The Program for Torture Victims assists the courageous survivors of state-sponsored torture and persecution who have stood up for freedom, equality and human dignity.

For 35 years, PTV has helped new U.S. refugees, from over 70 countries, heal their physical and psychological wounds, and start a second life here in California.

The first torture rehabilitation center in North America, PTV:

• Helps survivors heal and find purpose
• Assists with basic needs such as transportation, food, clothing, employment, housing, and language classes
• Helps integrate new immigrants into American culture
• Works to reunite and re-acclimate families so that survivors can once again become parents to their children and spouses to their wives or husbands
• Helps clients navigate the complex and bureaucratic U.S. asylum process
• Documents the widespread practice of torture and persecution through reports to the United Nations, the United States and international human rights organizations
• Helps to hold individuals and governments accountable for torture or persecution by providing expert medical and psychological testimony in U.S. and international courts.
This year, the unprecedented world refugee crisis spilled into California. More than 40,000 new political refugees arrived from war-torn countries like Syria, South Sudan and Libya. Others arrived from Uganda, Honduras, Iran or Russia who were persecuted based on their activism, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

This year we saw men, women and children paralyzed by despair. Without help, they would not have been able to cope with the haunting pain of their experience and effectively deal with the overwhelming challenge of a new country. Together, we helped them find the courage and strength to move beyond their torture or persecution and create new lives filled with hope, possibility and purpose.

This year, we also launched a new partnership with USC Eisner Family Medical Center and the USC Keck School of Medicine which formed the Human Rights Health Clinic at USC Eisner. This new clinic doubled the number of medical appointments we provided to survivors with lingering medical issues as a result of torture or other human rights abuses.

As we celebrate 35 years of service, we are proud of the lives we have healed. And our donors and volunteers should be proud of the community of new Americans they helped by providing a second chance.
PROGRAMS

MENTAL HEALTH CARE

As the pioneer in torture rehabilitation, PTV has developed an integrated and successful approach to healing survivors with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other disorders associated with torture or human rights abuse. PTV offers individual and family psychotherapy, psychological evaluation, psychiatric evaluation and follow-up care.

MEDICAL & DENTAL CARE

Most survivors cannot access government or workplace health coverage until after asylum has been filed. Through our Human Rights Health Clinic at USC Eisner, PTV provides outpatient medical care by physicians who are trained in refugee trauma. When specialists are needed, we utilize the network we have created at USC Eisner Family Medical Center and at other local health care organizations at no cost to the client. PTV also offers emergency or trauma-related dental care through our partnership with the Change A Life Foundation.

LEGAL SUPPORT

PTV works with an extensive network of attorneys and legal aid organizations to ensure high-quality legal assistance for our clients. Our staff conducts forensic medical and psychological evaluations, serves as expert witnesses for asylum cases in federal immigration proceedings, as well as for human rights or war crimes tribunals in international courts. Additionally, we provide training to attorneys, federal immigration officers, and judges.

SOCIAL SERVICES & EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

PTV provides basic needs such as emergency cash assistance, food, clothing, as well as linkages to permanent housing and employment. Our peer support groups create a sense of community for clients, allow them to share experiences, and empower them to become spokespeople against the use of torture.

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

Our holistic and integrated approach to healing also includes massage therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, pet therapy, art therapy, and theatre, which are provided through our innovative partnerships with local teaching institutions or by dedicated volunteer professionals.

PUBLIC EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

PTV initiates public programs to educate the general public about the use of torture worldwide and its consequences for individuals and society. We also engage elected officials and policymakers in efforts to identify and combat torture, and advocate for resources to facilitate the healing of torture survivors and to reunite them with their families.

PTV provides survivors of torture, persecution, or other forms of government violence the necessary tools to improve their health, build effective support networks and lead productive, meaningful lives...

U.S. SENATOR DIANE FEINSTEIN

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF HEALING
She wanted to make sure that what happened to her as a child would never happen to another girl. “It was so painful. I believed I was going to die,” she told us.

At just 10 years old, Karimeh was the victim of female genital mutilation (FGM). She belonged to a tribe that practiced this horrible rite of passage for young girls — a myth thought to ensure fidelity to future husbands. These procedures were done without anesthetic by tribal elders with no medical training. With pressure from the United Nations, the Benin government finally banned FGM. However, the practice continued in her tribe.

As an adult, Karimeh felt compelled to stop the archaic practice and to protect the girls in her community. She became a teacher. She educated the young girls and their mothers about the dangers of FGM and about the new law which prohibited it.

When one of her favorite students admitted that their family forced her to undergo the painful procedure, Karimeh filed a report with the local police. Her outspokenness raised the ire of tribal elders and parents alike. One day, in front of her students, she was grabbed by a group and dragged to the village center. She was tied and publicly flogged — all while the police looked on. Wounded, bloodied and terrified, she was left in a heap on the street. It’s no surprise that Karimeh suffers from back pain that keeps her from being able to sleep on her back.

She spent everything her fellow teachers gave her just to get to safety in Los Angeles. PTV provided prompt medical care and helped her with the monumental task of applying for political asylum. She also attends a PTV writing group, where she has made friends and has decided to explore journalism as a new career.

IMPACT
PTV assisted 270 survivors in 2015 who fled from 43 countries. More than half were from Armenia, India, Iran, Russia, Uganda, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Mexico.

ASSISTANCE

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APPOINTMENTS

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Dr. Mukadi Papy was a first-year physician at a clinic in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), when he discovered at least 30 cases of women who had all been raped and brutalized by DRC soldiers. All these women sought treatment for pelvic pain and displayed similar symptoms, and when he spoke to them about their medical history he learned about the sexual violence.

Against the advice of fellow physicians, Dr. Papy collected evidence to support his letter of complaint. Though aware of the consequences of speaking out against DRC’s soldiers, Dr. Papy was determined to end the cycle of abuse, and expose his evidence in order to create public outrage and political change. Instead, he was summoned by the Department of Public Health, and was told to surrender all original medical files so that they could be destroyed. When he refused to comply, the local authorities arrested him. In detention, he was chained to a pipe, beaten, and shocked with a device attached to a car battery. He lost consciousness and awoke the next morning in a hospital bed.

Today Dr. Papy lives in Los Angeles after additional government threats forced him to finally flee his home country of DRC. PTV assisted Dr. Papy by linking him with a pro-bono attorney, assisting him in finding low-income housing and providing him with medical care, counseling, and food. This year, he was granted asylum by the U.S. government.

Dr. Papy is currently working as a security guard to support himself while he studies for the U.S. Medical License Exam. We are proud to announce that a generous local foundation partnered with PTV to underwrite the cost of a six month exam prep-course for Dr. Papy. This study course is the first step in his three-year plan to practice medicine again.
PTV would like to thank the individuals, families and institutions who, through gifts or contributions, made our important work possible...
Ayana was determined not to become one of 40% of Kyrgyz women who are forced to marry the men who kidnap them. Ayana was home for a holiday break from boarding school when she fell victim to the brutal tradition of bride kidnapping. “Kyrgyz women are told not to protest, told they can’t ask the police for help, told they have no right to say no. They are voiceless” says PTV Therapist, Dr. Rosemarie Durocher.

AYANA survivor from Kyrgyzstan

Ayana was walking down a small street during the day, when a car pulled up and two men jumped out, grabbed her and threw her in the back seat. “I screamed as loud as I could,” said Ayana. Her kidnappers grew frustrated with her screaming and kicking in self-defense. While the car was travelling at high speed, her abductors opened the car door and pushed her out onto a paved road. Ayana woke up in hospital after having been unconscious for several hours, she suffered three broken ribs, a fractured wrist and extensive bruises. Her parents feared that she would be kidnapped again so they decided that she should flee.

Today, Ayana is a community college student here in Los Angeles. PTV assisted her with access to English classes and helped her get an internship at a local printing company. She has her mind set on being a graphic designer. “I arrived in Los Angeles alone and overwhelmed by the asylum process. PTV made me like family and referred me to a free lawyer. They arranged for me to see a female doctor and talk to a female therapist. PTV helped me like myself again, I am proud that I am a women and that I have a voice and that I have rights in this country,” she adds.
Alberto Vazquez, a licensed massage therapist, was looking to volunteer his services to help people who were experiencing pain but could not afford care. “My wife came across PTV on the internet and suggested that I volunteer there,” he said.

Alberto provides 5 hours of free massage therapy to survivors at our Wilshire office every Wednesday. “Massage therapy is a powerful tool to assist torture survivors with chronic pain, sleep issues, and stress. Alberto plays a key role in making our clients feel whole again,” says PTV Medical Director, Dr. Cynthia Willard.

One thing Alberto has noticed is that PTV clients tend to do more of their homework, which usually involves muscle exercises or stretching, than his paid clients. “PTV clients really want to heal. They are aware that something is going on in their bodies and want to feel better” says Vazquez.

Alberto remembers a survivor that he feels he really helped particularly. She had significant body pain and was referred by her psychotherapist. She had never received a massage from a man before, so she asked for her psychotherapist to be in the room, and for the door to remain open. She also did not want her feet to be touched.

During her first appointment, Alberto used the Google translator app to communicate, and the awkward translations made her laugh. On the second appointment she allowed her psychotherapist to step out, and halfway through the massage she pointed to her feet. “I knew that she trusted me if she asked me to massage her feet,” said Alberto. After the massage, the survivor hugged PTV staff, which she had never done before, as she was usually shy and reserved.

Improvements such as these may seem like baby steps, but they are monumental in helping survivors feel reconnected and begin to trust others again. Alberto proves that the human touch can change lives.
KEY VOLUNTEERS
Laila Al Marayati, MD
OB-Gynecologist
Emily and Victoria Almendarez
Outreach Interns
Hector Aristizabal
Theatre Director
Estela Chung
Communications Intern
Ana Deutsch, MFT
Therapist/Co-Founder
Lisa Huynh
Graphic Designer
Cheline Lundin
Event Volunteer
José Quiroga, MD
Physician/Co-Founder
Samantha Stewart, MD
Psychiatrist
Alberto Vazquez
Massage Therapist

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Claudia Vargas
Program Assistant
Leah Vincent
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Director of External Affairs
Dean Vendercaris
Bookkeeper

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Potter & Handy
Stella Maloyan
LAANE
The name, image or other identifying characteristics of some survivors may be changed to protect client confidentiality and the safety of family and friends that still live in the survivor's country of origin.

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