



Freedom from Torture

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

Learning Resource for
professionals to use in
outreach to youth audiences:

The impact of **poverty** on
torture survivors in the UK

For use with the A to Z of Poverty, by current and former clients of Freedom from Torture:
www.freedomfromtorture.org/poverty

This resource has been designed to be used alongside other human rights education tools that teach young people about refugees and asylum seekers within the wider frame of human rights. A list of learning resources from other organizations can be found at the back of this pack.

This resource explores how torture survivors experience the day-to-day struggles of living in the UK without the means to meet their basic living needs. It seeks to encourage young people to empathise with torture survivors' experiences, and understand how poverty exacerbates their feelings of powerlessness, fear and isolation.

The resource takes a creative approach, using exercises to encourage young people to empathise with survivors' experiences through their poetry from the [A-Z of Poverty](#). The content of the [A-Z of Poverty](#) is available free online.

It is important to judge the age and ability of suitable participants on a case-by-case basis, due to the sensitive nature of the topic. However we would suggest that these resources can be used for ages 14+.

Please use these resources with caution: there may be students or staff at your school who themselves have had firsthand experience of torture, or whose parents have, who are seeking asylum or have experienced violence in their lives. This topic needs to be approached with care and appropriate safeguards in place to protect their wellbeing. Please ensure that you assess the appropriateness of these resources for your class and its students.

After using this resource, please share any feedback that you may have at writetolife@freedomfromtorture.org. We may share this feedback publicly.

Introduction

- ❖ Start by reading the **A-Z of Poverty** and watching the DVD. Then you are ready to introduce Write to Life and the **A-Z of Poverty**. Explain that the lesson plan centres on themes from the **A-Z of Poverty** poetry collection - both in DVD format and the booklet. For example:
 - This is a collection of poems written by people who have survived torture in their home countries and now seek safety in the UK. All these people have come together through Write to Life, a creative writing group based at a charity called Freedom from Torture.
 - Write to Life is made up of both current and former clients of Freedom from Torture who meet regularly with writing mentors to explore their experiences of torture, and of their more recent lives here in the UK, through creative writing. Confronting their experiences in this way helps people to carry their lives forward and helps restore their sense of self and self-worth.
 - Freedom from Torture provides survivors with medical treatment, counselling, therapy, and other forms of support to help them rebuild their lives. It also documents evidence of torture and lobbies for its abolition throughout the world. <http://www.freedomfromtorture.org>
 - What you will hear today are poems written by torture survivors who now live in the UK. In their poems they explore what life after torture is like here, surviving on very little money and in very uncertain situations.
 - This lesson uses activities based around survivors' poems to explore their experiences in the UK.
 - Torture survivors are human beings like you and me; they might be teachers, engineers, shopkeepers and politicians, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters who have been imprisoned and tortured by authorities, (police and governments) in their countries. There are many reasons why they have been tortured: some because of their political views, others because of their ethnicity or race, or the accident of being related to an activist. The survivors who have written these poems have all managed to escape and seek safety in the UK, as they were no longer safe in their home countries. Almost all left behind everything and everybody they knew; they felt they had no choice.

- ❖ Introduce the aims and objectives of the lesson;
 - To explore the impact of torture on torture survivors and the challenges they face during recovering.
 - To write your own responses to the poems, sending messages or imagining how they might feel.

❖ Introduce the definition of torture:

The word 'torture' is used in lots of everyday contexts but torture has a very specific meaning that governments around the world agreed to in 1984. This defines torture as (to be written on the board):

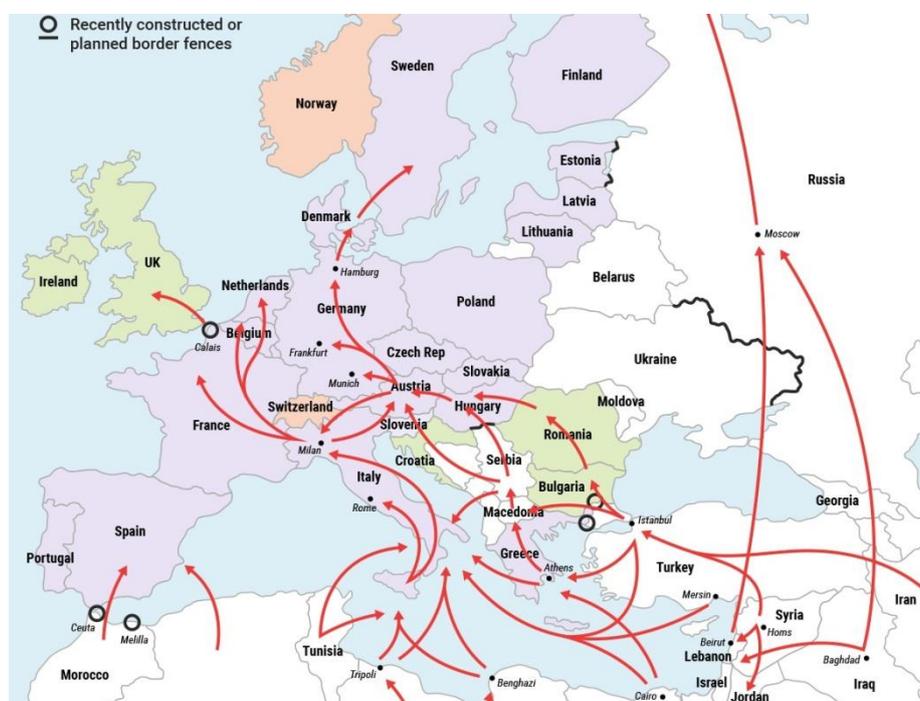
'Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person... by a public official or other person acting in an official capacity'

Full **definition** of torture:

"Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity." United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT)

Exercise One

Aim: This exercise will encourage students to explore what survivors leave behind when they are forced to flee their homes.



Europol, Reuters, The Washington Post, AFP, ICMPD

- ❖ Each student is given an A4 sheet of paper. Ask them to fold it in half 3 times so that when opened fully, they have 8 boxes marked on their sheet of paper.
- ❖ Ask students to spend 3 minutes silently thinking about what makes them **feel safe** and writing the 8 most important things in these boxes. We want them to reflect on all the different tangible and intangible things that make people feel safe, which may be people, objects or places. These will stay private as personal reflections and they won't be asked to share.
- ❖ Ask the class to rank what they have written down from 1-8 in order of importance, 1 being the most important thing in making them feel safe.
- ❖ Ask the class to imagine that they have to cross out 4 of the things they have written down. By crossing these out it means that they are losing this object, place or person.
- ❖ Tell the class to cross out another two boxes.

Questions for the class: You are now left with two boxes, with the two most important things to make you feel safe written in them. Imagine you are being forced to flee your home; would you realistically be able to bring these things with you if you were forced to flee? How did that feel?

- ❖ Explain that when survivors of torture are forced to flee their homes, they rarely have time to collect important documents, or treasured possessions. Many leave behind family members and close friends as well as their homes and communities and may never return to these places or see these people, again.
- ❖ Explain that you will now read a poem by a young person who explores their experience of arriving in the UK.

Read one survivor's experience of arriving in the UK as a minor in 'Nazdana'
(Refer to the '**A-Z of Poverty**' booklet)

Exercise Two

Aim: An exercise for students to understand the constraints on torture survivors living without the means to meet their basic needs, and how this might affect a survivor's rehabilitation.



Herlinde/Women for Refugee Women

- ❖ Explain that the people who have written these poems have sought safety in the UK - this is called making an asylum claim. It asks for the government to recognise them as refugees and to give them the right to stay in the UK and be protected. The government can take months, or years, to make the decision to protect someone. Whilst waiting for this decision, people are not allowed to work, so rely on small amounts of money given to them by the government.
- ❖ Ask students to read through worksheet 3 in the resource pack. Then read it out to the class:

'Individuals are not allowed to work whilst claiming asylum: around £5 a day is all they receive. Only items seen as essentials are allowed to be bought on a card, which some receive instead of cash. These items include toiletries, clothes and food. In theory, as an asylum seeker, you can buy anything except alcohol, tobacco and petrol; but as this card is only allowed to be used in certain shops, they may not stock many things you need. Shopkeepers are in control of the purchases, so what they do or don't allow relies on their knowledge of the rules, as well as their mood and attitude. They are, in effect, free to turn you away if they choose.'

'People have the right to complain about unfair treatment but must do so through a hotline or an advice agency. Neither route is always accessible, as asylum applicants are not given money for phone calls or travel.'

(The Poverty Barrier report, Freedom from Torture:

<http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/sites/default/files/documents/Poverty%20report%20FINAL%20a4%20web.pdf>)

Scenario to be read aloud:

You have come to the UK with 2 sets of clothes, a pair of sandals and a pair of shoes, a hair brush, a blanket, a picture of your family. Since you have been in the country you have got a mobile phone but you currently have no credit. You have access to a small fridge, a sink and an electric hob. The fridge and all cupboards are shared, so you can't rely on storing food as it may disappear. You just hope the food doesn't get stolen or go bad before you need it.

- ❖ Students should go into groups of 5 with an A3 sheet of paper, a marker pen and the list of essentials items that you would buy with their £5 a day. Ask students to present what they have bought and explain why they think these are important enough to spend limited funds on.
- ❖ Prompt students to think about the need for sufficient food, clothing - especially in winter, health and hygiene products, cleaning products, resources to present their asylum claim including phone money, fax and photocopying, and travel costs.

Watch Royalty Card and read 'Only One Pound' (from the **A - Z of Poverty supporting material)**

Questions for the class:

What impact do you think living within these restrictions would have on you in the long run including your health?

- ❖ When Freedom from Torture did research into living standards of torture survivors, they found that more than half of the people they asked were never, or not often, able to buy enough food to stop them from being hungry; two-thirds of them were never, or not often, able to buy adequate clothes to keep them warm, clean and dry. Half were never, or not often, able to buy basic medicines, cleaning products or sanitary products.

Does this surprise you?

How do you think this would impact someone's recovery from torture?

- ❖ When torture survivors were asked in this research, they responded that they were made to live on a day-to-day basis, unable to make plans. They felt constantly anxious, vulnerable and dependent on others to help them. This made many of them feel ashamed and vulnerable, excluded from society and unequal.

Exercise Three

- ❖ Give students an introduction into their character's background :

'You are Ameen, you are a 18 year old student from Turgo. In your country, your father publicly criticised the government and you were seen to support him in his protests.

'You were arrested and held in prison for months where you were tortured. Some of your family have been detained and you are not sure where they are. You were released from detention after your uncle paid a bribe to a guard. You could not go back home. If found again you would have been detained and probably tortured again.

'You arrived in the UK 2 months ago. Your uncle paid and organised for you to be transported to a safe place but the journey here was very difficult. You did not know which country you were being taken to, and did not know where you were when you arrived. You speak very little English. It took you two months to travel to the UK.

'When you arrive you are instructed to go to Immigration House to make an asylum claim. You are told that you will need to give information about why you fled your country and how you arrived here. It is crucial that you answer all questions as accurately as possible, as this could affect your right to stay in this country. If you fail to give all the information needed, there is a chance that you will be sent back to the country where you were tortured.'

- ❖ Ask students to fill out work sheet 1 - please note that the text is in deliberately unrecognisable language so that participants get a sense of the challenges of having to complete a form that is difficult to make sense of. Inform them that it is important to fill out this form as accurately as possible, as this may affect whether they are allowed to stay in the country or not. **Give three minutes** to complete the form using the information given to them about their history.

Half-way through this exercise, hand work sheet 2 out to half of the class - inform them that they must not share the information on this sheet with other class members. This sheet will give some people hints and tips for filling out the form.

- ❖ After the three minutes is up, ask students how that felt and discuss the benefits of half the class being able to understand more because they had been given more support and information.

Question for the class:

How did you find filling out that form?

Did you find it fair that some of the class had more assistance in filling out the form than others?

- ❖ Ask the students now to read 'Exile' in silence and write down five words to describe what this person is experiencing - *Resource sheet 3*

Questions for the class:

How do you think having a language barrier might stop a torture survivor getting the support they need?

What are the implications for this person of not being able to speak English?

Exercise four

(The first section of this exercise is recommended for older students)

- ❖ Read **K** for **Kidnapping**
- ❖ Watch '**B** is for **Big Boots**' on the DVD
- ❖ Ask the class to discuss and write down on A3 paper (either as whole class or in groups of 4/5): Consider the ways that Britain is welcoming to those fleeing their home to save their lives. How might students help them to feel safe and welcome in the UK? For example: Food from their home countries available to them in shops.

Task: Freedom from Torture has asked you to respond to survivors of torture, welcoming them to the UK in your own words. Create 'An A-Z of Welcome.' You can either do this independently, in groups or as a class to be sent to survivors of torture. This can be done by writing poems in response to '**An A-Z of Poverty**', recording messages, writing songs, creating banners or films. It's up to you! Remember to please share some of these materials with Freedom from Torture at writetolife@freedomfromtorture.org and include the subject heading 'Our response to Write to Life's A-Z' in your email. We will then endeavour to share your responses with members of Write to Life and/or on our website and social media (**Twitter: @FreefromTorture** **fb: Freedom from Torture**).

Resource sheet 1

'You are Ameen, you are a 18 year old student from Turgo. In your country, your father publically criticised the government and you were seen to support him in his protests.

'You were arrested and held in prison for months where you were tortured. Some of your family have been detained and you are not sure where they are. You were released from detention after your uncle paid a bribe to a guard. You could not go back home. If found again you would have been detained and probably tortured again.

'You arrived in the UK 2 months ago. Your uncle paid and organised for you to be transported to a safe place but the journey here was very difficult. You did not know which country you were being taken to, and did not know where you were when you arrived. You speak very little English. It took you two months to travel to the UK.

'When you arrive you are instructed to go to Immigration House to make an asylum claim. You are told that you will need to give information about why you fled your country and how you arrived here. It is crucial that you answer all questions as accurately as possible as this could affect your right to stay in this country. If you fail to give all the information needed, there is a chance that you will be sent back to the country where you were tortured.'

Worksheet 1

Immigration House Questionnaire

- 1) STIRF MANE? USRMANE.....
- 2) REDNEG: ELAM.....ELAMAF.....
- 3) TADE FO THIRB:/..../....
- 4) DADSRES:
..... POTSDOCE:
- 5) SPORTSAP LAITDE:
ATED SUSIED:/.../.... SUSIE BUMNER:
- 6) JABEN DISE SDIK MAYSIE?
EMAN: RESTIANEN: YOMEN:
.....
- 7) KOM DEN NITIL ENKLAN SA? (CIRLEC)
MEFTIL PLANE AOBT/YEFERR HARAT EUROSTARA
OOVRLADN
THERO (SPLEAE PSEFICY).....
- 8) YEFT DA ENKLAN FERITA IPLEEDI?
- 9) DELTAD ENKLAN DARINDI MAGLINDA?
- 10) WAREI DAR FLOGET HARINDI LANDT?
- 11) DOCUMENDEN (DOCUMENTS)
HAT DAR DOKUMENDEN JANGA HARI?
- 12) WAREI DAR FESTENE GUL GARITA MAR VI?

Worksheet 2

Tips and advice on Immigration House Questionnaire

6) JABEN DISE SDIK MAYSIE? (what gender you do consider yourself)

EMAN: RESTIANEN: YOMEN:

7) KOM DEN NITIL ENKLAN SA? (CIRLEC)

MEFTIL PLANE (aeroplane) AOBT/YEFERR (boat/ferry) HARAT (train)

EUROSTARA (eurostar) OOVLADN (overland)

THERO (SPLEAE PSEFICY) (other (please specify))

9) WAREI DAR FLOGET HARINDI LANDT? (Which other countries did you pass through on your journey?).....

11) DOKUMENDEN (DOCUMENTS).....

HAT DAR DOKUMENDEN JANGA HARI? (Which travel documents do you hold?)

Worksheet 3

The Budget Challenge

Individuals are not allowed to work whilst claiming asylum. They live on £5 a day and if they are reliant on the Azure card, can only purchase items seen as essential on this card, such as toiletries, clothes and food. In theory you can buy anything except alcohol, tobacco and petrol, but as this card is only allowed to be used in certain shops, they may not stock many things you need. Also, shopkeepers are in control of the purchases, so what they allow or don't relies on their knowledge of the rules, as well as on their mood and attitude. They are, in effect, free to turn you away if they choose.

You have come to the UK with: 2 sets of clothes, a pair of sandals and a pair of shoes, a hair brush, a blanket, and a picture of your family. Since you have been in the country you have got a mobile phone but you currently have no credit.

You have access to a small fridge, a sink and an electric hob. The fridge and all cupboards are shared, so you can't rely on storing food as it may disappear. You may have to buy your whole week's goods at once and just hope the food doesn't get stolen or go bad before you need it.

Toilet roll £1	Frying pan £4	Socks £1.50	Apples £1.00
Hat £2.50	Toothbrush £1	Sanitary pads £1.80	Shampoo £1.20
Toothpaste £1.25	Soap £0.50	Underwear £2.00	Mug £1.30
Frozen vegetables - £1.00 (small packet)	Chocolate bar 50p	Coca Cola £1.20	
Pasta £1.00	Nuts 80p	Sandwich £1.80	Cleaner £1.90
T-shirt £4.00	Mobile phone credit £5	Paracetamol 50p	Cold & Flu tablets £1
Bread £1	Internet access £2.00/hour	Packet of tea £1.20	Milk 80p
Cheese £1.90	Chicken £4.00	Tissues 90p	Ear plugs 50p
Cereal £2	Frozen Pizza 80p	Rice 80p	Bus fare £1.50
Fried chicken 99p	Chips 90p	Salad 99p	

N is for Nazdana

Nazdana is an adjective.

Where I am from, Nazdana is the word we use to describe someone who has had lots of love, support and sympathy from their family...who then, in a difficult situation, finds it really, really tough. The person is usually young and they see themselves as a child.

I was Nazdana when I came to the UK. I was 14. I had never been starving before, everything had been provided for me. I had never been shouted at.

When I first arrived, the police picked me up and took me to the police station. They took fingerprints and a DNA swab, and I thought they were going to help me,

But when they put me in a room, on my own, for more than 36 hours, I was really Nazdana. I was so scared.

Now I am not Nazdana. I have to look out for myself. I have to sort out all my own support, healthcare, education and housing. If there are problems, I have to deal with it.

I live in Croydon now and I often see young asylum seekers around there. They are all Nazdana. I try and help them. Their eyes are full of drops.

Minors should not have to go through the pain of the asylum system.

E is for Exile

Exile is a verb.

It means to feel completely separate from the other people around you. It is a state of mind but you feel it in your whole body.

I get Exile when I can't communicate.

When I first came to the UK it was really bad. I was 19. I was lost. I couldn't understand any of the signs or what people advised me to do.

I didn't know where to go or how to ask for help.

It was suffocating.

I will never forget the day I went to Lunar House and they turned me away. I was desperate for help but nobody understood my language.

Then, like a miracle, I met a woman who spoke French. It was like I could breathe again. Her connection brought me back to life.

Now I go to English classes every day. The weight of Exile is easier now. But when it comes, I still feel it.

More needs to be done to help asylum applicants and refugees integrate in this country.

R is for Royalty Card

Royalty Card is a noun.

When your application has been refused but you make a fresh claim, the Home Office gives you an Azure Card, or a Royalty Card as we call it.

Every week, they top up my Royalty Card, but for me and my child it is not enough.

When I use my Royalty Card, you can feel people looking at you. And it is not because I am Royal. It is because they know I am an asylum seeker. There is a shame attached to using this card.

Sometimes they refuse you and you have to call the Royalty Card people. Sometimes you don't even have money on your phone and you have to just leave it.

You can't buy whatever you want and it is getting more and more restricted.

You can't even buy a postcard.

O is for Only-One-Pound

Only-one-pound is a noun.

Every asylum seeker will be familiar with this phrase. They don't have any choice. When you are on asylum support the money the Home Office gives you is not enough. You have to look for the cheapest food - up to one pound. Anything more and you don't buy it. You can't afford it. And it is a question of survival.

But this means you don't have much choice.

My only-one-pound buffet involves rice, pasta, noodles, potatoes and ready-made pizza.

The only protein I get is nearly-expired, or expired, meat.

With no nutrition or calories, you feel tired like an old man. You have no energy.

It is embarrassing to eat the cheapest food, so you eat alone.

As a survivor of torture, the reality of only-one pound means you don't have good health and it affects your mind psychologically. You feel too weak to deal with your problems.

K is for Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a verb.

When I talk about kidnapping I am talking about being bundled off to a detention centre.

It is the word we use to describe being taken straight from your asylum screening interview to an isolated cell. In my case, I was taken to Harmondsworth. I was put in a car as if I was a criminal. We drove for two hours. I kept asking them where we're going. All they said was, "we are taking you somewhere for your safety." It reminded me of how, in Gambia, when they took you to prison they said they were taking you to a Five Star Hotel.

My kidnapping in the UK gave me flashbacks. It brought me right back to my torture in the Gambia. It was another form of mental torture all over again.

After my kidnapping I stayed in Hamondsworth for two weeks. I found myself in an unimaginable situation. It was horrible.

It was only when my solicitor referred my case to Freedom from Torture that I was released.

To be honest, even now, when I walk down the street I am scared of another kidnapping.

Guidance

Sensitivity

There may be students or staff at school or in your group who themselves have had firsthand experience of torture, or whose parents have, who are seeking asylum or have experienced violence in their lives. This topic needs to be approached with care and appropriate safeguards put in place to protect their wellbeing.

It may be difficult for a survivor of torture to discuss traumatic experiences; they may have fears about returning home or recalling their traumatic past. While personal experiences and testimonies can enrich debate, teachers need to be aware of the difficult emotions colleagues and pupils might face in such situations and should prepare for this suitably.

Before the lesson it is appropriate to tell students that they can approach you if they wish to talk about any of the issues discussed.

Be mindful of your school's or group's Child Protection Policy and seek advanced guidance from the Child Protection Officer if necessary. If any student does wish to talk to you, and if appropriate, give the student contact details for organisations such as Childline at www.childline.org.uk

Other teaching resources to support Human Rights Education

- Amnesty International - Torture - 13+
http://amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/lessons_-_torture.pdf
- Amnesty International - Time to Flee - 11-16
<http://amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-pack-time-flee#.VXhe3UaM7q4>
- Amnesty International - Everyone Everywhere - Refugees and Asylum
<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/lesson-refugees-and-asylum#node-8058>
- UNHCR - Against All Odds
<http://www.playagainstallodds.ca/>
- City of Sanctuary - Advice and tips on how to make your school a school of sanctuary
http://cityofsanctuary.org/files/schools_of_sanctuary_pack_national_14.7.pdf

Key terms and definitions

- ❖ The term **'refugee'** describes an individual who has fled their country due to fear of persecution, and their government's failure to protect them. They flee to a different country where the government or the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) grants the individual refugee status. Refugees are 'involuntary' or 'forced' migrants because they left their homes against their will.
- ❖ The term **'asylum seeker' or 'asylum applicant'** describes an individual who has applied for asylum and therefore wishes to be recognised as a refugee, but is awaiting the government's decision.

It is defined as a person who, from fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, has crossed an international frontier into a country in which he or she hopes to be granted refugee status.

- ❖ The term **'internally displaced person'** describes an individual who has left his/her home as a result of war or human rights abuses, but has relocated within their own country.

They have often left their home for similar reasons as refugees: armed conflict or human rights violations - but unlike a refugee remain legally under the protection of their own government, even though the government may be the reason that they have fled.

Example: When individuals are made homeless as a result of a natural disaster they are classified as internally displaced persons. As a result of the floods in Pakistan in 2010, many Pakistanis were forced to flee their homes and became internally displaced persons.

- ❖ The term **'economic migrant'** describes an individual who leaves their home due to poverty. He/she may be drawn to a new area or country because it offers the prospect of more work, better wages or greater opportunities. In many cases these individuals have left their homes voluntarily.

It is defined as an individual who moves from one region, place, or country to another in order to improve his or her standard of living.

Freedom from Torture

Freedom from Torture is the only UK-based human rights organisation dedicated to the treatment and rehabilitation of torture survivors. We do this by offering services across England and Scotland to around 1,000 torture survivors a year, including psychological and physical therapies, forensic documentation of torture, legal and welfare advice, and creative projects.

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www.freedomfromtorture.org

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Freedom from Torture

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