

# SUPPORT LIFE AFTER TORTURE GLOBAL READING

## **IRCT Global Reading on the occasion of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, 26 June 2017**

Today we commemorate the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. We do so in challenging times: three decades after the UN Convention against Torture came into force, the majority of people live in places where torture is still real and present. Across the world, leaders with little respect for democracy and human rights threaten to bring it back as state policy, and they do so with the support of some parts of society.

**As a result, the political and financial support for the fight against torture is weaker than it has ever been within our lifetime.**

IRCT founder, Dr Inge Genefke, once called torture “the most effective weapon against democracy”. She explained that torture breaks down the victim’s personality and identity and ability to live a fuller life later, with and among other human beings. And she experienced how torture infects and breaks up families and societies until it finally erodes the very fabric of our democratic societies: solidarity and the rule of law.

### **In the words of Inge,**

“we must all support torture survivors because they need it. Because their body and mind have suffered atrociously, unbearably, unspeakably. Because torture is the worst, and it is difficult to imagine unless you have suffered it.

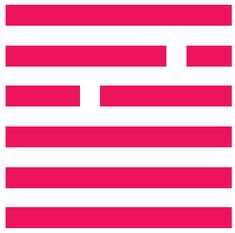
It is hanging for many, many hours by the arms or by the legs, it is phalanges, it is to have electrodes placed on different parts on the body. It is being burnt with cigarettes or with iron bars, being hit and kicked all over, or tormented until being unconscious.

It is being forced to witness the pain inflicted on a child or a spouse, on a sister or brother, father or mother, to have to watch helplessly and to have to listen to their screams and crying, and their appeals – and being able to do nothing.

It is the deprivation of all our senses – of our ability to see, hear, smell, distinguish day from night, and love.

It is the nightmare about the night they took your son away, the flashback of a soldier raping you, the fright every time there are fireworks, your inability to tell anyone what happened to you, the realisation that you can no longer feed your children or be a loving spouse, and your fear that your children will suffer like you suffered.

It is the systematic destruction of everything that makes us identify as human”.



# SUPPORT LIFE AFTER TORTURE GLOBAL READING

As everyone from the global torture rehabilitation movement come together on this day of solidarity with victims, there is no doubt that we can make a difference.

Thanks to the work already done, thanks to our research, thanks to our courageous colleagues all around the world, we know how to help survivors of torture rebuild their lives.

When we do this, we defy the primary purpose of torture and we take away the weapon from the torturers' hands.

With this understanding about what torture does to people, generated through decades of dedicated work, we call on everyone to join us and help us to support life after torture. Let us disarm those that seek to hurt our brothers and sisters, our families, our communities, and our aspiration for a world without torture.

**Thank you.**