



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 2018

Today we commemorate the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

Many torture survivors and their families across the world are forced to leave their homelands to avoid further torture, ill-treatment and discrimination. The journey often brings with it additional trauma and uncertainty, but arrival at an intended or unintended destination eventually occurs - most often in a country close-by, or maybe at a previously unimaginable distance. The new location is away from a familiar way of doing things, a support network, a means of supporting one's family. Existence is precarious. Torture trauma can make the already challenging task of making a life anew completely overwhelming - even years later.

Equally, many migrants and their families across the world face the threat of torture and ill-treatment in the country in which they settle or pass through - simply by virtue of being a migrant. So often in contemporary society the finger of blame is pointed at the migrant, without it being recognised that they are frequently the victims of torture, rape, enslavement, trafficking and murder. Nils Melzner, the Special Rapporteur on Torture made this very clear when he said that:

"The primary cause for the massive abuse suffered by migrants is neither migration itself, not organized crime, or the corruption of individual officials, but the growing tendency of States to base their official migration policies and practices on deterrence, criminalization and discrimination, rather than protection, human rights and non-discrimination."

The truth of these words is echoed by the similar experiences of migrants across the world. These include the deprivation of liberty on spurious or unfounded grounds, the blocking or reduction of migration routes and borders, and forced returns. The world needs to contend with these methods as well as a myriad of other complex issues, including how people who have been through torture can recover and rebuild their lives.

Fortunately, there is a growing global and regional recognition that torture victim migrants have a right to protection and rehabilitation in the countries where they seek refuge. The UN, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the European Court of Justice and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have all recently made this very clear. To make these rights a reality, people and organisations across the world stand ready to support life after torture. We in the rehabilitation movement know very well how to do this.

The torture rehabilitation movement has amassed a vast body of knowledge and is constantly developing new approaches, methodologies and resources to fully understand the complexity of migrants' stories. We understand the influence of culture and context in the rehabilitation process, how different interventions are suitable for different populations and individuals at different stages of the migration cycle, and how living with poverty and with uncertainty regarding immigration status affects mental health.

One of the things that we know beyond doubt is that, while there are similarities to the migrant experience the world over, it is equally certain that each person's story should be met afresh; histories are subjective, people are diverse, spoken and unspoken needs vary from one day to the other and over time. We therefore join together in solidarity on this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture to remember those who have been exposed to unimaginable abuses, and to recognise the importance of holistic rehabilitation.

In this way, we support life after torture.