

Concept Note:

**45th Session of the
United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture**

Public Event on

**A Victim's Journey:
Redress and Rehabilitation for
Torture Victims in Migration**

**28 April 2017, 11 am – 1 pm
Room VIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva**



Photo by Georgi Licovski/ EPA

Background:

Around the world, millions of people are on the move for a diversity of reasons.¹ A significant number of these migrants have suffered from torture, either in their country of origin or along the migratory route, or both, and may also be vulnerable to torture in their destination country. This is revealed by the work of the **UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture** in all regions of the world, which has documented that approximately two-thirds of the nearly 50 000 torture victims supported by the Fund in 2017 are migrants and refugees.

It is crucial that these victims of torture are treated in accordance with the international human rights law and standards to which they are entitled, regardless of their status. Victims of torture are entitled to the right to redress and rehabilitation.² Rehabilitation should be provided as early as possible, requiring *early identification* of victims, followed by *early intervention* with access to *comprehensive redress* (including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition).³ Victim

¹ Although there is no universal legal definition, OHCHR defines an “international migrant” as “any person who is outside a State of which he or she is a citizen or national, or, in the case of a stateless person, his or her State of birth or habitual residence”: OHCHR, *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders* (2014), p. 4. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines a “migrant” as “any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.”

² Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, article 14.

³ Committee Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Punishment, *General Comment No. 3*, CAT/C/GC/3 (19 November 2012), para. 15. See also OHCHR, *supra* note 1, Guideline 7.

participation in the redress and rehabilitation processes is essential.⁴ Furthermore, the already-precarious situation of torture victims in the context of migration may be compounded by other intersecting vulnerabilities, such as the factors that drove their migration, situations they encounter during their journey or on arrival, and/or specific aspects of a person's identity or circumstance (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation, health status, migration status, etc.).⁵

For over 35 years, the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture has channelled over US\$168 million to more than 620 organizations globally that provide medical, psychological, legal, humanitarian and social rehabilitation services to victims of torture. Each year, the Fund supports around 50 000 torture victims in over 80 countries in all regions of the world. The majority of these victims are migrants – including asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants – who have suffered torture in their country of origin, in transit, or in the context of reception.

At its 45th session, the Board of Trustees of the Fund will hold an Expert Workshop on 26-27 April 2017 with a number of expert practitioners working in projects supported by the Fund that directly support the identification, redress, rehabilitation and empowerment of victims of torture in migration. Other stakeholders, including UN agencies and other experts, will contribute to the exchange.

In the context of the session, a Public Meeting will be organized on 28 April 2017 to highlight the rights and needs of victims of torture in the context of migration, and to feature the expertise of the practitioners supported by the Fund in assisting these victims.

Objectives:

The Public Event, in the format of a panel discussion, will:

- Draw attention to the linkages between torture and migration, with a focus on the rights and needs of victims of torture in the context of migration;
- Present the experiences of grantees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, from different contexts and regions, on the redress and rehabilitation of torture victims in migration;
- Highlight the importance of victim participation in the redress and rehabilitation process;
- Emphasize the need for humane and specialized responses to victims of torture in the context of migration, including large-scale and complex migration flows.

The panel discussion will be followed by an inter-active segment of questions and answers.

The Public Event will be open to all Permanent Missions, civil society actors, media and other relevant stakeholders.

⁴ Id.

⁵ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants in the context of large movements*, A/HRC/33/67 (13 September 2016).

Panellists

The Public Event will be chaired by Ms. Gaby Oré Aguilar, Chairperson of the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and will feature the following panellists:

- Ms. Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Mr. Kolbassia Haoussou, Survivors Speak Out, Freedom from Torture, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Ms. Eva Abu Halaweh, Mizan Law Group for Human Rights, Jordan
- Ms. Ana Elena Barrios, Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Matías de Córdova, Mexico
- Ms. Hamsa Vijayraghavan, The Ara Trust, India
- Mr. Mark Fish, Room to Heal, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Ms. Lucy Kiama, HIAS Kenya, Kenya

Interpretation in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish will be provided.
