MISSION:
A LOCAL RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

The Program for Torture Victims (PTV) assists the courageous survivors of state-sponsored torture and persecution who have stood up for freedom, equality and human dignity.

For 33 years, PTV has helped new U.S. immigrants, from over 70 countries, heal their physical and psychological wounds, and start a second life here in California.

The first torture rehabilitation center in the United States, PTV:

- Helps survivors heal and transition from pain to purpose
- Assists with basic needs such as transportation, food, clothing, housing, and language classes
- Helps integrate new immigrants into American culture
- Works to reunite and re-acclimate families so that survivors can once again become parents to their children and spouses to their wives or husbands
- Helps clients navigate the complex and bureaucratic U.S. asylum process
- Documents the widespread practice of torture and persecution through reports to the United Nations, the United States and international human rights organizations
- Helps to hold individuals and governments accountable for torture or persecution by providing expert medical and psychological testimony in U.S. and international courts.

OFFICES
Venice
Los Angeles
Orange County
TORTURE

Torture is almost exclusively carried out, or allowed to be carried out, by government leaders or their agents — the military, the police, the paramilitary, village mayors, hate groups, or tribal leaders — to intimidate, repress and dehumanize individuals who are speaking out for governmental accountability, freedom, or equality.

Contrary to popular American TV shows and movies, torture is almost never used to obtain information. It’s used to break the human spirit. It’s used to instill fear in populations, and keep regimes in power at any cost.

Torture is prevalent. Although illegal under international law, more than 100 countries participated in the use of torture over the last decade. Torture shatters lives, separates families and destroys whole communities. A devastating violation of human rights, torture is a barrier to the development of democracy, freedom, and the rule of law.

MESSAGE FROM PTV LEADERSHIP

The typical profile of the survivor of torture or persecution who we have assisted over the last four decades has not changed. These individuals are selfless, intelligent, compassionate and courageous patriots who want nothing more than to transform their home countries into models of tolerance, freedom, transparency, democracy, and justice. But regimes in power—willing to keep control at any cost—beat, torture, imprison and kill their most remarkable citizens.

What have changed are the countries and governments that choose to violate human rights and disregard human dignity. When we began assisting local survivors in 1980, the majority were from Central America. Today, most of our clients have fled to the U.S. from the Middle East or Africa.

With your support, we will be here to help local survivors of torture and persecution from countries all over the world, until all people are free to hold their government accountable, free to elect their own leaders, free to practice the religion of their choice, free to marry a partner of one’s own choosing, free to advocate for clean air and water, and free to demand a livable wage.

Warmly,

Niels Frenzen    William “Trip” Oldfield III
Board President    Executive Director
PROGRAMS

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION & COUNSELING
As the pioneer in torture rehabilitation, PTV has developed an integrated and successful approach to healing survivors. This includes individual and family psychotherapy, psychological evaluation, psychiatric evaluation and follow-up care.

MEDICAL & DENTAL CARE
Most survivors are not eligible for government or workplace health insurance until after asylum is granted—a process that can take years. PTV provides immediate medical care by physicians who specialize in trauma. When specialists are needed, we utilize the network we have created at our offices in the Venice Family Clinic and at other local health care organizations at no cost to the client. PTV also offers emergency or trauma-related dental care through our partnership with the USC Dental Clinic.

LEGAL SUPPORT
PTV works with an extensive network of attorneys and legal aid organizations to ensure high-quality legal assistance for our clients. Our staff conducts forensic medical and psychological evaluations, serves as expert witnesses for asylum cases in federal immigration proceedings, and for human rights or war crimes trials in international courts. Additionally, we provide training to attorneys, federal immigration officers, and judges.

SOCIAL SERVICES & HEALING GROUPS
PTV provides basic needs such as emergency cash assistance, food, clothing, as well as linkages to permanent housing and employment. Our peer support groups create a sense of community for clients, allow them to share experiences, and empower them to become spokespeople against the use of torture.

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES
Our holistic and integrated approach to healing also includes massage therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, art therapy, and theatre, which are provided through our innovative partnerships with local teaching institutions or by dedicated volunteer professionals.

PUBLIC EDUCATION & ADVOCACY
PTV initiates public programs to educate the general public about the use of torture worldwide and its consequences for individuals and society. We also engage elected officials and policymakers in efforts to identify and combat torture, and advocate for resources to facilitate the healing of torture survivors and to reunite them with their families.
Seung,  
Survivor from North Korea

Seung is from North Korea where being Christian and being gay are not tolerated. Seung is both. He was arrested at a prayer service in the home of a fellow congregant in Pyongyang and imprisoned for ten days in a small cell with a dirt floor. The police repeatedly interrogated, beat, and brutalized Seung while he was at the jail. The other prisoners called him derogatory names and spit on him.

After his release he returned to his hometown where he was required to report to the local police station every few days. The authorities continued to beat, abuse, and publicly humiliate him. Seung found it impossible to sleep due to having nightmares about his beatings and public humiliation. Deep depression and loss of trust made relationships with his family strained and turbulent. He thought many times about how he might take his own life so that he could escape the persecution of his country. Luckily, he chose the possibility of hope and fled his homeland.

After a harrowing four week journey to escape North Korea, he arrived in the Koreatown neighborhood of Los Angeles and was told about PTV from a fellow Korean living in his apartment complex.

While Seung was finally safe in America, he suffered from extreme anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and pain and numbness in the areas where he was beaten. He still could not sleep or find relief from his violent dreams. Seung turned to PTV and received a full range of specialized medical treatment and psychological support. Our medical team helped heal the lingering nerve trauma, however the psychological damage he had incurred had left him with little trust in others. Our clinical team helped him re-build confidence in himself and others, and overcome his nightmares and difficulty with sleeping. His PTV social worker enrolled him in English classes and linked him to legal services to help with the complicated asylum process.

Today, Seung is steadily gaining back his confidence and the determination to build a new life here in Southern California. He has found new friends who accept him for who he is and he is very active in his new church.

North Korea

A recent UN hearing detailed “ordinary people who faced torture and imprisonment for doing nothing more than watching foreign soap operas or holding a religious belief.”

One survivor gave an account of witnessing a female inmate who was forced to drown her own baby in a bucket. North Korean leaders hold a “guilt by association” practice, punishing other generations for a family member’s perceived political views, sexual orientation or religious affiliations.

TARGETS

Frequent targets of torture and persecution include...

- human rights activists,
- union leaders,
- journalists,
- teachers,
- LGBT and women’s rights defenders,
- religious or ethnic minorities,
- environmentalists,
- and student leaders.
IMPACT

376
hours of free medical care provided by PTV physicians

125
Bags of groceries distributed to low-income survivors

11
children and spouses reunited with a survivor

280
survivors and their family members served in 2013 who fled from 53 countries

1090
individual therapy and counseling sessions provided to survivors

32
cases served as expert witness in immigration or human rights courts

NEW PROGRAMS

With the help of generous and tireless volunteers, PTV proudly launched two new programs in 2013.

ART THERAPY
Many of our female survivors have difficulty talking about the details of their torture, which may have included sexual violence. This new program gives our women an opportunity for self-expression, to share their stories with each other, and to build a sense of community in a safe environment. It’s a place where healing can begin.

FOOD BANK
Due to recent government budget cuts, we lost all funds that provided emergency grocery cards. But with some ingenuity and help from a service group called Big Sunday, we were able to transform a storage room into a new Food Bank. During the year, we worked with local high school students to develop service projects that collected and distributed 125 bags of groceries to survivors who didn’t have a steady source of income.
PTV’s most recent audited financial statements, IRS tax filings, and donor privacy policy can be downloaded from our website at ptvla.org
CONTRIBUTORS

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United Nations
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$10,000 OR MORE
Fusena Foundation
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Marc Williams & Erica Deutsch
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Kevin Yoshida
Nadia had erased all of her posts on Facebook before she got to the airport. “That’s what saved my life” she said.

Nadia had been tipped off by a friend that the Syrian Military Intelligence were forcing everyone at the Damascus airport to open their Facebook accounts for inspection before being allowed out of civil war-torn Syria. The military were looking for political dissidents like Nadia who were criticizing human rights abuses by President al-Assad on social media sites.

Nadia knew if she didn’t get out on this flight she would eventually be interrogated and tortured again. But she was more afraid of being kidnapped and killed like so many other Syrian artists and celebrities who peacefully demonstrated against the Syrian government and President al-Assad.

In Syria, she was a courageous human rights activist, who graduated law school and was a nationally respected artist with a prestigious position within the Minster of Culture. Under the pretense of an artistic fellowship in the U.S., she left everything behind and fled to the U.S. with 3 suitcases of clothes and $1000 from a bank account the Syrian government had not yet frozen.

Thankfully, Nadia learned about PTV from another Syrian torture survivor soon after she arrived in Los Angeles. She immediately came in for free medical treatment and started talking with a counselor. She had access to our food bank. An art therapy class at PTV was a safe place to express herself and she began sharing her horrific experiences with a group of women who understood. They understood because they were also brutally tortured in their home countries.

For clients like Nadia, life in the U.S. is not just a psychological struggle with painful memories, but also a series of problems posed by the asylum process and beginning life in a new country. Clients need help finding a safe place to live. They struggle with a new language. Due to bureaucracy and the extended backlog of the U.S. immigration and court systems, it can take a year or more to get a work permit.

Many survivors live with constant fear of deportation back into the hands of their torturers or that their family or friends back home will get punished because they chose to flee. (Nadia’s parents are still in Syria and she worries for their safety.)

What is Nadia’s life like now? She is healthier and happier every day. And she is now volunteering to teach in our art therapy program where she mentors other women who have been tortured, raped or persecuted.
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Kwasi was an accountant at a major Cote d’Ivoire bank with three kids and a beautiful wife.

Through the production of coffee and cocoa in the 60s and 70s, his country became an economic powerhouse in West Africa. However, an economic crisis in the late 1980s transitioned to a modern period of political and social turmoil led by former President Laurent Gbagbo and widespread human rights abuses by the Ivorian military.

The first democratic elections in a generation took place in late 2011. The new Ivorian government has made meaningful progress in rebuilding rule of law, particularly in the north. However, corruption and the influence of outside political pressure continue to undermine the progress of human rights.

Kwasi’s family was caught up in the violent political struggle, which divided his country by tribe and religion. The government of then-President Laurent Gbagbo attempted to assassinate his entire family. Kwasi barely survived a machete attack that killed his wife and brother. His oldest daughter was also raped and badly beaten.

To save his life, he fled to Los Angeles where other survivors from his country had landed. “My first asylum application was rejected due to an incompetent translator and I feared that I would be deported back to the violence of Cote d’Ivoire” says Kwasi.

He was referred to PTV through another Cote d’Ivoire survivor. “My first meeting with PTV will forever remain engraved in my memory. The welcome was filled with warmth and emotion and I immediately noticed the quality and humanitarian side of what PTV consists of. It was a grand relief to find myself surrounded by people with big hearts, who accept to share your sadness and pain. Because of PTV, a law firm took my case pro bono.”

He immediately saw a PTV physician who helped with the lingering injuries sustained in the machete attack, and a case worker who helped with English classes and convinced him to attend a support group. A therapist allowed him to move beyond the anger for his attackers and into a productive interest in a new career. “She gave me hope, restored my dignity, and lifted me from the ashes,” says Kwasi.

“I now have a full time job and I can send money back to my children in Africa, to my mother who cares for them,” adds Kwasi. He was granted asylum in August and his attorneys are working on bringing his three children to the U.S. to reunite with him.
*The name, image and identifying characteristics of some clients may be changed to protect client confidentiality and the safety of family and friends that still live in the client’s country of origin.

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