

Call for papers

Special section of Torture Journal: Journal on Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and Prevention of Torture

Continuous Traumatic Stress (CTS): An essential paradigm for understanding the experience and rehabilitation of torture survivors, or an unnecessary distraction?

Pau Pérez Sales - Editor-in-Chief, Torture Journal

Guest Editor: Craig Higson-Smith – Director of Research, The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), USA

Background

Conceptualisations of traumatic stress that consider traumatic exposure that occurred exclusively in the past may be of limited use when applied to torture survivors who continue to live in real danger. Such danger might arise in many ways, including from continued surveillance and intimidation by agents of authoritarian regimes, enduring conditions of war, or xenophobic violence aimed at refugees and asylum seekers targeting torture survivors living in exile. It was the recognition of the limitation of concepts like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex PTSD that led a group of mental health practitioners in apartheid-era South Africa to coin the term continuous traumatic stress (CTS), which emphasised the challenges of coming to terms with past traumatic events whilst still enduring the threat of current or future harm. Simultaneously, practitioners in Chile and El Salvador were exploring related concepts. More recently, a special edition of *Peace and Conflict, The Journal of Peace Psychology* made progress in this field of research, examining healthy and pathological responses to continuous threat, as well as intervention approaches that explicitly address contexts of ongoing violence.

Regardless of the intuitive appeal of theoretical constructs like CTS, empirical support is scarce, and the *posttraumatic* stress paradigm remains dominant in scientific writing about torture. The question arises: *Does the construct of continuous traumatic stress meaningfully add to practitioners' understanding of the experience of torture and support more effective rehabilitation approaches, or is it an unnecessary distraction that takes away from the core issue of coming to terms with past traumatic experiences?*

Objective

To gather and disseminate scientific perspectives on the utility of continuous traumatic stress and related constructs to understand the experiences and rehabilitation needs of torture survivors globally.

Call for papers

Torture Journal encourages authors to submit papers with a psychological, medical or legal orientation, particularly those that are interdisciplinary with other fields of knowledge. We welcome papers on the following:

1. Empirical evidence documenting torture survivors' experience of, and response to, ongoing threat and danger in different contexts;
2. Exploration of the links between ongoing threat, continuous traumatic stress and the fundamental rights of torture survivors and refugees;
3. Approaches to the forensic documentation of continuous traumatic stress in torture survivors;
4. Discussion of the role of continuous traumatic stress in transitional justice and peace-building interventions involving torture survivors;
5. Conceptualisations of healthy and pathological responses to ongoing threat in torture survivors;
6. Evidence linking ongoing threat and danger to torture survivors' needs and rehabilitation outcomes;
7. Approaches to assessment of safety, threat and continuous traumatic stress in torture survivors;
8. Clinical approaches to working with torture survivors under conditions of ongoing threat.

Deadline for submissions

30th September 2020.

For more information

Contact Pau Pérez-Sales, Editor in Chief (pauperez@runbox.com) or Chris Dominey, Editorial Assistant (cdo@irct.org).

For more general enquiries, please write to publications@irct.org

Submission guidelines and links

To make a submission, navigate here: <https://tidsskrift.dk/torture-journal/about/submissions>

Author guidelines can be found here:

<https://irct.org/uploads/media/2eefc4b785f87c7c3028a1c59ccd06ed.pdf>

Read more about the Torture Journal here: <https://irct.org/global-resources/torture-journal>

For general submission guidelines, please see the Torture Journal website (<https://tidsskrift.dk/index.php/torture-journal/index>). Papers will be selected on their relevance to the field, applicability, methodological rigor, and level of innovation.

About the Torture Journal

Please go to <https://tidsskrift.dk/torture-journal> - a site devoted to Torture Journal readers and contributors - to access the latest and archived issues.

References

Martín-Baró, I. (1989). Political violence and war as causes of psychosocial trauma in El Salvador. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 18(1), 3–20.
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00207411.1989.11449115>

Stevens, G., Eagle, G., Kaminer, D., & Higson-Smith, C. (2013). Continuous traumatic stress: Conceptual conversations in contexts of global conflict, violence and trauma. *Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 19*(2), 75-84. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0032484>

Straker, G. & The Sanctuaries Treatment Team. (1987). The continuous traumatic stress syndrome: The single therapeutic interview. *Psychology in Society, 8*, 48-78.