. In particular, rape and other forms of sexual violence have been inflicted on women in many African countries. Women in custody have been subjected to many forms of torture and in particular sexual violence and rape. These women may be psychologically traumatized for life. The ill effects of rape and sexual violence continues even when these women are forced to flee their countries of origin and subsequently seek refuge in a safe country like Canada. In this paper we will review a few cases of women who have been sexually abused in different settings to demonstrate the profound and long lasting effects of sexual abuse and rape on the victims.

Sexual Abuse in Political Settings

Case 1

Politically motivated harassment of opponents remained a public policy in Angola and many other African countries where officials systematically undermine freedom of expression and suppress any criticism of the government's practices.

BC is a 21 year-old woman from Angola. Her father was a political activist writing about corruption in the government, the lack of freedom and social justice in the country. The government of Angola had been following his activities and harassing him on a regular basis. He was arrested on several occasions. On one particular night the government forces attacked their home. They started beating everyone. They also ransacked the place. "To give her father a lesson" she and her mother were sexually abused in front of the rest of family; her father included. She was later blindfolded and taken to jail. She was forced to do hard labor in prison. She was repeatedly raped during the 2 years she was in jail. She was also beaten up on a regular basis. This treatment continued until she used an occasion to escape the jail and the country. She has never seen her family members since that morning when the police came to their house.

BC's emotional reaction to the ongoing sexual abuse is one of detachment and depression. She is cold and distant. She persistently tries to avoid talking about her traumatic experiences. She is confused about time and place. She dissociates and things appear unreal to her. She also reports difficulties falling sleep. When she goes to bed she would continuously think about the traumatic events and sexual abuse. She usually

wakes up in the middle of the night confused after having nightmares. Her heart races and she has difficulty breathing. Sometimes, she is unable to get back to sleep. As a result of inadequate sleep, she experiences extreme fatigue and has difficulty concentrating and functioning.

Case 2

GJ is a 30-year-old woman from Rwanda. She and her family endured many types of persecution, threats, violence and killing that extended beyond the war and continued to the present day. This includes her gang rape at the hands of Hutu soldiers at a refugee camp where her family fled during the war. On another occasion, someone threw a hand grenade through the window of her house. When GJ arrived, she found one family member dead and another one mortally wounded.

GJ's emotional reaction is very similar to BC. She feels she has changed for life. She describes herself as being a happy, sociable and outgoing person before these incidents, and now feels very detached from others and keeps to herself. She does not want to be in any groups and prefers to stay in her room. She does not take pleasure in anything and no longer smiles. She feels continually sad. She is also troubled by very poor concentration and memory difficulties, often forgetting scheduled activities. She has great difficulties falling asleep at night because it is at this time that the memories of her rape and the grenade attack are strongest. She lies in bed remembering her assailants' voices and laughter and sees images of the scene of her rape or the grenade attack. She tries to block these thoughts out but is not successful. Often these thoughts and images keep her awake until 4 in the morning. Her sleep is also disturbed by nightmares wherein she hears friends crying for help. She runs to save them, but arrives too late. She awakens from these dreams with a pounding heart and cannot settle back to sleep afterward. She also describes a hypersensitivity to sounds in her environment. For example, she gets extremely upset by sounds on the street, which remind her alternatively of artillery fire or of a grenade blast. She reports that when she hears these loud voices she instinctively "close the door and start running", her heart pounding. She says it takes her a few minutes before she realizes that she is no longer in Rwanda and that the sounds are benign. GJ's feelings of sadness are compounded by feelings of guilt. She feels responsible for her rape, even though others have told her that she could not have prevented it from happening. She wonders if she could have been "firmer" or more resolute in saying "no" to her assailants. Since her rape she has had a sense of being tainted and feeling "dirty". This pattern of thinking has persisted to this day. She sometimes wonders if she would be better off dead. While telling her story, GJ was anxious, hesitant, upset and tearful. She was sad.

Sexual Abuse in Domestic Settings

Case 3

As prominent as the use of sexual violence has been in armed conflicts, ethnic disputes and political repression, in most countries a woman's greatest risk of violence comes from people she knows. Violation of human rights against women happens not only at the hands of police and soldiers, but also at the hands of their own husbands, fathers or employers. In particular, sexual abuse may be used in domestic setting to intimidate women and force them into subversion. The following case is an example of the use of physical and sexual abuse in this setting and highlights the effect of economic hardship and poverty.

MK is a 27 year-old woman from Nigeria. She was forced to marry her husband when she was very young. Her husband was a dedicated Muslim and Imam (an Islamic religious leader). As soon as she moved to her husband's house, he started to abuse her in a variety of ways. He would beat her for not being covered properly. He would use a hot rod to inflict pain on her. On another occasion he put a hot cooking spoon on her body. This ill treatment continued until she could not tolerate it any longer and she ran away. She attempted to run away a few times but she was found every time and returned as she had very limited resources. Her punishment became worse each time she was returned. She was forced to do the chores of all four wives of the Imam. He raped her repeatedly and continued to physically abuse her. On one occasion when she had been caught and brought back, she was tied to a hook from the ceiling

and a hot coal was put under her with ground, dried pepper in it to make breathing more difficult for her. Eventually she had to leave the country as she could not tolerate the pain and suffering inflicted on her and in particular she could not tolerate the sexual abuse.

Her emotional reaction to these repeated episodes of sexual abuse was what we expect from all victims of sexual abuse. She felt down and depressed. She thought of killing herself. The pain inflicted on her was so intolerable that she could not sleep, concentrate and function properly. She had a very difficult time in describing the pain inflicted on her as well. She would get agitated and restless and would cry nonstop. MK's situation is by no means unique.

Psychological Reactions to Sexual Abuse

The cases described demonstrate there is a tremendous range of frequently occurring reactions to trauma. Some people withdraw into silence; others seek out support or have a pressing need to talk about what happened. Some may be preoccupied with thoughts about what they could have done differently to prevent what happened. Others may be filled with anger and rage at the injustice and feel a deep sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Abuse may affect victims physically, emotionally and behaviorally. It may affect also their thinking patterns. The physical reactions may include jitteriness, muscle tension, upset stomach, rapid heart rate, dizziness, fatigue and lack of energy. Emotional reactions may include extreme fear and inability to feel safe, sadness, grief and depression, guilt and anger, inability to enjoy anything, intense or extreme feeling at one time and a chronic feeling of emptiness at other times. As a result, the abused woman may become withdrawn or isolated from others, startle easily and avoid certain places and situations. She may also become confrontational and aggressive, change her eating habits, and become restless. The cognitive changes may include heightened awareness of surroundings at times and lessened awareness and disconnection from environment at other times. She may also think differently about herself and the world. She may have previously thought of herself as strong and independent. Subsequent to the traumatic experience she may think that she is no longer in control of her fate. She may also think the world is not a safe place to live in anymore. As a result she may not be able to trust anybody or count on people and feel more isolated as a result. This may lead to loss of self-esteem.

All people have psychological defenses that in difficult and stressful times protect them against fragmentation and loss of control. At times these defenses are overwhelmed to the degree that the person not only reacts negatively to events but may also meet the criteria for a psychiatric disorder. The most common and well know disorder in trauma victims is posttraumatic stress disorder. However the reaction is not limited to this condition. A wide variety of disorders including major depressive disorder, dysthymia, generalized anxiety disorder, panic attacks and substance abuse may be observed in trauma victims.

Conclusion

The cases discussed also demonstrate that torture and violence occurs in a wide range of circumstances and serves different purposes. There is no reliable estimate of the true prevalence of torture in the world. The above data published by Amnesty International that probably reflect but a fraction of all human abuses may give some idea about the extent of the problem. It appears that there is a wide spread and regular use of torture and ill treatment in many African countries. These include whipping, flogging, caning, amputations, beating, verbal abuse and threats, isolation and solitary confinement, physical abuse and use of excessive force. Sexual abuse is also widely used in a variety of settings in these countries. Physical and sexual abuse is also used in domestic settings to maintain the dominance of men and subordination of women in the family and society.

The three cases discussed in this paper demonstrate the reality that torture has long-term and disabling psychological effects. Torture survivors and survivors of sexual abuse have more difficulties with concentration, memory, energy and sleep. They have nightmares in which they are being followed, arrested and tortured.

They wake up confused and demonstrate symptoms of anxiety. They may feel guilty about what happened and limit their contacts with other people and so lose their social network of support. These psychological problems can cause severe psychosocial disability that may last decades or even a lifetime.

To address psychological problems of torture survivors, interaction at several levels of care may be necessary. They may benefit from pharmacotherapy. Medication may improve their sleep, increase their energy and appetite and lift their mood. Nightmares and flashbacks may decrease as well. Psychological treatment for effective rehabilitation of torture survivors has been widely recognized and advocated (2). Most rehabilitation centres have adopted a multidisciplinary approach in the case of survivors, involving legal, medical, social and psychological help (3). There is ample evidence that with adequate support and treatment, torture survivors can return to normal life and end the cycle of mental anguish. However, it appears that prevention of torture and ill treatment of political detainees is the best method of limiting psychological pain to people tortured and of curbing the cost to society.

Certain safeguards are necessary to end the torture and ill treatment of detainees. These include clear policies that torture and ill-treatment will not be tolerated; an end to incommunicado detention, including giving detainees access to independent medical examination and legal counsel; outlawing the use of confessions extracted under torture as evidence in courts of law; independent inspection of places of detention; informing detainees of their rights; human rights training for law enforcement personnel; compensation for the victims of torture; medical treatment and rehabilitation for the victims of torture (4). Governments have to ensure that prison conditions do not amount to cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in line with international human rights standards for the treatment of prisoners. Special attention should be paid to the issues of ethnic background and gender. An emphasis on working against abuses based on gender should be at the heart of any torture campaign. This includes the use of violence and in particular sexual abuse in domestic settings. Any form of torture is indefensible and may affect individuals for the rest of their lives.

Dr. Abbas Azadian is a staff psychiatrist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Toronto, a CCVT Board member and Co-Chair of CCVT's Health Network

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Providing Services for African Survivors of Torture in Canada

By Mohamed Ahmed

Africa is one of the largest continents on this globe. It consists of a large number of heterogeneous countries, cultures and languages, but is often racialized as a homogeneous entity by the countries of the North. After the colonial era, Africa experienced many difficulties, from famine to genocide. Most African rulers do not respect the rights of their citizens. To keep power, African dictators try to oppress, intimidate, arrest, torture and kill their own citizens. Nowadays, it seems that genocide has become an ever-more more popular tactic to use by the dictators. As a result of this, many African citizens have been forced to flee their countries, and many have ended up in countries far from their homes.

A substantial number of immigrants and refugees from Africa are victims of torture, either directly or indirectly. They have been subjected to beatings, mutilations, rape, and humiliation, or they have witnessed such. They have gone through all kinds of punishment and are lucky to be alive, though their family members and friends have been killed. Survivors of torture from Africa like other survivors develop psychological symptoms after the torture. Some of these symptoms are flash backs, nightmares, fears, lack of sleep, lack of concentration, lack of trust etc. Women and children are the most vulnerable group among the survivors. Africa is a patriarchal culture, and women's place in that culture tends to be marginalized: even though they have most of the responsibilities, they have the least amount of power, and are frequently marginalized even further after being tortured. If a woman happens to be raped, African culture dictates that there will be no respect for her. There is no possibility of getting married, no possibility of socialising with her peers and she is considered a prostitute, regardless of the nature of the incident. In other words, a woman is no longer welcome within the society. After the rape, a woman has no choice but to flee her home city to another place where nobody can recognize her. This causes family separation. In this situation women feel helpless and hopeless. Others choose not to talk about their trauma.

Children are also another group that is severely affected by torture. Most of the time children witness the killing of their parents and the rape of their mothers and sisters. The experience of torture occurs at a very sensitive time in a child's developmental stage, thus the trauma affects their mental development and they can develop somatic symptoms as well. The recovery of the child depends on the age and the coping mechanisms of the child. In Canada, children of survivors from Africa can have difficulties in the school system and are often labelled as "educationally disabled". Part of this is due to the lack of English, part of this is the teachers of the host community who lack the experience of trauma, and part of this is related to their own trauma.

Even though they arrive in a "safe" country like Canada, these survivors continue to face human rights abuses, albeit in other forms, such as discrimination and racism. Typically, African survivors have large families (an average of seven individuals in each family), which is not suitable for the housing system of the host community. Consequently, landlords do not rent their units to these survivors. They are discriminated against on the basis of their family size. The fact that many survivors from Africa, particularly women, cannot speak English well and they encounter resistance from the host community. Another example of discrimination is related to the survivor's appearance. The African survivor frequently experiences unwelcome and even derogatory comments on their traditional and/or religious way of dress. If that

is not discrimination what else can we call it? Their traumatic experiences are compounded by the settlement difficulties they face in their new country, and as a result, many survivors of torture from Africa seek help from specialized organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT).

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture is the only centre of its kind in Toronto. Its services are designed to help and survivors of torture from many different cultures and backgrounds, including Africa. Services available at CCVT include counselling, befriending, English as a second language, support groups, art therapy, and computer training, interpretation and information services. Since 1990, CCVT has helped hundreds, if not thousands, survivors of torture from Africa according to their needs; be it providing individual counselling and other services or running support groups. They also assist the survivors in sponsoring their family members to Canada. (Sponsoring family members is not easy in Africa due to the very limited number of Canadian consulates in that region.) It costs survivors from Africa a lot of money and time in comparison to other survivors from other regions. Recently, with the help of CCVT several clients were successful in sponsoring their children to Canada.

Individual counselling:

This program is designed to help survivors overcome their traumatic experiences. Survivors of torture are able to sit and talk to a counsellor at CCVT who can provide a sympathetic ear for them, who is willing to listen and eventually able to help them. These people have lost their ability to trust due to the fact that they have been hurt and tortured at the hands of the people they did trust; and are consequently very likely to distance themselves from others. It is very hard for the counsellor to build the relationship and to bridge that gap of mistrust. One of the responsibilities of CCVT counsellors is to fill this gap, to secure the trust of survivors of torture in order to serve them better. During the counselling sessions, counsellors try not to dictate the session but to give a chance for the survivors to talk, and to externalize their internal feelings. The survivor can take as long as he or she needs to talk, and they can talk as much or as little as they want to. This gives the survivor the comfort and feeling of safety they need and encourages them to share more sensitive issues. It is also very important to give the survivor the assurance of confidentiality, as this strengthens the relationship of trust. CCVT's confidentiality rules are very stringent: not only must they be observed by the counsellors, but by all other staff members and volunteers alike.

Support Groups:

The centre has a support group program intended to let survivors of torture get together and share information. It is not only for sharing information, but also for creating networks among themselves, and supporting and helping each other. There are support groups for women, children, and youth as well as men. These groups are run separately according to the countries/continent of origin since the needs and demands of the survivors are different from one country to another. The group sessions are run and facilitated by CCVT counsellors and other facilitators who may be from the same country/culture and/or are the same gender. The staff meets the group members first and does a needs assessment and then invites guest speakers to come and talk to the group. After the guest speaker, the group members have at least two hours each session to discuss their own issues and to share information. The number in the groups varies from six to forty five participants. Currently the African support groups that are running at the centre are the Somali women's group and a more general group for African women. Some of the main issues that have been discussed at support groups are housing, employment, tenants rights, raising children in a different country, the educational system, etc. A CCVT success story in community development emerged from one of these support groups where African women survivors managed to change some of the regulations in the Canadian system. For instance, in early 1990's when large numbers of Somali refugees were entering Canada, they faced difficulties in housing because at that time, refugee claimants were not eligible for subsidized housing, according to the policy

of the housing authority. A group of Somali women got together as a support group and they successfully came up with an idea to initiate and challenge the housing policy. Now every refugee is entitled to apply for subsidized housing, contrary to the old policy.

ESL classes:

CCVT has English as a second language classes specifically designed for survivors of torture. Along with other CCVT clients, African survivors are able to attend and study English on a full time basis. Since most of the African survivors have large size families, they encounter problems of getting day care, which prevent the mothers from attending English classes. To get subsidized daycare can take many years. Responding this access issue, CCVT has initiated a program of child minding and is expecting to start January 2002. This will give an opportunity for the mothers to attend ESL as well as accessing other services. In addition to formal English instruction, the centre has volunteers who are available to tutor the survivors and make it easier for the clients to learn.

Befriending Program:

Survivors of torture from Africa, like any other survivor, are able to access the CCVT befriending program. This program is intended to break the isolation of the survivors and create a feeling inclusiveness, of belonging. It allows the survivors to integrate well into the new society and to lessen or eliminate the cultural barriers that survivors face. It is a mutual process in which the befriender learns from the culture of the survivor and the survivor learns from the culture of the host community. It is a kind of socialising and helps the survivor in their healing process. Cultural definitions of friendship can affect how Befriending is (or is not) accepted by the client. A few years ago, I suggested to a client of mine that she might benefit in having a Befriender. The client was a little concerned about the issue, as in her culture, any friendship that begins with a formal introduction is likely to be a form of matchmaking. Because CCVT matches women to women and men to men, the first question she asked me was “ will I be involved with any problems through this”. After I explained to her the difference between the cultural assumption and what CCVT’s Befriending Program was actually about, she accepted the idea and was willing to be matched. As the befriending process went on, the relationship between the volunteer befriender and the client became strong. A few months later, when I asked the client about the befriending she said “ I am very happy to be matched with the befriender, she is like my sister, I was introduced to her parents and as a matter of fact I feel like being with my family”.

Art Therapy:

Some survivors are not able to communicate or verbalize their traumatic experiences. In such cases, CCVT has a program in place that allows the survivors of torture to convey their message in art. In a series of sessions facilitated by CCVT’s resident art therapist, they draw pictures in relation to their traumatic experiences. This method of drawing is also important for children who are not mature enough to express their feelings in words. As the process of drawing goes on, you can tell the difference of feeling from the clients. Most of the time, initial drawings are traumatic scenes with guns and are full of bloody images, but by the end of the art therapy process, you can see children drawing flowers and smiling faces.

Computer Training:

CCVT initiated a computer-training program for survivors of torture as part of their rehabilitation process and to provide them with technical skills, which will prepare them for the labour market. The program was initially intended to be specific for women, but as the needs and demand grew, men were also included. At the end of the course the students received diploma in recognition for their studies. Recently one of my African clients who successfully finished her computer program secured a secretarial

position at the Bank of Montreal bank in Toronto. She said “ thanks to CCVT and the computer instructor for giving me this opportunity. Now I have skills to work”.

In conclusion, survivors of torture from Africa face many challenges and obstacles during their process of settlement. As part of the trauma, they face language barriers, housing problems, and discrimination. All they want is to be included, regardless of where they came from, or what they look like. Working collectively with other African organizations and mainstream organizations serving African clients, CCVT continues to help African survivors of torture through programs specifically and sensitively designed to assist them in integrating into Canadian society and to come to terms with their traumatic pasts.

Mohamed Ahmed is a physician by training and is a Settlement Worker at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.



CCVT Clients



Toronto Tabla Ensemble

June 26

United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

by Alyssa Case

On June 26th, the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) joined individuals and organizations around the world to celebrate the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly called upon all nations to recognize June 26th as a day of solidarity and support for survivors of torture everywhere. Each year, CCVT volunteers join together with clients and members of the public to commemorate this important day and call for an end to torture. This June 26th celebrated the spirit of survivors with an evening of music, poetry and art, as we work towards a day when torture will no longer be a reality. The 2001 theme was “*Hope after the horror: communities in support of women and children survivors of torture.*” Special guests, Juno-nominated Toronto Tabla Ensemble joined host Fiona Reid and keynote speaker Alex Neve, Secretary General Amnesty International Canada.

UN Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan has stated that June 26th is “an occasion for all of us to raise our voices in the defence of human decency and respect for human life. It is a day on which we remember all the victims of torture: those who have survived, often physically or mentally scarred, and those who succumbed to this most horrible of deaths.” June 26th is an opportunity to stand in support of survivors living in our own communities and throughout the world.

Torture is being practiced in secret. While it is prohibited by numerous international instruments, including the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT), it continues to be carried out with impunity in two thirds of the world. In 80 countries, it has resulted in death. It is used to extract information, obtain confessions, and to punish. Torture often includes physical and psychological dimen-

sions, designed to attack the victim's particular vulnerabilities. Common forms include beatings, mutilations, electric shocks, water immersion, food and water deprivation, mock executions and threats to loved ones. Torture leaves long term scars on both the physical body and emotional well being. The trauma of what they endured can remain with survivors indefinitely. The horrors of torture affect not only those who suffer at the hands of torturers. The effects extend to the friends and families who live with the suffering of those they love.

Victims of torture come from many countries, and have many different faces. This year's theme for June 26th commemorates women and children who have endured the physical and psychological pain of torture, and aims to confront the invisibility of their suffering. While women are tortured for the same reasons as men, they can also be subjected to gender-based persecution. Rape and sexual violence are routinely used as weapons of terror and repression. Certain forms of religiously sanctioned torture, including stoning and suttee (where a woman is burned alive with the body of her dead husband) also disproportionately affect women.

While it is difficult for many in Canada to imagine, torture is carried out against children in 50 countries throughout the world. A child's encounter with torture can come from many sources. In war, threats or acts against children are effective weapons because they strike at the heart of targeted communities. Children in police custody are highly vulnerable to abuse by authorities and by other prisoners because of their age and inability to defend themselves. Like adults, children are also tortured because of their own political activities and the activities of their families. In many cases, it is children from marginalized economic and ethnic groups who are the most vulnerable.

June 26th commemorates the suffering of torture survivors who live in our community and throughout the world. This day also celebrates the spirit of survivors and the healing that continues to take place. Through rehabilitation, survivors and their families are rebuilding their lives and finding a place within Canadian society.

By joining forces, local and international communities continue to expose torture, rehabilitate survivors and bring torturers to justice. Torture is a crime against humanity—it can and must be stopped. On June 26th, please join us in supporting survivors in our community and calling for an end to torture worldwide.

Alyssa Case is a second-year law student at the University of Toronto and is a Donner Fellowship student placement at CCVT.



Audience Members

Halte à la torture! par Darnace Torou

La communauté internationale a célébré le 26 Juin dernier la Journée Internationale des Nations Unies pour le soutien aux victimes de la torture, conformément aux dispositions de la résolution 52/149 du 12 Décembre 1997 de l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies.

La veille, une déclaration commune avait été publiée par le Comité contre la torture, le Conseil d'Administration du Fonds de contributions volontaires des Nations Unies pour les victimes de la torture, le Rapporteur spécial de la Commission des Nations Unies sur la question de la torture et la Haut-Commissaire aux droits de l'homme. Les

signataires y "lancent un appel à tous les États afin qu'ils gardent constamment à l'esprit que l'élimination de la torture commande non seulement la ratification des instruments internationaux (relatifs au droits de l'homme) mais aussi leur mise en œuvre effective"; en outre, ils "prient instamment tous les participants à la Conférence de Durban contre le racisme, la discrimination raciale, la xénophobie et l'intolérance qui y est associée d'œuvrer de concert pour l'élimination de la torture, compte dûment tenu du lien qui existe entre la discrimination et la pratique de la torture et de la nécessité d'éliminer toute pratique de ce genre en tant qu'élément crucial de l'action menée pour que les victimes de la torture obtiennent réparation."

Dans son message du 26 Juin, le Secrétaire Général des Nations Unies a rappelé que "la torture est une atteinte atroce à la dignité humaine, qui déshumanise tant la victime que le tortionnaire." Cette pratique barbare ne pourrait être éradiquée que si les États s'y engagent, et que les bourreaux ne puissent vivre heureux après leur forfait au nom de la "raison d'État." M. Kofi Annan invite donc à "en finir avec l'impunité qui va trop souvent de pair avec la torture." Pour ce faire, il a encouragé les États Membres à ratifier et appliquer la Convention contre la torture et surtout, ratifier le Statut de la Cour pénale internationale qui définit la torture comme crime contre l'humanité et comme crime de guerre.

Le Centre Canadien pour les Victimes de Torture (CCVT) a marqué cette célébration, à Toronto d'un spectacle intitulé à juste titre : « **l'espoir après l'horreur** », dans l'auditorium de l'Université de Toronto (sur la rue Bloor Quest). Un événement magistralement organisé par la coordinatrice des bénévoles, Michele Millard, avec le concours de ces derniers et animé par Madame Fiona Reid, actrice bien connue et également bénévole au Centre.

C'est devant un public nombreux, dont beaucoup savent ce qu'est la torture, que M. Mulugeta Abai, Directeur Exécutif du CCVT a prononcé son allocution d'ouverture. Après avoir fait l'historique de la Convention adoptée le 10 Décembre 1984 et entrée en vigueur le 26 Juin 1987, il a déploré que ce soit le document le moins ratifié par les États, et pour cause! M. Abai a observé que les victimes de torture



Les Racines de Cuzcatlan

demeuraient massivement les femmes et les enfants et l'utilisation de la torture visait les objectifs les plus divers. Il s'est réjoui du fait le viol soit intégré dans la liste des crimes.

La seconde intervention remarquable a été celle faite par M. Alex Neve, Secrétaire Général de la Section Canadienne d'Amnesty International et surtout ancien membre du Réseau Juridique de CCVT. Il a articulé sa démarche autour de deux idées essentielles, à savoir ne pas oublier ceux qui, comme le journaliste Soudanais Fayçal Al-Baqer, sont incarcérés par leurs gouvernements et torturés parce que défendant les droits de l'homme, et être ensemble pour partager les idéaux communs. C'est cette idée partagée par quelques uns qui font reculer les frontières de l'horreur. Quelques hommes et femmes courageuses ont créé une nouvelle jurisprudence avec le précédent Pinochet. Les victimes de la torture sont les victimes des discriminations fondées sur la race, la couleur, la religion, l'appartenance ethnique, l'orientation sexuelle, etc... Seul un engagement résolu peut contribuer à faire la différence et M. Neeve a exprimé son optimisme pour un monde plus respectueux des droits humains.

La célébration de cette journée, ce sont aussi les autres personnes qui se sont exprimées, faisant part de leur expérience, de leurs idées. Il s'agissait de: Adeena Niazi d'Afghanistan, d'Elvira Kastrati adolescente du Kosovo, Aziza Farah jeune fille de Somalie, Martha Kumsa, poète, journaliste et ancienne prisonnière politique.

La musique, bien entendu a été la partie la plus appréciée de la soirée et elle a été, à l'image de Toronto et du CCVT, internationale. Se sont succédés sur le podium:

- Le couple Munni et Afzal qui a fasciné l'auditoire avec les sons venus de l'Inde et vulgarisés à travers le monde par les films;
- Jacqueline Ndenga, de la République Démocratique du Congo qui a enchanté le public par ses dons vocaux, avec un poème de Maya Angelou et surtout sa version chantée du désormais classique "A ma mère," du Guinéen Laye Camara;
- Les Racines de Cuzcatlan, un groupe de quatre enfants du Salvador qui ont émerveillé la salle par leur version multilinguale de "Frère Jacques" et surtout par l'interprétation du non moins célèbre "Guantanamo."
- Antigoni Papastafi, économiste, animatrice de radio et chanteuse d'origine albanaise, a ébloui la salle, accompagnée par son compatriote Bledar Belli à l'orgue;
- Tahereh Nowroozi qui a impressionné l'auditoire avec la musique de son terroir kurde (d'Iran). Assadi et Ghassvarian y ont ajouté la touche mélodique.

L'événement a été bien évidemment l'Ensemble Toronto Tabla, véritable condensé des musiques du monde, qui a déclenché les applaudissements nourris de la salle.

Une soirée qui a vraiment mérité son titre, **l'espoir après l'horreur!** Car on ressort de cette soirée avec le sentiment d'avoir appris "quelque chose", que par nos petites actions, et en nous retrouvant ensemble, nous contribuons à l'information de notre prochain, au rapprochement des races.

Le CCVT est une organisme de charité à but non lucratif ayant pour objectif de répondre au caractère unique des besoins des survivants de la torture et de leurs familles au Canada et à l'étranger, et aussi de sensibiliser le public, au Canada et à l'étranger, au phénomène de la torture et de ses conséquences sur les survivants et leurs familles. Institutionnalisé en 1983, donc avant l'adoption de la Convention des Nations Unies, le CCVT a son siège à Toronto, au 194 Jarvis Street.

Darnace Torou is the Outreach/Communication Coordinator with Africans in Partnership Against AIDS, a Canadian non-profit community-based organization in Toronto, and the Deputy Coordinator of Maison des Jeunes, a French-speaking youth centre based in Toronto, Canada. Originally from Chad, he is a former diplomat and is currently a CCVT Volunteer.



Martha Kumsa

The Day I Forget

Oh my heart is filled with joy
A tooth of the monster breaks
one more person is free
Raise the roof and celebrate!

Oh sunshine fills the sky,
birds sing in the trees
Showers of rain, torrents of blessings
and beauty fills my soul
My voice brims with melodies
of joyous songs
and my trembling heart finds consolation

Then...
then my gaze shifts to your side, Aayyoo
from between the two worlds
My heart fires you up into my mind
for I have willed not to forget
I shall not forget to tell
of your predicament

In that slaughterhouse
where one child wriggles out
The monster swallows a thousand more
of your children
I see the skies raining bullets
torrents of blood, Aayyoo
Explosion
rupturing Mother Earth
into a leaping dance of flames

Then images come creeping back
one by one, two by two
the subtle and the blatant
for I shall not forget to tell, Aayyoo
the biggest and the smallest

A blackened eye
a broken arm
in a home of prison
a bracelet turning into a handcuff
a necklace into a choking chain

The stump of a leg, an arm
Bayonets

cutting breasts,
tearing babies out of your wombs
Quicklime
dissolving your able men alive
Tattered bodies
of your tortured children
women and men alike
girls side by side with boys
tortured bodies, tortured souls
Friends turned enemies
dragging out your children
into dark moonless nights,
into merciless wars
Their bodies cover the sands of the deserts
and the fertile soils of the fertile lands

Oh I shall not forget to tell, Aayyoo
of the scavengers,
of the vultures that fill the sky
and hyenas that howl
to feast on the bodies
of your beloved children
as the children of your children cry
and cry, and cry...

Oh I shall not forget to tell, Aayyoo,
that their tears are rain and the rains are blood
Anger roars in my soul like thunder,
fire leaps from my tongue
So, Aayyoo, I cannot forget to tell

How can I forget, Aayyoo
Weals cover my body when they beat you
Blood drips form my nipples when they cut your breast
Isn't it your blood that courses my veins?
Am I not the cut of your flesh,
the splinter of your bones,
the spirit of your spirit,
the soul of your soul?

So I shall not forget to tell, Aayyoo
and here I take an oath
The day I forget to tell
May this sunshine dissolve into darkness
and all my dreams into nightmares
May the stars fall down and bombard me
and the moon deny me her light
May your blood that courses my vein
turn into a fount of burning acid
May that quick lime that ate up your children
eat me up alive

May your dripping nipples dissolve me
into a puddle of blood
May your weeping womb
suck me back into its vortex of nothingness
The day I forget to tell

But Aayyoo mother of love
Aayyoo mother of joy
May the monster die
and all these pains pass
May these wounds heal
and we all forget and love again
May we rejoice in the wonderful bliss

But till then
Till then, I will tell what happened
what's happening,
and happening again and again
I shall not forget to tell
till then

Till then I will always warn
I will always remember to tell
I will tell and break the deafening silences
Silences of culture

So, drink your tears no more, Aayyoo
Get up and shout and scream on torture
Raise your voice for justice,
you are not alone, Aayyoo
Scream out that stifling shame you hide
in the deepest core of your mortified heart
Aayyoo, your shame is shame no more

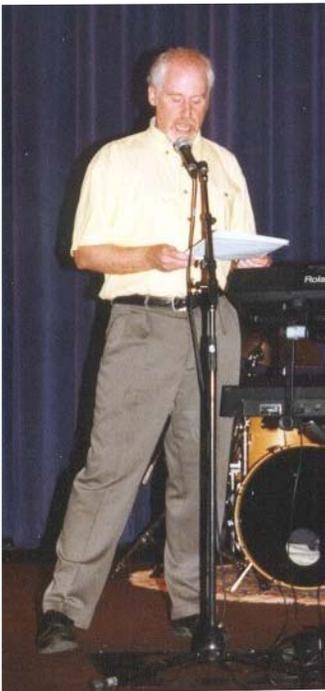
So drink your tears no more, Aayyoo
Mother of melody, raise your voice and sing
The monster has turned onto itself
The monster has turned onto itself

Martha Kumsa
Poet, Journalist, PhD Candidate

We Shall Not Forget

by Alex Neve

(Speech delivered at CCVT's celebration of the
United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, June 26, 2001)



Alex Neve, Keynote Speaker,
June 26, 2001

Friends, we gather here tonight in Toronto to reflect, perhaps to mourn, to pay tribute to the many stories of survival here in this room – and outside this room, perhaps far from this room. And not just to pay tribute but also to celebrate the triumph of survival, and respect as well, the challenge of survival. A day such as this - international in scope - and somber in its theme - torture - invites many different emotions.

Coming tonight I asked myself what is uppermost in my own mind. And 2 clear messages came through. That *we shall not forget*; and that *we are together*. Let me say a bit about each.

We shall not forget.

And sadly there is much to remember. In this far too cruel world of ours torture is still a reality in 150 countries - 3/4 of the world's states. In about 1/2 of these countries it is rampant and seemingly inescapable, practiced virtually everywhere. And in 50 countries, even children are not spared the devastating impact of this ancient evil. Children, tortured in 1/4 of the world's states! Worldwide, women are tortured because society allows it! Gays and lesbians are tortured because of their sexual identity. Dissidents are tortured because of their political views, minorities because of their ethnicity and religious followers because of their faith.

Everywhere society's most marginalized members, living on the streets, in poverty, surrounded by crime, see and experience torture because they have been written off and forgotten. Very, very often torture leads to death. But here and in countless similar gatherings around the world we are saying that torture is not forgotten, torturers are not forgotten and most importantly - those who face torture, those who survive it - and those who do not - are not forgotten.

And that where there once was silence - there are now many voices.

Where there was once forgetfulness, there is now memory.

And where there was once aloneness - there is now very much togetherness.

Let me tell you about just one man, one among many. One man who is not alone, not forgotten and about whom we shall not be silent. Faisal el Bagir Mohamed. Faisal, a Sudanese journalist and human rights defender, has been in incommunicado detention in Sudan for the past 12 days. He has almost

certainly been tortured during that time. Faisal belongs to the Sudan Victims of Torture Group and the Amal Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Physical and Mental Trauma, offering free counseling and medical care for victims of human rights abuses. It appears that Faisal was arrested, detained and most likely tortured, simply because he wanted to do precisely what we are doing tonight. He wanted to celebrate the UN's International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. As one of the main organizers of the proposed event, he met twice with government officials shortly before his arrest. And so, while we do celebrate and reflect tonight, let us very much remember Faisal. Still at risk of torture. And with him his colleagues, all of us here and countless women, men and youth around the world join together with insistence and determination in the struggle to overcome and banish torture. Which brings me to my second refrain.

We are together.

We are absolutely, wonderfully, powerfully together. And we are achieving great things, making important progress because we are together. Clearly there is much more to be done, much more to be accomplished. The horror of torture, the far grasping reach of torturers tells us that in very stark, heart-wrenching terms. But we have begun to chart a way forward, which I see as a steep, demanding, but ultimately attainable, uphill journey that will be fueled by pain and by inspiration, by anger and hope, towards a world that can truly be torture free.

With that in mind AI began a 2-year campaign against torture last October. It is a campaign largely built around my 2 refrains - because we do not forget, and because we are together - we can, we must and we do make a difference.

Certainly a difference in reminding the world of the steps they must take now - to bring torture to an end. Six steps, six ways to make a difference.

1. Outlaw Torture

Simple words - and we've made astounding headway since the world adopted the UN Convention Against Torture 17 years ago - in 1984. That Convention makes it clear, beyond any doubt, that torture is illegal and that protection against torture is a fundamental human right. It also lays out a powerful framework for preventing torture in the first place. In 17 years - 124 countries have signed on. That is the good news. Our challenge of course is to bring the remaining 69 on board now - and in all cases to make sure governments enact national laws that bring the treaty to life.

2. Break through the secrecy that surrounds torture.

Far from watching eyes - deep inside prison walls, within private homes - torture takes place in secret. Secrecy protects torturers. But there are fewer secrets. Torturers are increasingly being brought out in the daylight. Our challenge now is to ensure that there can be no more secrets. The UN has been working on a plan for nearly a decade to create a committee that would have the power to investigate jails and other places of detention, anywhere, anytime. To break the secrecy that leads to torture. A decade is long enough - we must press governments to put this in place now.

3. Confront Discrimination

We know that torturers thrive where discrimination rears its ugly head. Discrimination not only sends a message that torture will be tolerated; far worse, discrimination often actively encourages and praises torture. The important, powerful movement worldwide to stand-up to discrimination in its myriad, ugly forms is an essential piece of the struggle to overcome torture. Our challenge - overcome the

racism, sexism, bigotry and other discrimination that tells torturers it is okay to do what they do.

4. Defend the Defenders

Like Faisal - and many of you here in this room. At the front lines - worldwide - there is courageous relentless mobilizing, organizing and speaking out underway - individuals alone and in groups saying "no" to torture. Making a difference. But often at extreme personal cost. Defending against torture is not their struggle alone. It is a struggle we must all share. Our challenge is to do just that.

5. Provide Refuge

Sometimes the only way to escape torture - to be free from torture - is to flee from it - and seek safety in another country. So, strong, meaningful refugee protection is a vital piece of the struggle to defeat torture. But worldwide we see greater restrictions, borders closing, boats being turned back. Our challenge - to ensure there are safe places to flee to for those who fear torture.

6. Justice and Accountability

One reason torture continues with such horrifying frequency is that those who authorize, plan and carry out these unspeakable acts have rarely paid a price for their misdeeds. We live in a world where someone responsible for an assault in a back-alley brawl is more likely to face justice than is someone who oversees the systematic torture of hundreds or thousands of people. But that is changing. There is now unstoppable progress towards setting up the first permanent International Criminal Court, which would have jurisdiction to try, among others, torturers. The British House of Lords' decision in the Pinochet case, confirming the responsibility of all states to bring torturers to justice, continues to reverberate worldwide. Our challenge - to maintain and solidify the efforts to weave together an international web of justice, ensuring that torturers have nowhere left to hide.

The scope of the problem is immense. The obstacles to overcome are formidable. The challenges ahead are numerous. But there is momentum. There have been victories and there is breathtaking courage and determination that drives this struggle on. We shall not forget. We are together. And as tonight's theme reminds us, there is hope after the horror.

Alex Neve is the Director General of Amnesty International Canada and is a former member of CCVT's Legal Network

**Posters
of
Hope**



CCVT Programs and Services

1. **Settlement**
 - **Services:** housing, language, skills training, employment, social assistance, applications for family reunification, sponsorships
2. **Mental Health**
 - **Mutual Support Groups**
 - **Crisis Intervention:** suicide attempts, breakdowns, family problems, etc.
 - **Art Therapy**
 - **Individual and Group Therapy**
 - **Coordinated professional services:** doctors, lawyers, social service workers provide treatment, documentation and legal support
3. **Children's Programs:** Art and Play Therapy
4. **Volunteer Program**
 - A **Befriending Program** that assists survivors in rebuilding their connections to others as well as to the greater community.
 - An **ESL Tutoring Program** to help students learn and practice their English.
- **Escorting and interpreting** for survivors at different appointments (medical, legal, social).
5. **Public Education**
 - responds to numerous requests for information, assistance and consultations on torture and the effects of torture as well as regularly producing resource materials
6. **Refugees in Limbo**
 - Providing services to refugees in limbo at different levels, including counselling, training, workshops, networking with sister organizations, etc.
7. **Language Instruction and Training**
 - specially designed to address the needs and realities of the survivor of torture (concentration, memory, depression, triggers)
 - Computer training
8. **International Projects:** CCVT is associated with a coalition of Centres which support victims of violence, repression and torture, in exile or in their own countries

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