

# FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

EMPOWERING  
SURVIVORS,  
REBUILDING  
LIVES



**STRATEGY 2019-21**  
**HEAL PROTECT PREVENT**

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# VISION

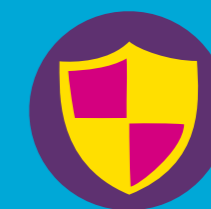
Our vision is a world free from torture.



In a world where torture still exists, we aim to ensure that the human rights of survivors are restored through rehabilitation and protection.



We fight to ensure that states responsible for torture are held to account.







# WHO WE ARE

**Freedom from Torture is the only organisation in the UK dedicated solely to the treatment of survivors of torture.**

Torturers attempt to silence and break people. We help survivors to find their voices again and rebuild their lives in the safety of the UK.

Our team of dedicated professionals provides physical, psychological, legal and welfare support to people who have survived torture. We also support other providers to deliver high quality rehabilitation services to survivors.

We help people move from darkness into light, and to reclaim their lives.

We campaign for change, using evidence from our services and survivor voices to protect and promote survivors' rights and hold torturing states to account. We are proud to play a significant role in the global anti-torture movement. The perspectives of survivors, active and empowered, underpin and inform all our work.

Our vibrant community of supporters helps to create this change.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

**We oppose torture fiercely and stand with survivors in their recovery. Their resilience is a source of constant inspiration.**

We believe that no survivor should be forced back to be at risk of further torture.

Freedom from Torture's core values include:

**COMPASSION:**

Understanding the suffering, acting together to end it

**EMPOWERMENT:**

Unlocking strength, moving from passive to active

**RESOLVE:**

Never giving up, even in the hardest times

**HOPE:**

Belief in the potential for making change

# OUR NATIONAL CENTRES

**We have centres across the UK where we rehabilitate survivors and build capacity and influence.**

Each week, dozens of full-time and over a hundred part-time staff are joined by nearly two hundred volunteers in Freedom from Torture centres in Birmingham, Glasgow, London, Manchester and Newcastle.

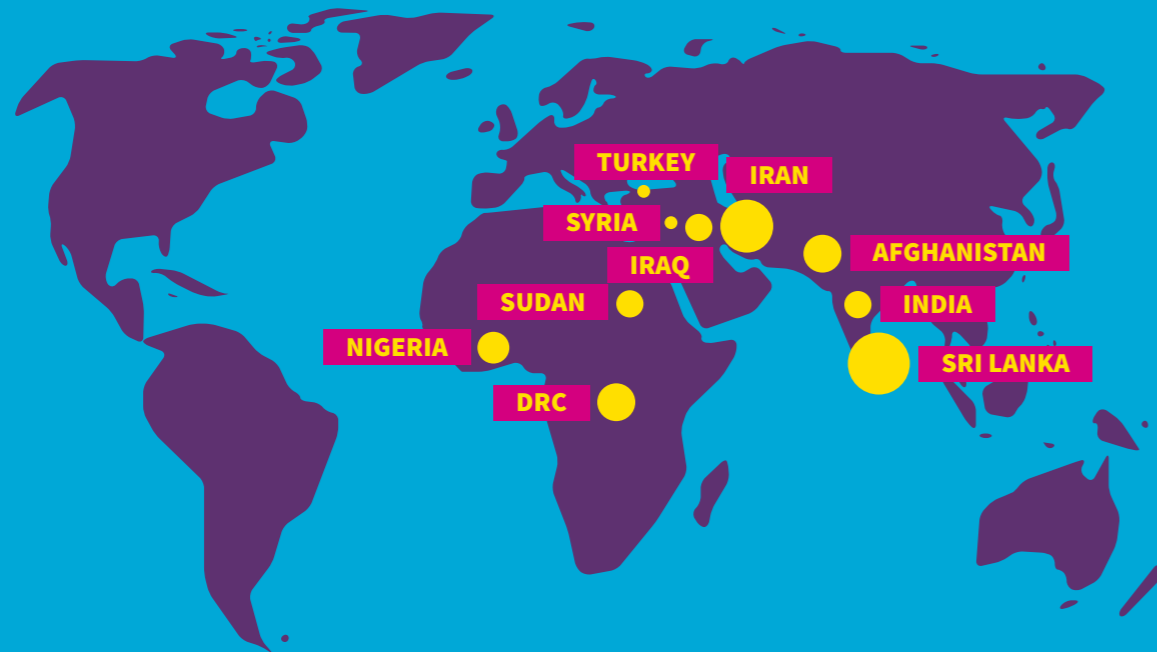


# THE CHALLENGES



“A great nation doesn’t support or endorse the practice of torture but respects human rights and upholds the absolute ban on torture...While you [Donald Trump] publicly support and encourage the use of torture you also give a licence to dictators and strongmen of other countries, including America’s allies, to detain and torture their own people.”

Kolbassia Haoussou, coordinator of Survivors Speak OUT, in his open letter to Donald Trump. Read the message in full [here](#).



## TOP TEN COUNTRIES OF REFERRAL

The above map is based on the referrals data of Freedom from Torture for 2017. The map indicates torture survivors who have arrived in the UK and found their way to Freedom from Torture. It does not intend to reflect all countries where torture is known to be widespread.

## THE IMPOSSIBLE STANDARD OF PROOF

We live in a world in which torture is not just happening daily but is increasingly encouraged by some of the most powerful politicians in the world. It is essential that we turn the tide.

On arrival in the UK, many torture survivors who have already suffered so much struggle to access basic services to fulfil their right to rehabilitation. Those failed by the asylum system are especially vulnerable after years of austerity and what has become known as the “hostile environment”.

Too many find that the Home Office refuses to believe them as they try to reveal the brutal reality of what they have lived through. The bar for proving torture in the asylum system is becoming impossible to meet in practice. Even those with extensive independent clinical evidence of torture are accused of lying and threatened with detention and removal to a risk of further torture.

We believe the UK must step up and welcome torture survivors who are on the move and at risk. The Windrush scandal has shone a light on systemic failings of the immigration system. Change is essential.



“It is not a case of ensuring that the shocking treatment of the Windrush generation ‘never happens again’. It is already happening – redoubling the pain of those who have already suffered so much and holding them back from starting a new life in safety.”

Joint letter to the Home Secretary coordinated by Freedom from Torture with refugee organisations, human rights groups and faith leaders on parallels between the Home Office treatment of the Windrush generation and the treatment of asylum-seekers. Read the letter [here](#).



# HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

**Freedom from Torture transforms the lives of individual survivors in the UK through our specialist torture rehabilitation services.**

Again and again, survivors of torture tell us that they feel they have found their own humanity once more, and have regained control of their own lives. They thus defeat the inhumanity of their torturers, who deliberately set out to destroy lives. These direct services provided by Freedom from Torture for torture survivors form the bedrock of all that we do and the need is growing.

In addition to our own services, we also work to build the capacity of other providers in order to maximise access for survivors to high quality rehabilitation services.

We are more than just a service provider. We are committed to using expertise and evidence from our work with survivors to tackle the problem of torture and expose its human cost. We work with survivors and our supporters and partners to campaign for the rights of survivors, including in the asylum system, and for torture prevention and accountability.



## REHABILITATION IS A COMPLEX PROCESS WHICH TAKES MANY DIFFERENT FORMS



## REHABILITATION

**Freedom from Torture takes a holistic approach.** We provide psychological therapies, support and community groups, forensic documentation of torture and practical help, such as legal and welfare advice, to support survivors in navigating the asylum system and accessing crucial services like housing and welfare.

Our clinicians offer individual, family and group therapy, helping torture survivors to deal with the trauma of their experiences. Therapeutic, creative and social groups offer activities from gardening and bread-making to football and chess, enabling survivors to find some respite and peace, make new friends, and begin to rebuild their lives.

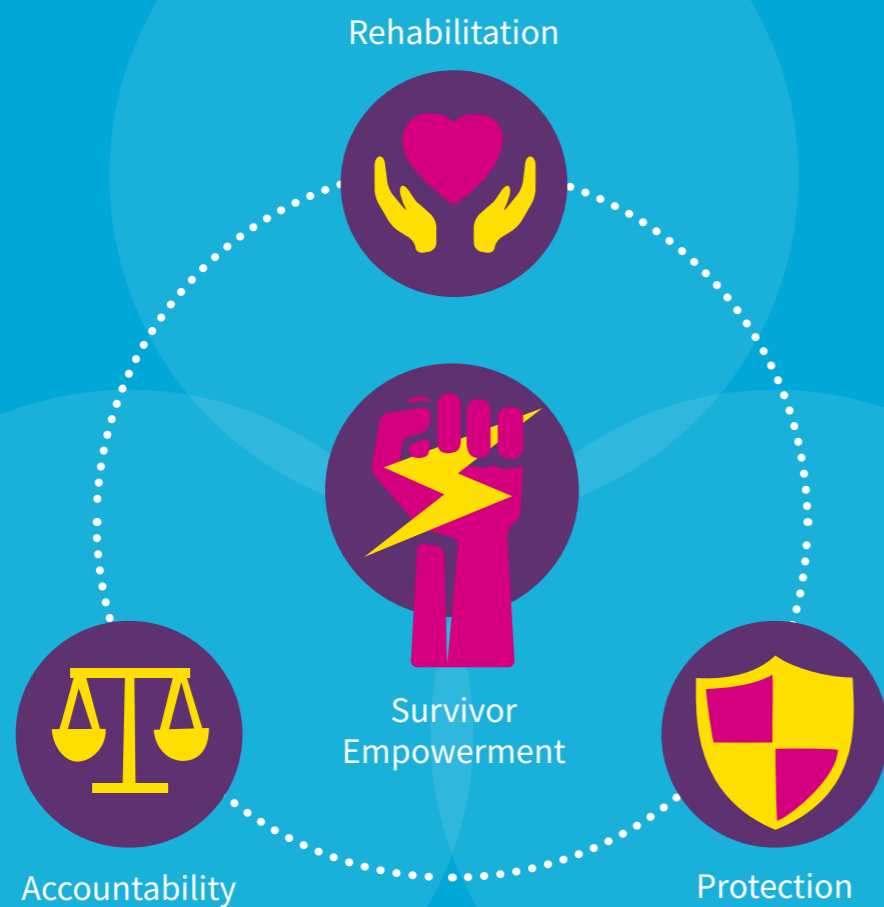
Language is central to all our work with survivors. We provide an interpreting service that enables survivors to communicate with clinicians and others who do not speak their language.

“Slowly I’m starting to feel settled and this has helped me move forward. With a safer place to stay, and Ilana’s support, I have been able to face the pain of my past.”

Torture survivor



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 2019-2021



## REHABILITATION



“Therapy is the flower of this organisation. It is a way of unlocking people’s power that torturers tried to take away”

Torture survivor rehabilitated with help from Freedom from Torture



As the UN has made clear, all survivors in the UK have a right to rehabilitation, no matter where they were tortured in the world (Read the full article here). This right is, however, elusive for many survivors in this country. In a vicious cycle, exclusion from essential services fuels deterioration of survivors’ mental and physical health.

In the next three years, between 2019 and 2021, we will work to ensure that more survivors get access to the services they need to realise their right to rehabilitation. At present, we only have capacity to assist one third of those who need our help. We will strengthen our own treatment services to reach more survivors. We will challenge barriers to survivors’ access to mainstream services. We will provide capacity-building support to other providers. We will contribute to the wider clinical knowledge base about what works best in helping survivors to rehabilitate.



## IN SUMMARY:

By providing more choice and access for survivors to quality rehabilitation services, these outcomes can have transformative impact on the lives of torture survivors in this country.

### GOAL:

To help more survivors of torture in the UK to realise their right to rehabilitation

### OUTCOMES BY 2021:

- 1a New pathways through our rehabilitation service that:
  - (i) Are based on best evidence about how to fulfil the right to rehabilitation for different groups of torture survivors;
  - (ii) Offer more choice to service users; and
  - (iii) Are more responsive to the health, social, welfare and legal needs of different groups of survivors
- 1b More survivors access our direct rehabilitation service year on year with a clear priority placed on those who can benefit the most from our holistic model
- 1c Clear evidence that our interventions lead to improved health outcomes for our service users
- 1d Freedom from Torture is recognised as a sector leader in supporting frontline staff to deliver the best possible care to survivors
- 1e More survivors access the health and social care services they need including through knowledge-sharing and advocacy
- 1f Freedom from Torture is actively helping to advance clinical knowledge of how best to realise the right to rehabilitation for survivors living in exile

## PROTECTION



**“The difficulty of proving torture in the asylum system is the mother of all our problems here in the UK.”**

Torture survivor in treatment at Freedom from Torture



**Living every day in fear of being forced to return to further torture is one of the greatest barriers to rehabilitation for survivors.**

It is clear from our analysis that asylum decision-makers often view expert evidence of torture as a problem “to get around” in order to be able to reject the asylum claim. Read the full article [here](#).

We will work to help more survivors secure protection in the UK so that they can recover and rebuild their lives safe in the knowledge that they will not be forcibly returned to a risk of further torture. We will do this by improving access for survivors to expert evidence of torture and legal representation, by increasing the capacity of our own world-leading medico-legal report service and by building the capacity of other providers. Through parliamentary pressure and campaigning, we will seek to ensure that asylum decision-makers apply the correct standard of proof when assessing survivors’ asylum claims. We will fight to end the inhumane detention of torture survivors for immigration purposes.

### GOAL:

To ensure survivors of torture in the UK receive effective protection and are not returned to their countries of origin to face a risk of further torture

### OUTCOMES BY 2021:

- 2a** More survivors who need it are able to obtain expert clinical evidence of torture for their asylum claim
- 2b** Improved use of expert clinical evidence of torture by asylum decision-makers
- 2c** Improved access for survivors to quality legal advice and representation for their asylum claims through well-targeted capacity-building and other action by Freedom from Torture
- 2d** UK asylum country information, guidance and case law reflects our evidence of torture practices
- 2e** An end to the immigration detention of survivors



## IN SUMMARY:

By ensuring that survivors of torture are not returned to a risk of further torture and receive legal protection more quickly, we will ensure the security that survivors need to recover.

## ACCOUNTABILITY



**“We want a world free from torture. Torturers need to know that what they are doing is not right and against human rights.”**

Survivor activist at Freedom from Torture



**All the indications are that torture will continue in the coming years and the absolute global ban will come under further strain as part of a backlash against human rights in various parts of the world.**

We will use our medical evidence and the expertise of our clinicians and survivors themselves to confront torturing states and promote prevention and accountability in the states our service users come from. We will help to strengthen the global anti-torture movement by sharing innovative features of our work including our survivor activism models. We will push the UK government to restore its standing as an unequivocal supporter of the global torture ban.



## IN SUMMARY:

Both in the UK and globally, Freedom from Torture will be a leading voice, working closely with torture survivors at all times, in exposing and confronting torture worldwide.

### GOAL:

To expose torture in order to strengthen prevention efforts and secure justice and international protection for survivors

### OUTCOMES BY 2021:

- 3a** Our medical evidence and survivor voices are used to:
  - (i) Expose torture practices in the countries where our service users come from;
  - (ii) Prevent torture and hold torturing states accountable;
  - and
  - (iii) Strengthen UK asylum country information, guidance and case law
- 3b** Increased survivor involvement in the design and implementation of torture prevention and accountability processes
- 3c** Stronger Freedom from Torture impact within states where our service users were tortured
- 3d** Pioneering aspects of our torture prevention and accountability work are used to strengthen the global anti-torture movement
- 3e** British foreign policy has a stronger focus on torture prevention and accountability
- 3f** Accountability for UK complicity in post-9/11 torture



## SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT



**“As torture survivors we have precious knowledge and wisdom to offer.”**

Tracy Ndovi, member of the Survivors Speak OUT network supported by Freedom from Torture. [Read the full article here.](#)



**Torture is a tool of repression designed to silence and break resistance by making people powerless and destroying their voice and place in communities. Supporting survivors to recover their agency and participate actively in society is a key objective of therapy and everything else we do at Freedom from Torture.**

We will move up the “ladder of participation” so that survivors do not simply inform but also co-design, deliver and evaluate our services and influencing work, and help to set the direction of Freedom from Torture’s work.



### GOAL:

To be a model of best practice in enabling the empowerment and agency of torture survivors

### OUTCOMES BY 2021:

- 4a Stronger survivor voices in our governance and management, so that survivors help to set our direction of travel
- 4b Meaningful involvement of survivors in the design, delivery and evaluation of Freedom from Torture’s services so that survivor voices are heard at every stage
- 4c Stronger survivor engagement across Freedom from Torture’s operations
- 4d Other organisations working with survivors are inspired by our practice to strengthen their service user engagement
- 4e Freedom from Torture is recognised as a global leader in supporting survivors to fight torture and promote the rights of other survivors

## IN SUMMARY:

Survivor empowerment has long been at the heart of Freedom from Torture’s work. Other organisations are eager to hear more and learn from our approaches to involving survivors in our operations and influencing work. This is a powerful way of confronting – and defeating – the evil of torture.



# STRENGTHENING FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

The need for our work has never been greater and none of it would be possible without the work of our service users, staff, volunteers and supporters to ensure that Freedom from Torture is the most effective organisation it can be for the benefit of survivors.

We are a voice of authority in our field. Expertise underpins all that we do. We are an organisation which has real, measurable impact and which is evidence-led in all of its work.

From 2019 to 2021 we are committed to: growing our income and supporter base, supporting and valuing our supporters and staff (including volunteers and interpreters), and managing our organisation and our resources with the highest levels of probity and transparency.



**“Without this help, I would have had many problems. On top of the practical help, I have also made some new friends who have been through the same as me. Before, I was very isolated but I finally feel like things are starting to get better.”**

Freedom from Torture client





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Freedom from Torture  
(Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture)

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