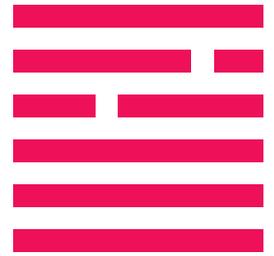


SUPPORT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS AFTER TORTURE



Every year, millions of people are forced to flee their home countries. Today, there are approximately 60 million people – a figure unprecedented in modern human history – who have been displaced as a result of persecution, armed conflict, war and gross human rights violations. Many of them have been subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Torture victims often suffer severe physical and psychological consequences that are exacerbated by the experiences of flight, perilous journeys to safety and forcibly living in a foreign country. They need support to rebuild their lives after torture and to effectively engage in asylum processes.

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WHAT IS SUPPORT TO REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS?

Support means identifying torture victims among the broader displaced population and offering them relevant support. This includes rehabilitation support, documenting their torture claims so that they can use it as evidence in their asylum application, and offering asylum procedures that are sensitive to their vulnerable situation.

Refugees and asylum seekers have an internationally recognised right to a fair evaluation of their claims. Among them, torture victims have a right to rehabilitation regardless of their legal status in their host country.

In reality, however, the vast majority of torture victims are not identified as such in the process of asylum determination, which means that the information about their past torture is not considered in the determination of their asylum claim. Adding to this, they do not receive the rehabilitation support they need to fully recover and rebuild their lives.

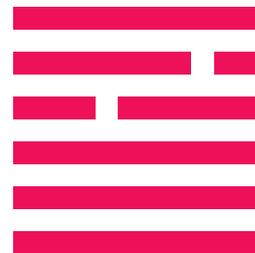
Thousands of persons who have very strong grounds for protection and who urgently need rehabilitation support receive neither.

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SUPPORT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS AFTER TORTURE



WHY SUPPORT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS?

Torture frequently leaves victims with long-lasting physical impairment, or even disability. Even greater are the psychological consequences such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder with symptoms including flashbacks, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.

When torture victims are not identified as such, they are not offered rehabilitation services, their claims of past torture are not documented and their asylum requests are not examined in processes that are sensitive to their vulnerable physical and psychological state. It is a missed opportunity for all involved in asylum processes to help individuals in need and to ensure fair processing of their asylum requests. Instead, victims are often left without support for long periods of time, which can lead to a further deterioration of their situation and well-being. This negatively affects their ability to take care of themselves and their family and to restore their life after torture in their host country.

We know how to support refugees and asylum seekers after torture. With appropriate screening mechanisms in place, we can identify possible victims early in the asylum process and ensure that they receive rehabilitation support to address the effects of torture. In parallel, they can have their claims documented, which can be used as evidence in asylum proceedings and the processes can be adapted to be sensitive to their vulnerable situation.

It is therefore vital that torture victims receive support throughout asylum proceedings and that they have access to rehabilitation services and other adapted material assistance.

Support is needed so that refugees and asylum seekers can begin to rebuild their lives.

WHAT I CAN DO TO SUPPORT

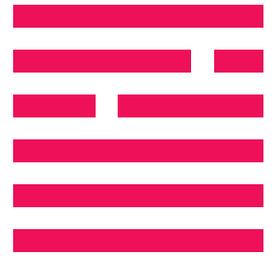
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HOW TO SUPPORT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS?

We can all do something to support refugees and asylum seekers who are victims of torture in our communities, countries and globally. Here is what you can do:

Political decisions makers at all levels should ensure that:

- Establish mechanism for early identification of torture victims among refugees and asylum seekers, which includes referrals for support with rehabilitation and documentation of their torture claims;
- Establish special asylum determination processes that are sensitive to the physical and psychological state of torture victims and other vulnerable groups to ensure that the processes are suitable for identifying valid protection claims;
- Ensure that torture victims receive support that is sensitive to their special needs throughout asylum proceedings. This includes special guarantees such as the exemption from immigration detention, the provision of reception facilities that take into consideration their mental health and a sensitive management of their case by protection authorities.

Migration judges and officers should:

- Be trained in and actively seek to identify signs of torture in refugees and asylum seekers and ensure that the existence of such signs leads to an automatic referral for support with rehabilitation and documentation;
- Ensure that determination of asylum claims from torture victims is sensitive to the vulnerable psychological state and adequately considers any evidence of past torture.

Health and other professionals working with asylum seekers who are torture victims should:

- Be trained in and actively seek to identify signs of torture in refugees and asylum seekers;
- Ensure that they support victims in accordance with ethical and professional standards for rehabilitation and documentation.

We can all:

- Support victims to tell their story to raise awareness about their experiences and create an atmosphere that enables them to raise their voices as victims;
- De-stigmatise refugees and asylum seekers, speak up in their support and advocate for the rights of victims;
- Hold political leaders accountable for providing adequate support to refugees and asylum seekers after torture.

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