



ABOUT REHABILITATION

What is rehabilitation?

The aim of rehabilitation is to empower the torture survivor to resume as full a life as possible. To this end, rehabilitation centres use a variety of different treatment approaches, taking into account survivors' individual needs, as well as the cultural, social and political environment.

Rehabilitation requires a holistic approach

The rehabilitation of torture survivors requires addressing their needs in a broader context. Rehabilitation centres offer multi-disciplinary support and counselling, including:

- medical attention / psychotherapeutic treatment
- psychosocial support / trauma treatment
- legal services and redress
- social reintegration.

In the case of asylum seekers and refugees, the services may include assisting in documentation of torture for the asylum decision, language classes and help in finding somewhere to live and work.

Secondary victims also need support

In the worst case, torture can affect several generations. The physical and mental after-effects of torture often place great strain on the entire family and society. Therefore, other members of the victim's family – in particular the spouse and children – are also offered treatment and counselling. Children are particularly vulnerable. They often suffer from a feeling of guilt or personal responsibility for what has happened.

Rebuilding the life of someone whose dignity has been destroyed takes time. Health professionals and other caregivers need to gain the trust and confidence of their clients, and need to be available for the client whenever needed. To rehabilitate survivors of



torture requires long-term material, medical, psychological and social assistance and support.

Rehabilitation efforts play a key role

The impact of rehabilitation efforts on society is often far-reaching. Torture is a political act, and the rehabilitation of torture survivors is thus often also perceived as political. Rehabilitation centres therefore play a key role in promoting democracy, co-existence, and respect for human rights. They provide support and hope, and act as a symbol of triumph over the manmade terror of torture which can hold back the development of democracy of entire societies. Through the following activities, a centre can play a role in the promotion of democracy and prevent torture:

- awareness
- reporting
- media
- campaigns
- local community development
- documentation
- training
- education.

Reconstructing broken societies

In some instances, whole societies can be more or less traumatised where torture has been used in a systematic and widespread manner. In general, after years of repression, conflict and war, regular support networks and structures have often been broken or destroyed. Rehabilitation programmes for torture survivors need to be closely integrated with broader community-oriented initiatives for reconstruction of countries and societies. Providing psychosocial support and redress to survivors of torture and trauma can help reconstruct broken societies. Health professionals and other caregivers need to collaborate closely with local authorities, communities, social service providers, legal structures and human rights NGOs to address the needs of torture victims and their families.



The IRCT global network

Centres and programmes within the IRCT global network conduct a broad range of projects and activities related to prevention of torture and rehabilitation of survivors.

Our partners are often:

- rehabilitation centres for treatment of torture and trauma
- governments and local administrations
- human rights organisations – national and international
- health professional organisations – national and international
- intergovernmental organisations (i.e. the UN)
- regional organisations (e.g. the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the EU, the African Union).

Throughout our work, we ensure the required professional confidentiality of torture victims and their families. We recognise our obligation to protect the dignity of each individual in our efforts to provide rehabilitation and treatment, and to promote justice in the fight against torture. Cultural sensitivity is a guiding principle in the provision of rehabilitation and treatment services for torture survivors worldwide without discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation.

The IRCT promotes democratic development and freedom from torture in all states. We urge all states and international fora to promote the full and equitable recognition of all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable, which demands recognition, rehabilitation and restitution of torture victims as well as effective political measures to prevent acts of torture and to bring perpetrators of torture to justice in fair legal proceedings.