

## **NCTTP Calls on the President-Elect to Provide Torture Survivors with Access to Rehabilitative Care and Asylum Procedures that Treat them with Dignity**

As President-Elect Trump prepares to be the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and his transition team lays out the agenda and priorities that will define this presidential term, the National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs (NCTTP) urges him to make a commitment to the rehabilitation and protection of torture survivors. Central to this commitment would be ensuring that survivors of torture who have been forced to flee their homes and seek protection in the United States have access to specialized rehabilitative care and asylum procedures that treat them with dignity and provides them with hope.

Survivors of torture report being subjected to severe beatings, rape, deprivation, humiliation, threats, sensory stress, kidnapping, forced postures, asphyxiation, burning, and witness to murder and torture of family members. These experiences commonly lead survivors to demonstrate symptoms such as chronic pain, sleep disorders, severe depression and anxiety, the inability to concentrate, and thoughts of suicide. A recent [study](#) by the NCTTP shows that among 9,025 torture survivors coming for treatment in NCTTP centers, 69% had PTSD and 52.4% had major depressive disorder.

All torture survivors have suffered greatly either physically or psychologically. In many cases, they have lost their families, homes, livelihoods, and most importantly their sense of self and security. Many survivors of torture in the United States are refugees, asylees, or asylum seekers. [Clients seen at NCTTP member centers](#) come from countries where torture is widespread and/or has been used systematically against civilians, including Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Cameroon, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Cambodia, and Iran. A [meta-analysis](#) of previous research studies on torture prevalence rates within refugee populations in the United States revealed that as many as 44% of refugees are either primary or secondary survivors of torture, suggesting that there may be as many as 1.3 million torture surviving refugees in the country. They are amongst the most resilient but also the most vulnerable immigrant populations in the United States.

Without the benefit of help, torture survivors can become immobilized by their distress, unable to function within their communities or contribute to their family's well-being. Recognizing that treatment provides survivors with the environment in which to heal and contribute to American society, Congress passed the bipartisan Torture Victims Relief Act in 1998 that authorizes rehabilitation assistance to be provided to torture survivors, including treatment of physical and psychological effects of torture. Effective torture survivor rehabilitation programs are able to address a survivor's physical, psychological, legal and social needs to reduce their suffering and restore functioning as quickly as possible. In order to address the long-term impacts of torture and the consequences that come with them, it is essential that survivors of torture are able to access asylum protection and specialized rehabilitative care, so they can rebuild their lives, restore their hope, and make important contributions to the economic and social fabric of the communities that welcome them.