

OUR STRATEGY 2022–2025



**FREEDOM
FROM
TORTURE**
EMPOWERING
SURVIVORS.
REBUILDING
LIVES

**TOGETHER FOR
A FUTURE FREE
FROM TORTURE**

INTRODUCTION

No matter who we are or where we come from, we all want to live in a world free from torture.

No government should ever commit or tolerate torture. The way we treat those who have survived it shows who we are as people and what our society stands for.

At Freedom from Torture, we are working towards a more compassionate world, where torture is consigned to history books and survivors get the help they need to thrive.

This strategy explains what we will achieve by 2025.

For the first time ever, our strategy has been created together with people who have lived through both torture and the UK's harsh asylum system.

Together, we led surveys, ran focus groups and interviewed supporters and partner organisations. Then we refined our learning

to make sure people's real-life experiences, priorities and ambitions become our guiding light for this new roadmap to a brighter future.

To bring our strategy to life we have set four goals. To reach them, we will focus on the values that have always been at the heart of our movement.

We will keep raising the alarm when governments torture people or allow this to happen. We will keep creating safe places where those who have lived through torture can start to feel strong again.

And we will keep growing our community of compassionate people – volunteers and activists, survivors and supporters, lawyers, therapists, and doctors – **who, like us, believe that a world free from torture is worth fighting for.**



“ This is our most ambitious strategy ever – moving beyond a collaborative approach to one where our clinical services and campaigns are co-designed and co-delivered by people who have survived torture. Our ambition is also reflected in our commitment to growing so that we can double the number of people who benefit from our ground-breaking rehabilitation services and the expert clinical reports we prepare for survivors’ asylum claims.”

Sonya Sceats, Chief Executive,
Freedom from Torture



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS 2019–2021

To fully understand how to tackle torture, we need to ask people who know how it feels.

This is why, since 2019, survivors have become much more involved in advising and running Freedom from Torture. For example, we have designed a new rehabilitation model together. Grounded in human rights, it offers people more choice and better outcomes.

We have also proudly welcomed a survivor of torture to our senior management team for the first time.

Today, we are proud to have people from many different backgrounds and walks of life shaping what we do, combining our different expertise to make us stronger together.

Our movement's milestone achievements from 2019–21 include:



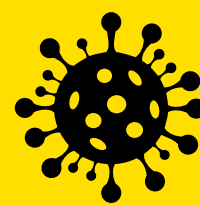
SUPPORTING PEOPLE



We designed and piloted human rights-based rehabilitation therapy, with and for survivors.

We delivered a record
46,000 HOURS
of direct clinical therapy.

COPING WITH COVID-19



Our supporters raised an incredible

£260,000

for the Do What We Can campaign for people who needed emergency help during the pandemic, making it our most successful digital appeal ever.

We distributed

£20,000

in small Covid-19 grants to 14 smaller UK charities delivering programmes and services for torture survivors that complement our own work.



SHIFTING THE POWER



3 in 12

of our trustees now have direct experience of torture and/or the UK's cruel asylum system.

Two members of our national Survivors Speak OUT network, Kolbassia Haoussou and Nadine Tunasi, were appointed as champions of the UK's flagship initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

We drew on our model of survivor empowerment to support

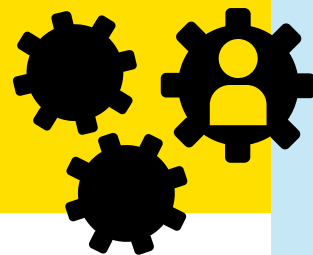
50+ ORGANISATIONS

Survivor representation at senior management level and a new Survivor Empowerment directorate staffed mainly by survivors.

Kolbassia Haoussou, our new Director of Survivor Empowerment, received an MBE for his services to people who have survived sexual violence and torture.



CHANGING THE SYSTEM



We halted attempts by the government to decriminalise torture by British troops abroad.

Following a key Supreme Court decision in 2019, the government now has to take medical evidence of torture seriously when deciding asylum applications.

Our expert medical evidence of torture helped the Home Office get more asylum decisions "right first time".



WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS



More of us now believe in being a safe haven for people who have been tortured; that no one should be forced back to a place where they risk being tortured, and that Britain has a moral obligation to stop torture happening worldwide.

A growing proportion of people in Britain think torture is wrong in any circumstance.

100,000+ SUPPORTERS

now stand with us for a torture-free world.



WHO WE ARE

VISION

**Our vision is a world
free from torture.**

Where torture still exists, we aim to ensure that the human rights of survivors are restored through rehabilitation and protection. And we fight to ensure that torturing governments are held to account.





WHAT WE DO

Freedom from Torture supports people who have survived torture to heal, and feel safe and strong again.

Our therapists work with survivors to rebuild their physical and mental health. Our doctors document evidence of torture, and our lawyers and welfare advisors help survivors with their asylum cases and social support.

Together, we speak out to expose torture and defend the rights of survivors, nationally and globally. We hold torturing governments to account. And we campaign for women, men and children to be treated fairly when they seek safety in the UK after being tortured.

We are able to do it all because we are backed by an active movement of compassionate, outspoken supporters.





WHAT WE STAND FOR

**We stand with anyone, anywhere,
who has survived torture.
We believe in offering safety to people
who risk being tortured elsewhere.**

We are committed to tackling structural inequality and promoting diversity and inclusion in all of our work to achieve a world free from torture.

This includes facing up to the pervasive racism built into our immigration system, our public institutions and our history books.

We are committed to survivor leadership in the fight against torture.

And by recognising our diversity as our biggest strength, we are becoming a truly inclusive movement.

THESE FOUR VALUES GUIDE OUR WORK:

COMPASSION

We understand suffering, and work together to end it.

RESOLVE

We never give up, no matter what.

EMPOWERMENT

We unlock strength and help people move from passive to active.

HOPE

We know things can change for the better.



THE WORLD AROUND US

Wherever we come from and whatever our religious views or race, we all deserve to live peacefully and free from harm. Some elected leaders think, however, that torturing people is justified.

The UK has tried to let torturers from past conflicts off the hook. Politicians try to distract us from their failures by pointing fingers at people who come here to find safety.

Our ministers are making it harder for people who have escaped torture to rebuild their lives in the UK. And they are tearing apart the international system Britain helped create to protect refugees after World War Two.

We have work to do, but we have the wind in our sails.

Even if our leaders do not appear to care about people being tortured, we are many who do care about each other.

In 2021, we forced the government to back down – despite its 80-seat majority – on its plans to block prosecutions of British troops for torture and other crimes abroad.

Growing numbers of people want Britain to stand up proudly and support the absolute global ban on torture. Many of us think it is right to offer a safe haven to people who risk being tortured elsewhere. More and more of us also want to change bad systems and processes that are hurting people.

By coming together, we are building a broader movement with powerful networks, connecting supporters and survivors, professionals and activists, and experts in defending our human rights.

Now is the time to step up our work for a torture-free world.

Right now, the commitment of many governments to the absolute and universal prohibition of torture seems ambiguous or worse. Our future work together to maintain the global torture ban begins immediately, and the next 5 years will be crucial if we are to have impact.

Through to 2025 and beyond, we will also intensify our efforts to build stronger coalitions of caring people and organisations to demand a humane asylum system that gives survivors a fair chance to build new lives in our communities.

AND WE HAVE A PLAN FOR HOW TO ACHIEVE IT.





GOAL 1 CHANGING LIVES

We will help more survivors of torture via our ground-breaking clinical services and become a recognised clinical centre of excellence.



“Freedom from Torture’s life-saving clinical services don’t just restore survivors’ lives – they restore the life of the society we live in.”

Jeremie Diatapakola, Service User Administrator at Freedom from Torture and Survivors Speak OUT member



WE RECENTLY ASKED PEOPLE WHO HAVE SURVIVED TORTURE WHAT OUR TOP FUTURE PRIORITY SHOULD BE.

They told us that we need to provide our rehabilitation therapies and expert medical evidence to more survivors.

To do this work best, we need to develop and deliver it hand in hand with survivors. We need to recruit more talented doctors, therapists and other professionals, and grow our income in order to make that happen.

What is a Medico-Legal Report?



A medico-legal report is a document prepared by a medical expert following a physical and psychological assessment of a survivor of torture for use in their application for asylum in the UK based on international legal standards set out in the Istanbul Protocol.



What is evidence-based trauma focused therapy?

We assess clients for symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and disorders strongly linked to trauma exposure. If they are experiencing PTSD and want to receive treatment, we offer three types of psychological therapy that are proven through gold standard research to most effectively treat the condition and that are recommended in national and international guidelines: Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) and trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (TFCBT).

BY THE END OF 2025 WE WILL:

- double the number of people rebuilding their lives through our pioneering torture rehabilitation services
- provide twice as many survivors with medico-legal reports, or other expert clinical evidence to support their asylum claim
- ensure all our therapy teams are delivering evidence-based trauma-focused therapy to survivors with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- train survivors and therapists to deliver a wider range of treatments together
- offer every person leaving our treatments the chance to join a peer support group and benefit from legal and welfare workshops and signposting
- be recognised as a centre of clinical excellence, with highly skilled teams leading innovative research alongside key academic partners, participating in national and global debates, and delivering outstanding outcomes for the people we work with.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- offering survivors easier access to and choice of remote and in-person services
- rolling out a new operating model for our medico-legal report service
- expanding our clinical workforce
- modernising our client database and other systems to support better services and research
- developing a new in-house clinical research programme and sharing our learning with similar organisations
- growing our income to make this all a reality.

GOAL 2

CHANGING THE SYSTEM

We will build broad support for the torture ban and Britain as a country of sanctuary for survivors, and ensure a fair, compassionate asylum system.



“We need an immigration system that is fair, protects and works for the people who will rely on it in time of need.”

Sepideh Sahar, artist and Survivors Speak OUT member

HISTORY SHOWS THAT LIKE-MINDED, COMPASSIONATE PEOPLE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

Right now, the future might look bleak. Governments continue to torture people. Leaders are losing interest in stopping torture.

In Britain, some politicians think attacking people seeking safety is an acceptable strategy for getting a few votes. Chronic problems with the asylum system put people at risk of forced return to torture.

Great challenges undoubtedly lie ahead. But, by working together, we will overcome them.



BY THE END OF 2025 WE WILL:

- inspire an overwhelming majority of people in this country to support the absolute torture ban and Britain as a place of sanctuary for survivors
- triple the number of people taking concrete action to defend these principles
- develop and run all our campaigns in partnership with people who have been tortured
- pursue at least one strategic legal case that changes government policy and promotes survivors' human rights
- successfully campaign against three policy or legal proposals that could hurt torture survivors
- help Home Office officials make better decisions on survivors' asylum applications.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- building a mass movement of allies, from grassroots supporters and expert professionals to politicians and partner organisations, and led by people who have experienced torture
- defending the absolute ban on torture, confronting British complicity in torture, and making a powerful case for a fair, compassionate asylum system – together
- pushing for better use of expert medical evidence when asylum applications are determined
- ensuring that survivor empowerment and anti-racism are deeply embedded in all of this work.



Who are Survivors Speak OUT?

We are a national network of torture survivors who are former clients of Freedom from Torture and who speak with authority on issues of torture, and about life in the UK as asylum seekers and refugees who have survived trauma. In the fight against torture, we are the experts. Our expert voices influence others and call for evidence-based policies.

GOAL 3

SURVIVORS DRIVING CHANGE

We will support more survivors to take the lead and shape our work.



“One of the most powerful ways to fight torture is to empower survivors to become agents: first to get rid of the impact of torture and live free from what the torturers wanted to achieve, and second to stand tall against torture by using their voice how they wish to.”

Kolbassia Haoussou MBE,
Director of Survivor Empowerment



PEOPLE THRIVE WHEN WE FEEL IN CONTROL OF OUR LIVES, AND HAVE A SAY OVER OUR OWN FUTURES. GOVERNMENTS USE TORTURE TO TAKE THAT SENSE OF PERSONAL AGENCY AWAY AND SILENCE US.

To feel empowered again, survivors need to play an active part in running Freedom from Torture. Their input is also vital for improving our services and how we do our work.

And as movements for social justice gain ground globally, it matters more than ever that people with direct experience of torture are leading our common calls for change.



BY THE END OF 2025 WE WILL:

- employ people who have survived torture across most of Freedom from Torture's directorates so they are influencing decisions at all levels
- invite every person receiving treatment to evaluate and help shape our rehabilitation services
- ensure no major changes to services without the feedback of the people they are designed to help
- recruit at least 100 survivors to join initiatives aimed at increasing survivor influence in our services and campaigns
- influence at least 20 government and civil society organisations to meaningfully change their policy and practice, with input and inspiration from our Survivor Empowerment team and approach
- ensure more survivors are leading the movement for refugees' rights and a torture-free world.

WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- making sure survivors play a leading role in designing, delivering and evaluating our services to meet their needs
- promoting survivor leadership of our campaigns
- employing and involving survivors across Freedom from Torture, including our management and governance teams
- creating apprenticeships, skills training, career development and mentoring opportunities so survivors can contribute meaningfully to major projects
- paying a fair wage to survivors who otherwise contribute to our work, within the law
- supporting campaigns to allow people to work while they wait for an asylum decision.

GOAL 4

CHANGING OURSELVES

We will become a more agile, creative and future-focused organisation that actively supports healing and empowering survivors.



“Being a future-focused organisation is important and, with a diverse workforce reflecting the communities we serve, will help to empower survivors both inside and outside Freedom from Torture.”

Nasrin Parvaz, writer, artist and Survivors Speak OUT member

TO DO OUTSTANDING WORK AND ACHIEVE OUR GOALS, OUR ORGANISATION NEEDS TO KEEP EVOLVING.

By increasing our funding, we can make a bigger difference by expanding our services and doubling the number of people who benefit from them. By listening to survivors, we can test and learn from new ways of working. By embracing digital technology, we will innovate for more impact.

Diversity is one of our greatest assets, and we will continue to make sure our workforce reflects the communities we serve. We also need to ensure support for staff in this challenging work. Helping people through their trauma is rewarding, but it also takes a toll.

Finally, all our work needs to be transparent. We must be easily held to account by everyone we work with and for, as well as by all those who support us.



Artwork by Nasrin Parvaz
'We run for our lives'

BY THE END OF 2025 WE WILL...

- better reflect the communities we serve across our workforce, including in management positions and our clinical services
- inspire others working with torture survivors to draw from our trauma-informed well being framework as a model of good practice
- use data insights to inform all decisions, including how to allocate resources, and for sharing best practice learning within our sector
- be on track to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030
- increase our income by more than 30%, in order to deliver this strategy

WE WILL DO THIS BY...

- building our reputation as a learning organisation that offers excellent career progression, cutting-edge clinical services, unique opportunities to deliver services and campaigns in partnership with survivors, and the rewards of changing lives and systems for good
- attracting and retaining more talented employees from different backgrounds, working with diversity experts to improve our recruitment processes
- developing more career pathways for survivors, including within our clinical services, creating new apprenticeships, learning and development, and talent management programmes
- embedding our new trauma-informed wellbeing framework to support our workforce, and offering tailored support for employees who have survived torture
- investing in modern technology, data and systems
- reporting on our environmental footprint
- innovating to broaden our fundraising opportunities
- continuously improving our work by consulting and listening to people who have survived torture



What is our trauma-informed well being framework?

This is an approach to staff wellbeing which is guided by the knowledge of how to support people, recognising any specific needs and requirements which they may have as a result of past or ongoing trauma. The framework applies a trauma-informed lens through which to view staff wellbeing, recognising that exposure to trauma is an inherent risk within human rights work, supporting an organisation-wide approach to reducing and mitigating those risks.



TOGETHER FOR A FUTURE FREE FROM TORTURE



No matter where we come from, our background or beliefs, we all want to live in safety and peace. Around the world, however, governments are still using torture to silence and destroy people.

WE WON'T LET THEM.

So we are setting our sights firmly on the goals in this strategy, and making ambitious plans for the years to come.


Our diverse movement is growing all the time. We all have different life experiences, but we are united by our commitment to compassion for people fleeing torture.

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY DOING SO, PLEASE *WORK WITH US* TO END TORTURE.

We depend on the support and advice of our partners to help shape and deliver our work. Together, our voices will grow ever louder in demanding that our government treats people who have survived torture fairly.

We aim to bring this strategy to life by increasing our income by more than 30%. Most of our work is funded by our caring supporters, as well as by our other generous donors. We are humbled by their dedication, and this kindness of strangers.





JOIN MORE THAN 100,000 PEOPLE FIGHTING TO END TORTURE AND ENSURE SAFETY FOR SURVIVORS AROUND THE WORLD TODAY.

AS A SUPPORTER OR FUNDING PARTNER:

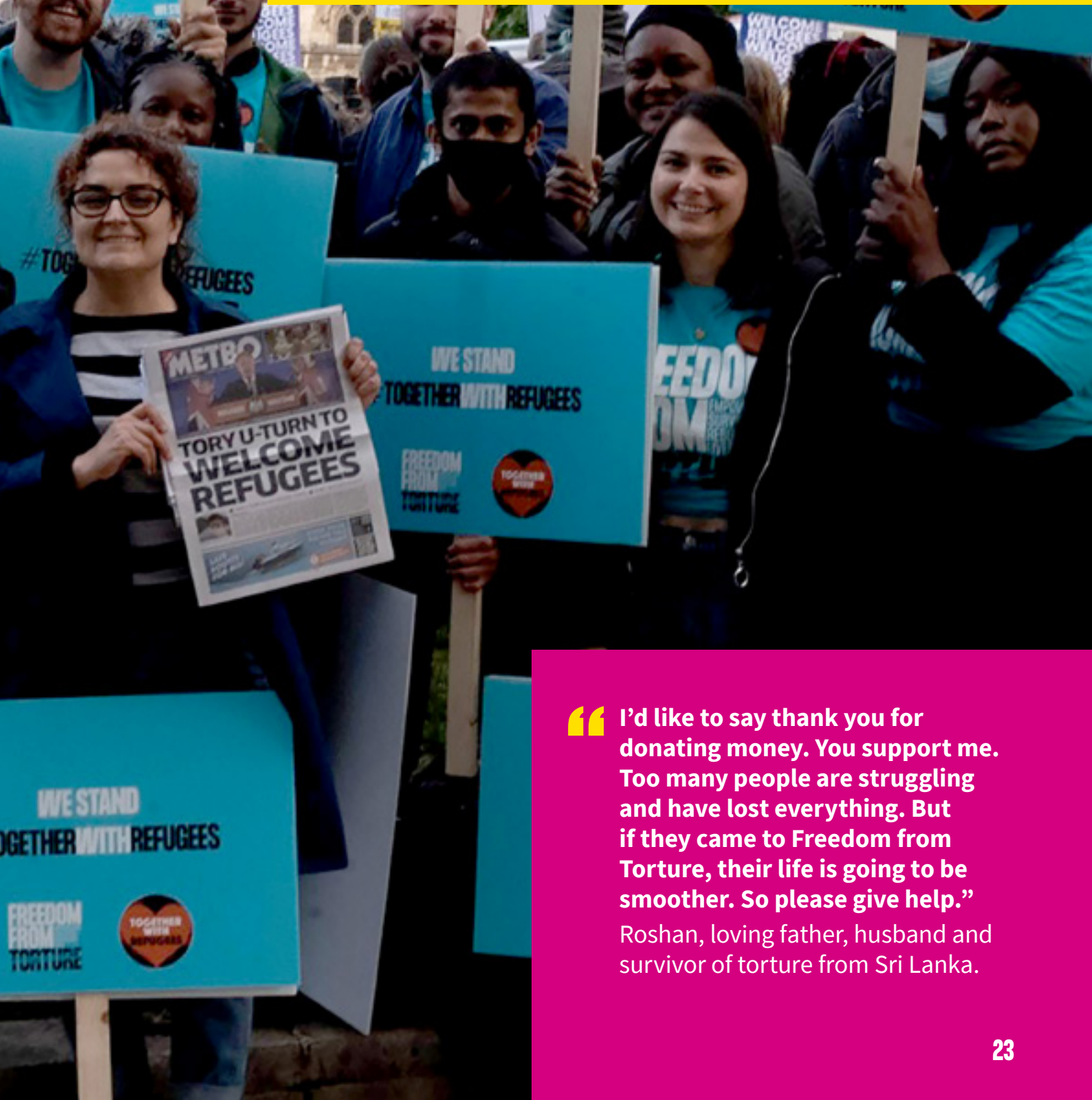
1 You can help us double the number of people rebuilding their lives through our rehabilitation services. £30 each month can provide a survivor with the interpreting and travel they need to access a session with one of our specialist therapists.

2 You can help our therapists to deliver more treatments in partnership with people who have survived torture. We can do this through tailored therapy sessions or pain management sessions. On average it costs just £118 for a therapist and a survivor to co-deliver a therapy session together with an interpreter and travel costs.

3 By giving people who are discharged from our treatment services the opportunity to join peer support groups and legal and welfare workshops, your support can stay with them in the long term. Each group session can cost £191, and an entire year of support to run one group is £2,294.



None of our work would be possible without you. It is more important than ever to extend our compassion to those who arrive here to rebuild their lives in safety after torture. If you too believe in a kinder, more humane approach to supporting survivors of torture then please visit www.freedomfromtorture.org/what-you-can-do to take action, or call us on **0207 679 7788**.



“ I’d like to say thank you for donating money. You support me. Too many people are struggling and have lost everything. But if they came to Freedom from Torture, their life is going to be smoother. So please give help.”
Roshan, loving father, husband and survivor of torture from Sri Lanka.

**WITH YOUR HELP, TOGETHER
WE CAN CONTINUE OUR
MISSION TOWARDS A FUTURE
FREE FROM TORTURE.**



Freedom from Torture

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