CONTENTS

Who we are 4
What we stand for 4
Our national centres 5
The challenges 6
How we make a difference 8
Goals and objectives 2019–2021 10
1. Rehabilitation 11
2. Protection 12
3. Accountability 13
4. Survivor empowerment 14
Strengthening Freedom from Torture 15

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.
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 a shone a light on systemic failings of the immigration system. Change is essential.

“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.

“This 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.

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.
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.

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
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.

“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

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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

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

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.
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.

“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

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

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Or join us on Facebook /FreedomfromTorture

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