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VICTIMS of TORTURE

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**U.S. Home to Far More Refugee Torture Survivors than Previously Believed**

***The Center for Victims of Torture Calls on Congress to Increase Funding***

**ST. PAUL, Minn**— Based on an analysis of previous research studies, the Center for Victims of Torture™ (CVT) has concluded that the number of refugee torture survivors in the U.S. is much higher than previously reported. In light of these findings, CVT today calls on Congress to increase funding for torture survivor rehabilitation services. The organization is also recommending the U.S. government conduct a coordinated and more thorough approach to determining the number of refugee torture survivors living in the United States.

“For nearly 20 years, we’ve estimated that 400,000 – 500,000 refugee torture survivors live in the United States,” said Craig Higson-Smith, CVT’s director of research. “However, with the ongoing arrival of refugees, we know that number has to be higher. A meta-analysis of the studies that have been done leads us to estimate a refugee torture prevalence rate as high as 44 percent – significantly higher than previous estimates.”

“Applying this percentage to the more than [3 million refugees](#) who have arrived in the U.S. since 1975, we conclude that the number of refugee torture survivors in the U.S. could be nearly three times the previous estimate – perhaps as high as 1.3 million,” said Higson-Smith. “This estimate does not account for the number of torture survivors who have been granted protection through the U.S. asylum system.”

Curt Goering, CVT executive director, noted, “There is an existing national network of specialized rehabilitation centers and programs that urgently needs additional funding to rebuild the lives and restore the hope of the large number of torture survivors now living in this country—and those who will arrive in the coming years. We call upon Congress to immediately increase ORR funding for survivor rehabilitation to \$16 million as has been requested by members of the Senate, and for the Administration to conduct a thorough and thoughtful review of the number of survivors in the U.S. in

order to develop sustainable physical and mental health policies and care networks for refugee torture survivors.”

[Studies suggest that 40-50% of refugees](#) who survived torture experience posttraumatic stress disorder and/or major depressive disorder and thus often require mental health care to facilitate effective integration into communities and economies. The benefits of this care are clear, as the positive economic impacts of refugees and immigrants have been widely documented.

Recognizing the vital importance of rehabilitative care for torture survivors, earlier this year 21 U.S. Senators formally requested a funding increase of \$5 million (to \$16 million) for the Office of Refugee Resettlement’s Survivors of Torture program (ORR/SOT). They took that action even before the Obama Administration’s recent commitment to accept 100,000 refugees per year by 2017. Likewise, the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act of 2015 (TVRRA), a bi-partisan bill championed by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ/4<sup>th</sup>), is pending in both chambers of Congress. The TVRRA authorizes \$25 million to the ORR/SOT.

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*The Center for Victims of Torture is a nonprofit organization headquartered in St. Paul, MN with an office in Washington, D.C. and healing initiatives in Africa and the Middle East. Visit [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org).*