Warm welcome in the North West Centre

Freedom from Torture’s Poverty Report launched in the Houses of Parliament
The view from our Chief Executive Keith Best

As we near the end of 2013 I am beginning to look back on our achievements for this year. Our clinical teams work tirelessly to support our clients, now using recently introduced processes to record better the outcomes of our work and operate to a national clinical model: demonstrating the beneficial impact our therapy has on our clients is important to us as well as to our supporters and funders.

Our clinical work is central to our entire organisation and informs both our policy and communications work too.

Through our Iran Report, based on the diagnosis of torture of our clients through our medico-legal reports, we were able to push the Iranian representative at the Human Rights Council to admit that torture may take place in Iran. Using our clients’ own extensive testimony we launched our Poverty Barrier Report in the Houses of Parliament this summer showing how poverty inhibits rehabilitation of torture survivors.

Right now Sri Lanka is back on our agenda. As documented in our 2012/13 Annual Review, Sri Lanka was the leading country of origin for those referred to Freedom from Torture last year; the vast majority were ethnic Tamils and most were referred to us by concerned GPs or solicitors representing them in their asylum claims.

We are disappointed that the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is due to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka next month. It is a country whose persistent abuse of human rights has been documented by ourselves and others: we see the evidence of it every day in our centres. I was able to get an assurance from Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt MP that both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will be briefed on and raise these issues while there. Rest assured that we shall continue to bring our clients’ experiences to the attention of decision makers and international media so that our research and knowledge can help to end impunity of the torturers and hold torturing states to account.

Survivors of torture continue to arrive at our centres every day. As you read this newsletter please remember that everything we do to help them is only possible due to the support we receive from you for which we, but most importantly they, are so very grateful.

Thank you.
Madu and Her Baby:

When more and more Sri Lankan refugees were arriving at our centres earlier this year, Madu bravely put herself forward to tell you her story of how she was tortured in Sri Lanka and escaped to the UK, where she found herself traumatised, alone and pregnant as a result of the rape she had endured.

Madu now attends English classes three times a week, travelling two hours each way to get there. She still hasn’t been granted protection to stay in the UK but is trying to look to the future. It was very important to Madu that you took the time to read her story and know what’s happening in Sri Lanka. Madu said: “There are many people like me who haven’t been able to come here, who don’t have this help I do, so I am most grateful. I benefit a lot because I can come here and tell my story and because I can, I feel better.”

*All names are changed to protect our clients but their stories and messages are real.*
THANK YOU

AN OPEN LETTER FROM MEHMET

Mehmet used to come to Freedom from Torture for counselling and therapy. He has now been granted protection status to stay in the UK and he’s opened his own business, a cafe and hairdressers. Mehmet wrote in to say thank you to his counsellor Emine. With Mehmet’s permission we wanted to share this letter with you because without you none of this would have been possible.

Hi, I am Mehmet.

Because of my political views and my family’s background, which was Kurdish and Alevi, our homes were burned down and we were tortured several times. We were forced to leave our land. Although it has been so many years since, even now as I am writing this letter I feel the psychological pressure.

Just to mention a few of those tortures that I have been subjected to: falaka, (beating of the soles with a stick) pressurized water, being left naked, with no water and food on a wet and cold floor for many hours, and many more other physical and mental tortures which I cannot name here. I was in fear that if I was detained again by the state security forces I would have been locked up for a long time or killed; I had to leave my country.

The UK immigration kept me in detention for 8 months on the grounds that I had used a false passport to come here. This treatment deteriorated my mental health, which was already in a bad state.

I was introduced to Freedom from Torture by my solicitor. With all sincerity I must say that for the first time I met with people who were pleasant, warm and smiling. These people did indeed believe that every human being has to live like a human being. I would like to thank all members of the team for helping me and people like me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Emine especially. From the first day I set foot in the building she made a great effort to help me to throw away the bad memories from my mind. Because of her efforts, her character, her approach towards me and counselling. She helped me gradually to regain my self confidence and trust in people.

Following the path she showed slowly but steadily I built the life that I have now. I even met my wife in a Freedom from Torture art group and got married. I have a wonderful wife and a very sweet one year old daughter. That’s why I look positively to the future. All the positive improvements in my life were thanks to my counsellor, Emine. For all her support I thank her very much.

In this letter what I really want to say is this: I thank you valued people who work as a team to re-enliven the people whose lives are shattered.

I salut you with love and respect.

Mehmet
Write to Life is a therapeutic creative writing group held every two weeks at the London and South East centre. Torture survivors are referred by their clinicians and once part of the group, they work with professional writers who volunteer as their mentors.

The workshops can take many forms: they can be about technique, looking at the work of other great writers, or simply developing a shared subject. The main objective is to nurture a love of writing and its possibilities.

The group have published many books, performed at Edinburgh International Book Festival and worked with Tate Britain.

Godfrey has been attending for just over a year. He was tortured in Uganda and after an agonising wait he has just been granted permission to remain in the UK.

He said; “When my accommodation was moved the first thing I did was find out how far it was to Freedom from Torture. It’s 24 miles away. I can’t afford transport so my mentor gave me a bike through the charity he runs, and now I cycle the 48 mile round trip. It was hard at first, and I did accidentally go down the M40! But now I’m used to it. It’s definitely worth the journey.

“This place is like my home. I find peace just being here, the sort of peace I don’t find anywhere else. If I miss sessions I find I feel depressed again. Coming here is like a re-charge. I read, I write, I listen. At Write to Life everybody is treated equally and with dignity. Everybody’s writing is equally appreciated which encourages me to write more. The other members inspire me, they give me hope and when I leave the building I can lift up my head high and continue with life.”

Saber also travels a long way to attend the group, the journey is very difficult for him as he lost one of his legs and uses a prosthetic limb and a crutch.

He said; “My leg is painful and I also have back problems but I take four different trains and two buses just to get here. In my country I was the editor of a magazine, it’s my profession. Writing is my identity, my life. For me, without writing there is nothing. I have so many thoughts and things I need to say but away from the group, alone, I find it hard to think. In Write to Life my thoughts are clearer and I can write. I’ve found it difficult to integrate and make friends but here I can really talk to people.”

To order Write to Life books go to www.freedomfromtorture.org/fft-shop or call 020 7697 7788. Books are £5 all proceeds go to Freedom from Torture.

Freedom from Torture staff and members of the Survivors Speak OUT network (SSO) were joined by Channel 4 News anchor, Jon Snow, Baroness Lister and UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Méndez for the launch.

Staff, clinicians and more than 100 clients worked together on the research. The findings are alarming. The report details how numerous torture survivors do not have access to basic human necessities such as adequate food, safe accommodation, and enough funds to travel to crucial appointments. The poverty barrier also means torture survivors often find themselves isolated, lonely, or even destitute, all of which have a seriously detrimental impact on their recovery from torture.

On behalf of SSO, Kolbassia Haoussou said; “For SSO, this event was always about creating a positive change and we were happy to see the room was filled with policy experts, policy makers, MPs, peers, civil servants and other human rights organisations. We hope they have gained a great deal of knowledge that they can apply to their work and find a way to change torture survivors’ lives for the better.”

To read the full report go to www.freedomfromtorture.org/poverty or call 020 7697 7786 to request a hard copy in the post. Remember to follow us on Twitter and Facebook too.
"The doctor says I have to eat a lot of protein but I cannot afford to so I'm always weak. I faint. One time I fainted at Freedom from Torture. An ambulance came. I have dizziness."

**IMPACT**

The Guardian, BBC North East and MSN UK amongst others reported on the ‘Poverty Barrier’ report and as the report continues to make waves more public voices have supported our research recommendations – from Stephen Fry on Twitter, to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Méndez. Both Freedom from Torture and SSO gave evidence based on this research to Parliament’s Home Affairs Committee for its important asylum inquiry.

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS...**

In the report we made key recommendations for much needed changes in the UK including:

- the **Government** should raise asylum support rates
- the **Home Office** should improve asylum support decision-making and customer service skills
- the **Department for Work and Pensions** should ensure that torture survivors are transferred seamlessly to mainstream benefits after they are granted status to avoid destitution
- the **Ministry of Justice** should abandon plans to introduce a residence test for legal aid

During the launch at the House of Commons on 17 July 2013, Kolbassia Haoussou made it clear that we are committed to using our ‘Poverty Barrier’ research to find solutions. Our next steps include:

- **Input** into the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s asylum support inspection
- **Follow-up** with the Department of Health in respect of the access to healthcare consultation
- **Meetings** with senior officials at the Home Office
- **Follow up** with various UN experts to draw attention to these issues

More than 40 torture survivors also participated in the photo project to tell their own visual stories about the poverty they live in here in the UK. To view these as well as many expert blogs and news updates please visit our online Poverty Hub at [www.freedomfromtorture.org/poverty](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/poverty)

"All my belongings stored in a cabinet” Our client’s medicine, towel, toothbrush, documents and toothpaste - everything he owns is in this draw

"I sleep with many people who have many difficulties and this is where I have to sleep.”
NEWS

Do you watch Channel 4’s Four Rooms?

Freedom from Torture client, Ali, appeared on the TV programme Four Rooms in May 2013 with his beautiful sculpture of the queen.

Ali, an Iranian refugee and talented stonemason, spent four years working on the stone sculpture. It was his way of expressing his gratitude to the UK for providing him with a safe haven.

After an 18 month wait, the Home Office granted Ali protection status and leave to remain in the UK in 2007. He said; “What I went through in Iran made me feel useless and people did not respect me for who I was. It is different here in the UK and I was shocked to find people apologising to me when I bumped into them in the street, or holding doors open for me. I started to think about what source this sense of respect might come from and I thought about the Queen as head of state. I wanted to show my respect and my gratitude for the wonderful way that people had treated me here.”

On the television programme Four Rooms Ali offered four art dealers the opportunity to make their own offers to purchase his piece. Art dealer Tom Bolt came out on top, giving Ali £3,000 and allowing him to keep the sculpture. Ali said; “I was absolutely bowled over. It was a big surprise and I was deeply grateful. After the show I had some photos taken with Tom and he was very nice to me, it was quite emotional.” Ali continues to work with Marlies, his counsellor, and hopes to be able to develop a career from his talent. He has already been commissioned for a plaque!

Survivors Speak OUT: at the UN

On 24 September 2013, the Survivors Speak OUT network (SSO) stood alongside Foreign Secretary William Hague and the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, in support of a new Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict at the UN General Assembly.

The General Debate of the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly is the largest and most diverse gathering in the diplomatic calendar, bringing together leaders and senior ministers from all 193 members of the United Nations.

The Survivors Speak OUT network took this opportunity to call on members of the United Nations to show where they stand on the issue of sexual violence. The new declaration contains political and practical commitments to end these terrible crimes.

Our SSO member urged the UN to take practical action saying; “I do hope all of you in this room today will ensure the success of the prevention of sexual violence initiative not just in words, but in actions.”

At the end of the SSO member’s speech William Hague added; “It’s not easy for survivors to speak on these subjects, particularly in global forums and we must remember what she has said on behalf of survivors all over the world as we speak as nations on this subject.”

At the beginning of the launch 107 countries supported the declaration which increased to 119 and counting following the event. You can watch it online at www.freedomfromtorture.org/ssloattheunga
In memory of Barbara Turner (1922-2012)

Barbara was born in Oldham, Greater Manchester. After graduating from Manchester University in social administration she joined the wartime Mass Observation project and became a planning officer in the Ministry of Housing. From 1960 she was head of the Sociological Research Branch at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, her research results were fed into a series of bulletins which influenced the course of public housing. Barbara was involved in social research and study of the private rented sector, families, children’s play, single and elderly people and homelessness amongst other issues.

In the late 1990s Barbara moved to Hampstead. It was at this time that Barbara became involved with the befriending scheme at Freedom from Torture and maintained lifelong friendships with the two torture survivors she befriended.

Barbara died in 2012 aged 89 and we were honoured to learn that she had chosen to demonstrate her compassion for torture survivors by remembering Freedom from Torture in her Will. We are very grateful for the commitment Barbara gave to our work both as a befriender and as a donor. Her generous legacy will enable more torture survivors to experience healing and renewal.

Legacies are very valuable to us and make a real difference in the lives of torture survivors. If you’d like more information, or an informal chat, about leaving a gift in your Will please contact Rebecca on 0207 697 7814 or rwood@freedomfromtorture.org.

Helping hand for the holiday scheme!

A huge thank you to everyone who contacted Holiday Scheme organiser Philippa to offer to be a host after reading about the scheme in our May 2013 newsletter. Philippa said; “There was the most wonderful response and we now have 39 new hosts from all over the country. This is very positive because the more hosts we have the better the chance of making the perfect holiday match as often as possible.”

This summer was enormously successful for the holiday scheme. We arranged 51 holidays for 58 adults and 33 children. Referrals came in from our offices in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham and we were able to send people to hosts all over the country from Argyll to the Isle of Wight. Feedback was very positive – one clinician commented; “He was so positive about his holiday, he had such a good time. I’ve never seen him so positive about anything. The hosts must have been absolutely fantastic!”

In order to make best use of all our new hosts we are now looking for someone to join holiday coordinators, Philippa and Carmelle. We’re looking for a friendly, approachable and organised person who can interview torture survivors and arrange suitable holidays for them with our holiday hosts.

There’s lots of organising to be done so we are looking for a special person who can give Freedom from Torture a regular commitment during the summer holiday season of one day a week in our London office with one or two days a week working from home.

Closing date for this volunteer role is 14 February 2014. For more information and an application form go to www.freedomfromtorture.org/working-for-us/vacancies or email Gilberte on volunteerrecruitment@freedomfromtorture.org

Join Philippa, holiday organiser extraordinaire!
North West Centre Open Day Welcomes Everyone

On 11 July we opened the doors of our North West centre in Manchester for supporters to visit us and learn about what we do. Stone Flowers, a music group made up of torture survivors, performed three songs, and Jackson from Experts by Experience (EBE) spoke alongside North West Centre staff.

EBE is a group of torture survivors who deliver training, raise awareness and organise regular meetings with clients at the centre. Jackson talked about their work and ended by simply saying; “I'd like to thank you all on behalf of everyone, and myself.”

Stone Flowers performed three songs they were rehearsing for a performance at the Imperial War Museum North. The pieces reflected themes close to the heart of the group about torture and loss. The group ended with an uplifting song, which got everyone clapping and singing.

Staff talked about what it’s like to work with people who have been tortured during an open Q and A session. What resonated to many visitors was just how many people living in the North West need our help and how much we rely on the kind commitment of volunteers.

Fateha, Clinical Administrator said; “We are seeing 86 people a week, and every two weeks we receive details of 15-20 more people for allocation. We have to decide who needs us most. It’s heartbreaking.”

Jude, Manchester Centre Manager added “With cuts to local services, pressure on our small service has increased and we are assessing even more torture survivors who are homeless with no support. We are doing everything we can to offer a good service to as many people as possible.”

Your support for the North West Centre is more important than ever right now, please join us for our 10th anniversary.

As the first centre to open outside London, we will be commemorating our 10th anniversary of the North West centre in Manchester at 6.30pm on Thursday 7 November 2013. You are invited to join staff and supporters for a celebration of our growth and achievements over the last decade. The evening will include Guest Speakers, a buffet, and poetry written and performed by North West clients.

Please email Alice on anicolay@freedomfromtorture.org or call 0161 236 5744 for info
REFUGEE WEEK STARTED ON 17 JUNE WITH THE CELEBRATING SANCTUARY EVENT ON LONDON’S SOUTH BANK. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE STAFF WERE THERE TO SPEAK ABOUT THE WORK OF FREEDOM FROM TORTURE. ROLAND SCHILLING, UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UK, CAME BY TO SAY HELLO!

Almost 200 Supporters, staff and clients joined us at our London centre for the **Secret Garden Party** on 6 July 2013. It was a beautiful day! Highlights included readings from the **Write to Life** group, talks from therapists from the **Natural Garden Project**, a plant sale with seedlings from our garden, an exhibition of work from the **Open Art Studio**, a display of photos from our **Football Group** and a special film screening of **Words & Music** introduced by Write to Life’s Stephanie Ndoungo. Videos on [www.freedomfromtorture.org/secretgardenparty2013](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/secretgardenparty2013)

A big thank you to all the supporters who joined Freedom from Torture West Midlands for Afternoon Tea at the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, and to Jane Laxton of Quaker Concern for the Abolition of Torture (Q-CAT) who presented the Q-CAT World without Torture Garden which won a Gold Medal at the Royal Horticultural Society Annual Show at Tatton Park in 2012.

**ART AUCTION 2013**, Wednesday 13 November 2013

- Registration, drinks & art viewing at 6pm, live auction starts at 7.30pm
- Studio Spaces, Unit 2, 110 Pennington Street, London, E1W 2BB

We are excited to announce that our biennial art auction will take place this November. The event is once again supported by Christie’s and their International Director, Auctioneering, Hugh Edmeades will be our auctioneer for the evening. The auction will feature work from Jake and Dinos Chapman, Antony Gormley, Paula Rego, David Hockney, Sir Peter Blake, John Hoyland, Michael Craig-Martin and many more, as well as work from the Freedom from Torture **Open Art Studio**.

‘High Moon’ (right) by Freedom from Torture service user Said is included in the auction. He said; “Painting in the Open Art Studio is always helpful; it is like a painkiller. I’m so proud and happy to put my work in the auction alongside the other artists.”

All proceeds from the auction will go directly to Freedom from Torture. Don’t miss this amazing opportunity to snap up a great piece of art whilst supporting our work!

For full details and to RSVP, please visit [www.freedomfromtorture.org/art](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/art) or contact Katja Janus on kjanus@freedomfromtorture.org or 020 7697 7808
**CHRISTMAS CARDS**

We have a selection of beautiful designs. All profits go towards our work with torture survivors.

Each pack contains 10 cards and envelopes and all cards carry the message ‘Season’s Greetings’

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**DATE FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Summer 2013 raffle winners** are 0111048, 0150994 and 0157624. Winners have been contacted by post.

**NORTH WEST CENTRE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

Thursday 7 November, from 6.30pm

2022NQ, 20 Dale Street, Manchester, M1 1EZ

Join us for our Manchester centre’s ten year birthday. Guest speakers, buffet and exclusive art auction. Buy tickets at [www.freedomfromtorture.org/events/7555](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/events/7555) or contact Alice on 0161 236 5744

**WRITE TO LIFE: THE VALUE OF MUSIC AND LETTER IN THE RECOVERY FROM TORTURE**

Sunday 10 November, 6.15pm

Hall Place, Bourne Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 1PQ

Hosted by lawyer and broadcaster Clive Anderson. Featuring a performance of ‘Souvenirs’ by members of our Write to Life group and readings by Blake Morrison. For info and tickets contact michael@maisey.org.uk

**ANNUAL CHARITY DINNER**

Thursday 14 November, 7.30pm

The Dandelion and Burdock Restaurant, 16 Town Hall Street, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 2EA

Join our Calderdale Supporters Group for a five course taster menu, live music, raffle and an auction. For more information go to [www.freedomfromtorture.org/charitydinner](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/charitydinner)

**ANNUAL WINTER CONCERT**

Thursday 5 December, 7.30pm

St Werburgh’s Church, 388 Wilbraham Road, Chorlton, M21 0UH

Buy tickets at [www.freedomfromtorture.org/events/6820](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/events/6820) or contact Alice on 0161 236 5744

**LOCAL SUPPORTERS GROUP CHRISTMAS CONCERT**

Saturday 14 December, 11am – 1pm

Carrs Lane Church, Carrs Lane, Birmingham, B4 7SX

Lovely event open to all with performances by Quinbourne Choir, Gifted Praise Choir and a Samba band. Speakers from Freedom from Torture.

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

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Thursday 5 December, 7.30pm

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**CHRISTMAS CARDS**

We have a selection of beautiful designs. All profits go towards our work with torture survivors.

Each pack contains 10 cards and envelopes and all cards carry the message ‘Season’s Greetings’

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Card number:

Start date: Issue number: Please note that we cannot accept CAF payments for Christmas card purchases. Please return this form in the Freepost envelope provided.

Please contact us at shop@freedomfromtorture.org or on 020 7697 7828.