

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

EMPOWERING
SURVIVORS,
REBUILDING
LIVES

IMPACT REPORT 2023



2023 SAW A RENEWED SENSE OF COMPASSION, COURAGE AND RESOLVE AT FREEDOM FROM TORTURE.

**It was a year of survivor agency on the march.
Of survivors in the driving seat. And of our
growing movement standing together and
speaking out for what is right in the face of
cruel and inhumane policies affecting the
lives of people who have survived torture.**

EMPOWERING CHANGE

Survivors of torture are now more than ever the fundamental driving force behind reforms to the services that we offer to our clients.

In 2023, we ran a survey (page 6) to give all our clients an opportunity to tell us directly what they want most from our rehabilitation services. This forward-thinking approach has been invaluable in helping us, in collaboration with survivors, to shape and prioritise our services to truly reflect survivors' needs.

In November, the Supreme Court blocked the Rwanda “cash for humans” scheme on the basis that Rwanda is not a safe third country. We fought the Government’s plan to send refugees to Rwanda every step of the way. Our survivor networks were central to the design and delivery of our unapologetic campaigning, driven by the knowledge that the threat of forcible removal to a notorious torturing state was causing our clients extreme distress and, in many cases, further trauma. Alarming, the Government tried to legislate around this finding of fact by our Supreme Court. But we will never give up until all these anti-refugee policies are scrapped once and for all. We have mobilised tens of thousands of caring and compassionate people to continue the fight.

This year, our models of Empowerment spread across the world. Alongside our Survivors Speak OUT network, we are now routinely referred to as the “go to experts” globally on survivor leadership and empowerment in relation to

lived experience involvement in international justice and accountability initiatives. Survivor engagement has been pivotal to tackling inhumane policies and making a real, tangible difference to issues affecting the lives of survivors. Creation of a new global survivor advisory group for the UK’s Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative has been a long term ambition of the Survivors Speak OUT network. And now it is a reality, thanks to the tireless advocacy of Kolbassia Haoussou MBE and Nadine Tunasi who serve as survivor champions for the initiative. Their unwavering commitment to ensuring survivor perspectives were represented in all discussions has also been reflected in concrete changes to policies at the International Criminal Court (ICC), including on gender based crimes.

We have achieved a great deal over the past year but inflation has increased our cost base significantly and we can still only see one in three of the torture survivors referred to Freedom from Torture for clinical therapy. Time is of the essence in dealing with trauma. We urgently need more therapists to be able to support more torture survivors more quickly. And we need more funding to do that. Thank you for your unwavering support and standing with survivors.



Members of the One Strong Voice network, nested at Freedom from Torture, handing in a petition opposing the Illegal Migration Act

TORTURE SURVIVORS ARE AT THE HEART OF ALL THAT FREEDOM FROM TORTURE DOES

Everything we do is informed by the experience of torture survivors, their needs, their physical and mental health recovery, and their will and agency in rebuilding their lives. Each survivor is on their own journey. The hard work – dealing with trauma, re-establishing relationships and trust, rebuilding confidence and putting their life back together – is theirs to do. What we can offer is hope for the future and support in getting there.

TOGETHER WE...

CHANGED SURVIVORS' LIVES



713

survivors received life changing holistic rehabilitation services



167

survivors supported with clinical evidence in support of their asylum claims



Our Medico-legal reports helped ensure positive Home Office decisions in

OVER 80%

of first instance asylum claims by survivors who were examined by our doctors



Our in-depth client survey validated key elements of our clinical model including our focus on evidence-based trauma-focused therapies and holistic care including health assessments, pain service and Medico-legal reports, and generated insights for further improvement of our services over the coming years



80% of discharged clients since 2020 have reported significant improvement in their mental health symptoms

CHANGED THE SYSTEM



RWANDA SCHEME

ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court after litigation which we supported in many ways



10,000+

asylum seekers helped by improvements we secured to a Home Office fast-track system for some asylum claims



14%

increase since 2020 in public support for torture being wrong in any circumstance



Almost **80,000**

of our supporters took campaign actions to stand up for the rights of survivors

DROVE POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP



75

organisations across the world consulted us on how to shift more power to survivors in services, campaigns and justice initiatives for their benefit



CONCRETE CHANGES

to multiple policies affecting the lives of survivors including new International Criminal Court (ICC) policies



Co-design and co-delivery by survivors of all our 2023 campaigns



Launch of the Survivors Speak OUT network's first ever two year strategy (2023-2025)

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE WINS TOP PRIZE AT CHARITY AWARDS

It is a testament to survivors, our supporters and staff that our unfaltering campaigning for a more compassionate world was recognised at the 2023 Charity Awards, the longest-running and most prestigious awards scheme in the charity sector.

As well as winning the top prize in the Campaigning & Advocacy category, Freedom from Torture was chosen as the Overall Winner by this year's judges for our creative and successful campaign to stop airlines from flying refugees to Rwanda as part of the Government's anti-refugee agenda.

Torture survivors contributed directly to the design and implementation of the campaign, and many signed up for a campaign leadership programme, gaining skills in organising and campaign strategy.

The awards are helping send a clear message from the wider UK charity sector: **Not in our name.**



"This is what happens when you really embed a genuine commitment to lived experience throughout your organisation, as they have done for over a decade. And even if they haven't permanently stopped this policy, they have shifted the public debate – you can see it coming up again and again, the questioning of whether this is an OK way to behave as a nation, as a society."

RUTH DAVISON, CHARITY AWARDS JUDGE

OUR SERVICES ARE SHAPED BY SURVIVORS

In 2023 we conducted a clinical review survey to ensure survivors were central to the design of service improvements.

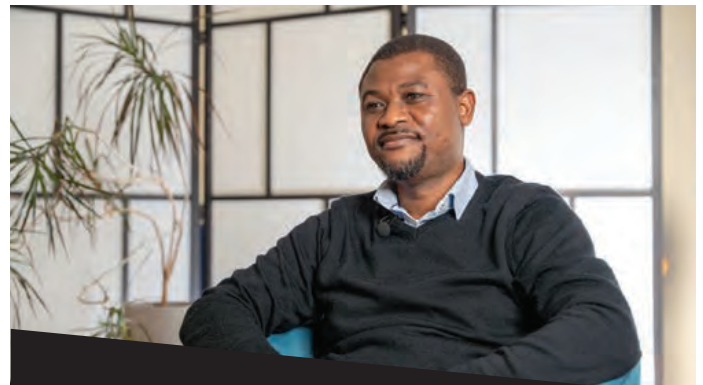
Arriving in a foreign country after the terrifying ordeal of torture is a deeply traumatic experience. Navigating the complexities of the UK asylum system is emotionally and physically exhausting. Moreover, many survivors urgently need mental and physical care and support to begin the healing process.

With so many regressive changes to accommodation arrangements and the system for processing asylum claims, the immediate needs of survivors are changing. This is why, in 2023, we undertook a wide-ranging clinical survey in partnership with survivors to better understand our service users' experiences of our face-to-face and remote clinical services.

The survey has been crucial to ensuring that improvements to our services are co-designed and relevant to survivors. Information will be used to inform changes to our clinical pathway from 2024 and will improve the quality of care that we are able to provide survivors of torture.

|| *Clients highlighted the importance of continuing to provide a holistic package of care including a focus on evidence-based trauma therapies and Medico-legal reports, the need for expanded access to health assessments and pain management, and ideas for a new survivor co-led approach to the reintegration phase of therapy. We continue to use client feedback to make improvements to our service and to ensure our service is both of high quality and relevant to the current priorities of survivors. ||*

HELEN MCCOLL, NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL SERVICES



Jeremie Diatapakola, survivor and service user engagement coordinator, North West centre, worked successfully to engage clients in the survey process.



ALMOST A THIRD
of all active clients responded to the survey

The survey had 138 respondents (29.1%) out of 474 clients. This can be compared to the NHS-E GP Patient Survey (2023) response rate of 28%.

SUPPORTING FELLOW SURVIVORS

Stabilisation is a way in which we help survivors at the beginning of the clinical pathway to feel safe and supported, and develop coping skills to manage distress, nightmares and flashbacks. This facilitates the next stage of therapy, where we directly target disturbing memories of torture and other traumatic events.

Our survivor-led London stabilisation group, 'Finding Our Ground', went from strength to strength this year, with more survivors than ever working with new clients to provide a safe space to start their journey to recovery. It is a great example of how survivors are leading the way in delivering services that have a real impact on our clients' ability to feel safe and secure again. The stabilisation process lasts roughly 9 weeks, with each week dedicated to a different topic relating to how survivors can support themselves. It is an important part of our clinical pathway and the recovery journey for a survivor.

It makes such a difference, when someone has lived experience of torture themselves. It is very powerful and inspirational. Seeing that [the co-facilitator with lived experience] has been through torture herself and has survived and continued to rebuild her life and her education.

CLIENT, 'FINDING OUR GROUND'

The group helps service users to understand how they can help themselves during difficult times. They have mentioned to me how they are able to manage things like sleep, panic attacks, pains and trauma symptoms thanks to this group. I feel very proud to be supporting fellow survivors.

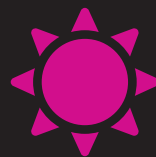
BORRY JARJU,
SURVIVOR AND SERVICE USER ENGAGEMENT
COORDINATOR, LONDON CENTRE

EMPOWERING SURVIVORS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

Our rehabilitation services help survivors to begin the painful process of recovering from the mental and physical pain caused by torture.

For most of us, it is hard to comprehend the terrible impact torture can have. Many people who have survived torture experience ongoing trauma for years: physical pain; problems with sleeping, concentrating, trusting others, and memory; and flashbacks and panic attacks sparked by sights, sounds and smells such as corridors, water and darkness.

Thanks to our supporters, we have clinicians who work with survivors to rebuild their physical and mental health. Our doctors document evidence of torture. Our immigration and welfare advisors help survivors with their asylum cases, homelessness and other poverty-related challenges.



713 survivors received life changing holistic rehabilitation services



80% of discharged clients since 2020 have reported significant improvement in their mental health symptoms



A survivor braves the rain to plant new seeds in the Freedom from Torture garden as part of their horticultural therapy session



KRISH'S STORY

Targeted in the street, fearing for his life and desperate to protect his family, Krish made the heartbreaking decision to leave everything he knew behind to try and find safety.

At 30 years old Krish was a staunch human rights activist, but, as with many Tamil Sri Lankans, speaking out put him in danger. The Government accused him of working against it. Krish was taken from his family and was subjected to terrible torture and violence.

Traumatized and alone, Krish risked his life to reach the UK. He was desperate to find somewhere safe so that he could rebuild his life, but he was battling with the memories of what he had been through.

Thanks to your kindness, however, Krish knows that he is not alone. He is making amazing progress in therapy and really values his sessions. Talking with his therapist gives him the hope and strength he needs to move on with his life.

“ I was nearly on the edge of my life, but after coming to Freedom from Torture I started to feel, in spite of the flashbacks and past memories, I wanted to live. Coming and seeing my therapist made me feel good. ”

KRISH

Krish is only 30 and has his whole life ahead of him. Because of your support, he is looking forward to his future and building a life in the UK. This would not be possible without the generosity of supporters like you.

NAVIGATING THE ASYLUM SYSTEM

Survivors of torture need safety and security to begin the slow process of recovery, but can often live in limbo and fear for years, housed or detained in conditions that can cause further trauma.



“ Every day in our therapy rooms, survivors of torture describe the horror, isolation, and hopelessness they feel when trapped in housing that is unsafe. Living in this type of accommodation can be profoundly retraumatizing for them. ”

ANN SALTER, HEAD OF CLINICAL SERVICES, FREEDOM FROM TORTURE NORTH WEST CENTRE

This is why our immigration and welfare team exist.

They support survivors in our treatment service to navigate the complex asylum system, secure legal representation and ensure that their asylum claims are well evidenced, and work to ensure safe and secure housing to help our clients recover from their experiences.

In 2023, we received:




1245 internal referrals for immigration advice – for survivors in our treatment service



876 internal referrals for welfare advice – for survivors in our treatment service





|| *The main reason I am happy is Freedom from Torture.* **||**

AAYAN

AAYAN'S STORY

One client we were able to support was Aayan.

Without your support, Aayan thinks he wouldn't be here. He said *"The main reason I am happy is the Freedom from Torture project. The main reason I am happy is Freedom from Torture."*

The support you give has funded essential trauma therapy and helped Aayan in other areas of his life. He has been helped to find English classes, appropriate housing, welfare support, warm clothing and food vouchers. *"There are so many things"* he said.

In his own words Aayan said he is *"very happy"* now, reunited with his family and working a job that he loves as a chef. Your support has allowed him to dream for the future and make plans to see his parents in India for the first time in over a decade.

PROVIDING EXPERT CLINICAL EVIDENCE

Our specialist and highly trained doctors provide independent evidence of torture for consideration as part of survivors' asylum claims.

They document the physical and psychological trauma of torture in expert witness reports. Our therapists also provide clinical letters about the psychological impact of torture that has emerged during treatment. This clinical evidence of torture documented by our clinicians is taken into account by asylum decision makers.

In 2023, **we supported 167 new survivors this way**, providing a total of 187 clinical letters and Medico-legal Reports to support asylum applications.

Our Medico-legal Report team provides services including:

- medical examinations and Medico-legal documentation.
- expert testimony in support of claims and legal proceedings.
- training for medics, lawyers and other professionals involved in the asylum process.

This high success rate for first instance asylum claims involving our Medico-legal Reports is especially significant because the Home Office's new fast track system for clearing the asylum backlog means that legal representatives tend to instruct us only in the most complicated cases now.



Beth, Head of Clinical Services from our Birmingham centre, works with a team of clinicians who help torture survivors on their journey to recovery



167 new survivors supported with Medico-legal Reports or other clinical evidence for their asylum claims



**POSITIVE HOME OFFICE
DECISIONS IN OVER 80%**

of first instance cases for which we provided a Medico-legal Report

|| *Without Freedom from Torture
I wouldn't be here today.* **||**

CHIDI



CHIDI'S STORY

Chidi is one of 167 survivors we helped through our Medico-legal Report service in 2023. Services we can only provide thanks to your support.

Chidi still finds it hard to talk about the trauma he experienced in Cameroon that forced him to flee the country, leaving his family behind. He arrived in the UK struggling with his mental health and the horrors he had been through.

Living in Manchester, contemplating suicide, and with seemingly no hope for a future, Chidi fortunately came across the name 'Freedom from Torture' and decided to find out more.

We provided Chidi with therapy to help him deal with the trauma. After referral to one of our doctors, he was provided with a Medico-legal Report for his asylum claim. We also provided funding so he could buy some clothes.

|| *I wish you a long life because thanks to you, people who are desperate, people who have lost hope or have no life left, are able to find hope again.* **||**

FIGHTING TO ENSURE THE UK IS A PLACE OF SANCTUARY

2023 was a year of fierce campaigning and influencing decision makers to combat the increasingly hostile asylum system.



Of those arriving in the UK seeking asylum, an estimated one person in three has experienced torture in their home country, forcing them to flee.

Thanks to you, we are mobilising caring people in communities all over the country to call for a fair, effective and humane approach to supporting survivors of torture when they arrive in the UK seeking safety.

- **Almost 80,000 supporters took action to stand with survivors in 2023 through emailing MPs or signing petitions.** This has given hope to our clients that together we are a strong movement that will continue to stand up for what is right in the face of cruel anti-refugee policies.

We fought for humanity and the rule of law during the passage of the Illegal Migration Act. Given the Government's sizeable parliamentary majority, we were not successful in defeating the legislation, but our collective campaigning efforts through the Together With Refugees coalition pushed the Labour Party to pledge to overturn the asylum ban and the Rwanda scheme. It is inconceivable that Labour would have made these vital pledges without the movement pressure that Freedom from Torture and other civil society groups helped to build.

Freedom from Torture and Together With Refugees

Freedom from Torture is a proud member of the Together With Refugees coalition, which brings together over 600 national, grassroots and refugee led organisations joining for a more compassionate approach to supporting refugees. In 2023, Freedom from Torture supported the

development of the Fair Begins Here campaign, launched in early 2024, calling for a fair new plan for refugees fleeing torture, war and persecution. We will be supporting this campaign through our organising and movement building work, aiming to reach thousands of people across the UK.

FIGHTING THE RWANDA POLICY

In June 2023 the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government’s plan to send refugees to Rwanda was unlawful. Freedom from Torture provided evidence and expertise to the court demonstrating that torture survivors will struggle to disclose their harrowing experiences in a process that moves too fast and has few safeguards.

“This is a victory for reason and compassion. We are delighted that the appeal judgment has affirmed what the caring people of this country already knew: the UK Government’s ‘cash for humans’ deal with Rwanda is not only deeply immoral, it flies in the face of the laws of this country.

Every day in Freedom from Torture’s therapy rooms, torture survivors confide in our clinicians their fears this expulsion scheme has generated amongst people seeking safety in this country. As we outlined in our intervention in the Court of Appeal, this dirty deal with Rwanda does too little to identify

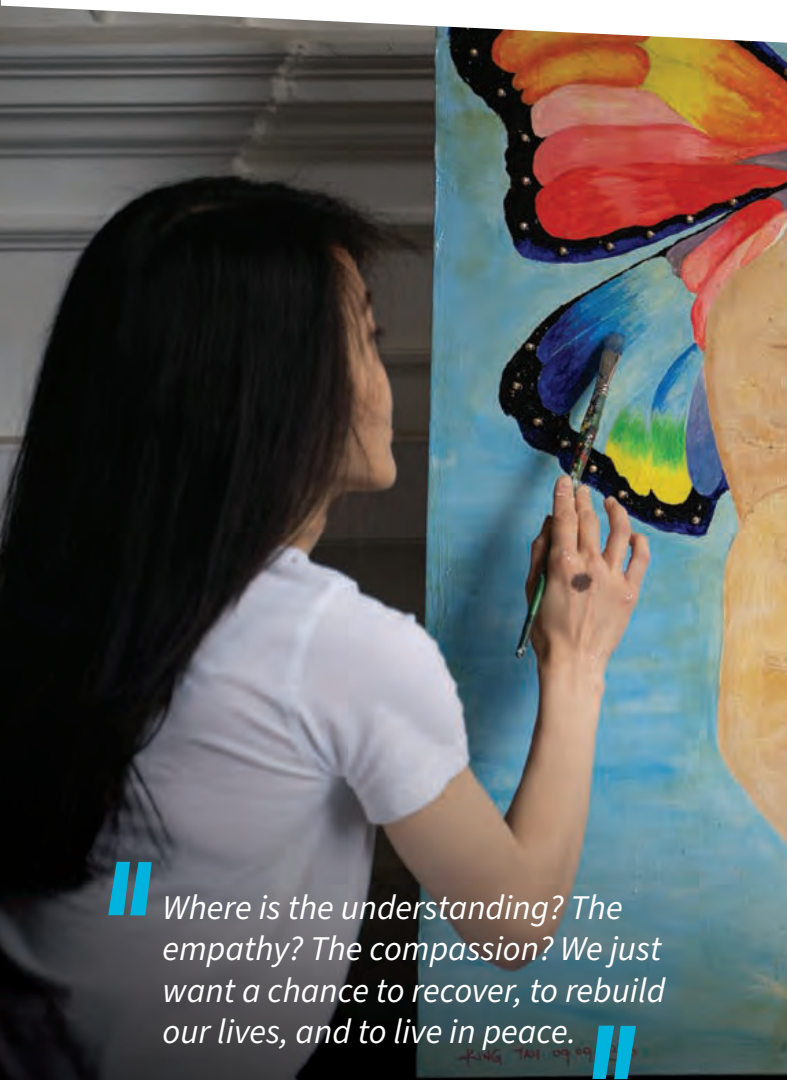
and protect survivors and other vulnerable groups and would see them placed at risk of further harm.

Sunak’s inhumane policy has sparked anger across the UK, from protesters on the streets to faith leaders and cultural icons. If he is serious about offering sanctuary to those most in need, he should focus on rebuilding a fair and compassionate asylum system. One that welcomes and offers a fair hearing to refugees no matter how they arrive.”

SONYA SCEATS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

Undeterred, the Government took the case to the Supreme Court. The judges unanimously agreed with the Court of Appeal, ruling that refugees sent to Rwanda were at risk of being wrongly returned to their country of origin.

Despite the Supreme Court finding that refugees could not safely be sent to Rwanda, Parliament has now approved the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Act, which simply declares by fiat that Rwanda a safe country under UK law.



“Where is the understanding? The empathy? The compassion? We just want a chance to recover, to rebuild our lives, and to live in peace.**”**

KING

KING'S STORY

Having experienced persecution and trauma for so long, King has struggled with her physical and mental health. With the help of organisations like Freedom from Torture, she is finding ways to cope. But she lives with the constant anxiety of being sent to Rwanda.

“They keep saying that the Rwanda plan will be a deterrent for people trying to reach the UK to claim sanctuary... when you’re fleeing for your life, you’re not thinking about government policies.**”**

We will continue to campaign against anti-refugee policies like the Rwanda scheme and to protect survivors who have risked everything to come to the UK for sanctuary and protection. **We have mobilised thousands of supporters. The fight continues.**

CHANGING UNFAIR PROCESSES

In response to our pre-action litigation work and threat of judicial review, the Home Office made changes to a fast-tracking system they put in place to help clear the significant backlog of asylum claims. We secured critical safeguards for survivors of torture and other refugees.

10,000+
refugees will benefit from these amendments

In March 2023, Freedom from Torture launched the preliminary stages of litigation against the Home Office's new streamlined asylum process. This is an accelerated

process that uses a questionnaire for people seeking asylum from countries for which there is a high asylum grant rate. Whilst the questionnaire may have been well intentioned, there was a significant risk of it leading to wrongful cancellation of asylum claims. Our work resulted in increased fairness for more than 10,000 refugees within the process.



|| *Asylum claims can involve life or death decisions, so getting the correct decision is paramount. The 'asylum claim questionnaire' required people to complete a complex form, often without any legal advice, within a 20-day deadline. This risked many asylum claims being wrongly withdrawn, leaving those individuals at risk of return to torture or persecution or forcible expulsion to Rwanda. Our intervention secured critical safeguards for over 10,000 people.* ||

NATASHA TSANGARIDES,
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY,
FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

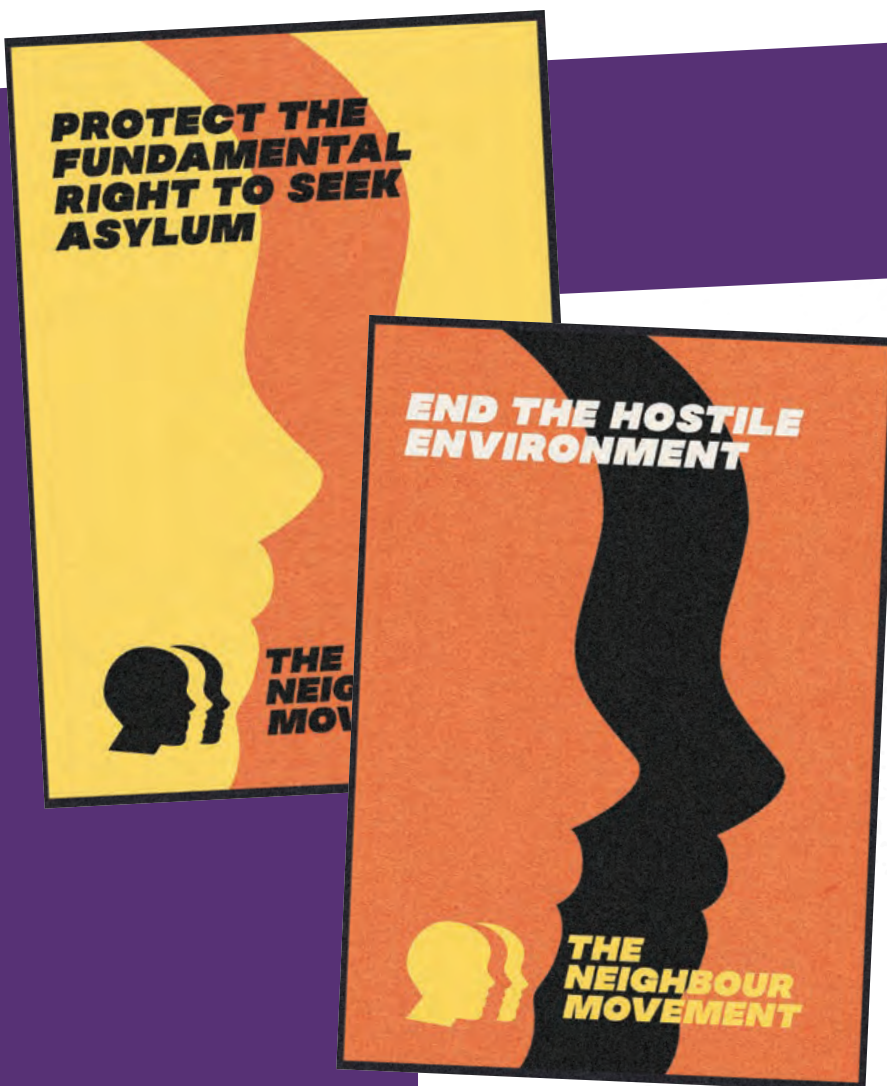
Our pre-action legal work secured clarifications, policy amendments and a review of the Equality Impact Assessment for the scheme. In response to our planned judicial review, the Home Office published updated guidance on Withdrawing Asylum Claims, requiring asylum caseworkers to take several steps before treating a claim as withdrawn, including the following commitments:

- **Claims will not be refused** on the basis of a response to the asylum questionnaire alone.
- **Claims will be granted extensions** in all cases where requested.
- If not returned within the timeframe and with no extension requested, **the claim will not immediately or invariably be treated as withdrawn** and attempts will be made to contact the person by multiple methods.

The revised guidance also includes details of a process for requesting review of implied withdrawals. The impact of this work was also to place a spotlight in the media on the process, adding scrutiny and placing pressure on the Home Secretary.



Sile Reynolds, Head of Asylum Advocacy, speaks to the media about refugee rights outside the Supreme Court



THE NEIGHBOUR MOVEMENT

During 2023 we worked with lived experience leaders and our partners at the Asylum Reform Initiative, the coordinating mechanism behind the Together With Refugees coalition, to develop a new project, the Neighbour Movement. This project aimed to test new community organising approaches to build stronger people power in support of a fairer and more compassionate asylum system in the UK.

SPREADING SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT MODELS ACROSS THE GLOBE

This year, we saw survivor leaders playing an important role on the global stage – standing up for our shared values of hope and compassion and calling out injustice. Survivor leadership and influencing at these high levels has led to concrete changes in practice and policy.



|| I am proud Freedom from Torture has become the go-to organisation for survivor-led approaches. It is great to see survivor advisory groups within the torture rehabilitation sector using a survivor-centred framework on a global scale.



75+

organisations from around the world sought our support on models of survivor empowerment



We are now routinely seen as the ‘go-to experts’ globally on survivor leadership and empowerment

Working with these groups is not only proof-of-concept that survivor-led frameworks work, but that these frameworks are the future for all organisations working with people with a wide range of lived experiences, including torture. ||

KOLBASSIA HAOUSSOU MBE, DIRECTOR OF SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCING AT FREEDOM FROM TORTURE AND SURVIVOR CHAMPION FOR THE PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT INITIATIVE

SURVIVORS SPEAK OUT

Nothing about us, without us

Our survivor-led network, Survivors Speak OUT (SSO), has had an incredible impact over the past year influencing consultations, debates and conferences in the UK and abroad. Their voices have been crucial to influencing international justice and accountability mechanisms.



“ When I became Survivor Champion, along with my colleague Kolbassia Haoussou MBE, I knew that part of my role was to make space and create a platform so that more survivors can take part in the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative. Through my work, I’ve had the opportunity to meet many survivors from different countries and I am always inspired by their determination and resilience. ”

NADINE TUNASI, SSO MANAGER AT FREEDOM FROM TORTURE AND SURVIVOR CHAMPION FOR THE PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT INITIATIVE

(1) INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE ON PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT INITIATIVE

As survivor champions, Kolbassia Haoussou MBE and Nadine Tunasi won the argument to create a survivor advisory group for the UK’s flagship Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

The advisory group now brings survivors from across the world together and is a tremendous example of Freedom from Torture influencing other actors, in this case the UK Government, to take a survivor-centred approach to preventing sexual violence, including sexual torture. The advisory group is at the heart of the new international alliance that the UK has created to bolster the impact of the entire initiative, including implementation of recommendations and policy development.



- A new survivor advisory group to put survivors at the heart of decision-making in the global fight against sexual violence in conflict.
- Global survivor advisory group recommendations were adopted in the International Alliance policies.
- Survivors from previously marginalised communities, such as the indigenous people of Guatemala and children born of war rape, felt empowered to speak and saw their recommendations reflected in the work of the International Alliance.

(2) ADVISING THE OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Survivors Speak OUT (SSO) is now advising on a survivor-based approach to achieving international justice for survivors.



- SSO helped to shape the creation of new virtual reality software for victims of sexual violence to give testimony for prosecutions and the ability for survivors to bear witness in court whilst being in a remote, safe space.
- SSO helped to strengthen a new ICC policy on gender-based crimes.

A WORLD FREE FROM TORTURE

No Government should ever commit or tolerate torture. It is the most terrible abuse of power towards a defenceless person, a violation of their human rights and dignity, to deliberately cause pain, suffering and mental anguish.

And yet in the 21st century, around the world, we see the incidence and acceptance of torture rising, as authoritarian governments seek to suppress popular movements and protest, and use torture to silence activists and destroy people.

In 2023, we continued our unapologetic efforts to protect the absolute ban on torture, raise awareness of torturing states and hold the UK to its obligations and commitments to international law.

- Our movement-building work has helped to achieve a **14% increase since 2020** in UK public support for the absolute torture ban, **rising from 55% in January 2020 to 69% in January 2024.**
- **122% increase in our media coverage last year,** showcasing our lived-experience, clinical and policy experts as thought leaders on torture and the rights of survivors.

We used media to raise awareness and highlight abuses of power. This included stories showcasing survivor experiences of torture in places like Iran and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and commentary from survivors on UK legislation which backslides on our obligation to uphold the absolute torture ban and sets a dangerous precedent for other countries, including the Northern Ireland Troubles Act and National Security Bill, as well as the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill (known as the Anti-Boycott Bill), which seeks to restrict public bodies making decisions that meet with their human rights responsibilities, including in relation to torture.

Survivors launch Refugee Rights and Anti-Torture Manifestos at Parliament

Freedom from Torture and SSO were selected to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) at Parliament. We launched our joint Refugee Rights and Anti-Torture manifestos, highlighting key priorities to Members of Parliament and Peers from across the political spectrum.

Together with survivors of torture participating in the UK Anti-Torture Coalition, a coalition of survivors and organisations committed to upholding the absolute prohibition on torture and achieving justice and reparation for survivors, we are building political support across all political parties to uphold the absolute ban on torture and the right to asylum in the lead up to the next General Election as a foundation for engagement with whichever party or parties form the next Government.



HOLDING THE UK TO ACCOUNT

“There cannot be avenues for accountability for international crimes in some countries and a total absence in others. We either all have human rights, or none of us do.”

NADINE TUNASI, SSO MANAGER AND SURVIVOR
CHAMPION FOR THE PREVENTING SEXUAL
VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT INITIATIVE

The National Security Bill 2023 included concerning provisions that potentially granted ministers and security personnel impunity if they encouraged or assisted any offence abroad. Our advocacy and campaigning work contributed to narrowing the scope of the provisions, limiting full impunity and allowing some survivors to have improved access to redress.

We briefed Members of Parliament and Peers on the terrible precedent that passing the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill 2023 would set. Sadly, it was passed. The Act gives a green light to repressive governments

worldwide to evade their obligations under international law. However, the Irish Government will be challenging the legality of the Act as incompatible with provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights including the prohibition of torture.

Through our report ‘Dangerous Liaisons: UK partnerships with Chinese policing institutions linked to crimes against humanity in Xinjiang’ (2022), Freedom from Torture has achieved more robust protections against UK police complicity in torture abroad. In 2023 the national coordination body for law enforcement in the UK, the National Police Chief’s Council, introduced new guidance on risk assessment for overseas security and justice assistance, to supplement Government guidance on human rights in this area. The new “police specific guidance” is intended to ensure that overseas security and justice assistance delivered by UK police is responsive to human rights risks. The Minister advised that the process for oversight of international engagement was being updated to reduce the types of risks highlighted by Freedom from Torture’s investigation.

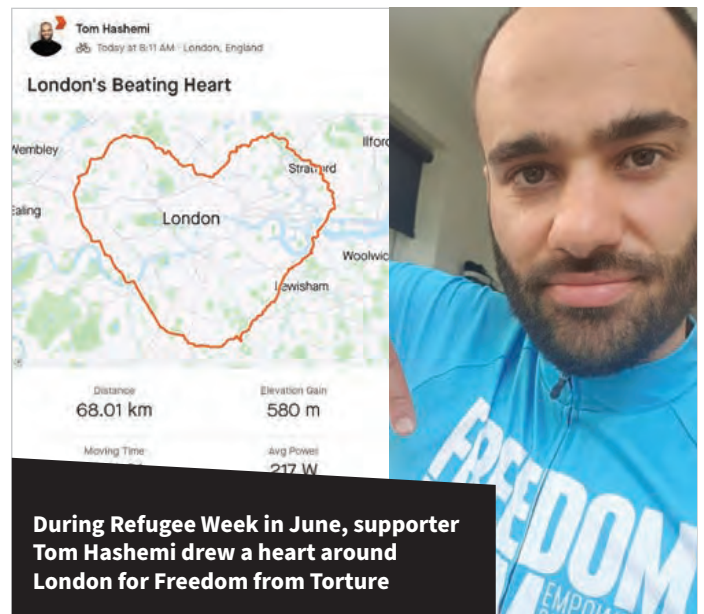


SUPPORTERS: THE POWER BEHIND OUR SUCCESS

In 2023, our supporters grew bigger and louder than ever before. Our art auction *Drawing a Line Under Torture* at the prestigious Sotheby's art auction house surpassed all expectations, raising an incredible £310,000 through both the live auction and an innovative online auction platform, allowing bidders to participate worldwide.



Nasrin Parvaz, survivor, artist and activist, speaking at our *Drawing a Line Under Torture* art auction



During Refugee Week in June, supporter Tom Hashemi drew a heart around London for Freedom from Torture

Survivor artists took centre stage, featuring their works alongside beautiful works donated by Quentin Blake, Antony Gormley, Maggi Hambling, David Hockney, Grayson Perry, Paula Rego and Ai Weiwei, among many others.

The highlight of the night was a speech by artist and survivor activist Nasrin Parvaz who, in her own words, has used art sessions at Freedom from Torture to explore “important insights into the very painful realities faced by those who’ve experienced torture”.

Our amazing supporters also undertook more challenges than ever to raise vital funds for survivors of torture.

Over 50 supporters took part in Journeys in Solidarity, walking, running, cycling, and swimming in solidarity with survivors of torture. Thomas Munns completed the gruelling London Marathon. On two wheels, supporters Tom Hashemi and Matt Ludford pushed themselves to new heights. Tom cycled in the shape of a heart around London for Refugee Week and Matt rode from London to Glasgow – a distance of 600 miles – in aid of our services. Mother and daughter Tara and Anna cycled through France, Italy, Slovenia, and Austria, while Daisy Shone trekked 100km of the Jordan desert in only 5 days.



A big thank you from
Freedom from Torture staff!

THANK YOU

None of this work would be possible without you. With your support we helped survivors gain asylum, provided essential services to help rebuild shattered lives, held governments to account and campaigned tirelessly for a world free from torture.

Thank you for standing with survivors and extending compassion to those who arrive here to rebuild their lives in safety after torture. We are delighted to share those funders below, who are happy for their support to be acknowledged.

- BBC Children in Need
- Beatrice Laing Trust
- Ben & Jerry's Foundation Fund, a fund of Tides Foundation
- Bertha Foundation
- Brook Trust
- Cathy Wills Charitable Trust
- C F Crawford Charitable Trust
- Chillag Family Trust
- City Bridge Foundation
- CRH Charitable Trust
- D'Oyly Carte CT
- Elizabeth Bennett Charitable Trust
- Evan Cornish Foundation
- Garden Court Chambers
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector
- Hadrian Trust
- Highway One Trust
- Jane & James Kessler Family Charitable Trust
- John Coates Charitable Trust
- Joseph Ettedgui Charitable Foundation
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Justice Collaborations
- London Catalyst
- London Churches Refugee Fund
- Ministry of Justice
- Murdoch Forrest Charitable Trust
- Mrs Kathrine Tollis
- National Lottery Community Fund
- Netherdale Trust
- Newcastle City Council
- Oak Philanthropy Ltd
- Patricia Routledge Foundation
- Rachel and Anthony Williams Charitable Trust
- Rayne Foundation
- Scottish Government
- Smilg Family Charitable Trust
- Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation
- The Ian Mactaggart Trust
- The Sigrid Rausing Trust
- The St. Christopher's Trust
- Victoria Wood Foundation
- Vitol Foundation
- Wyn and Ken Lo Memorial Fund
- Yusef Foundation

PLEASE JOIN US IN FIGHTING FOR A WORLD WITHOUT TORTURE. SUPPORT TORTURE SURVIVORS LIVE FOR THE FUTURE, NOT IN THE PAIN OF THE PAST.

We can only see one in three of the torture survivors referred to Freedom from Torture for clinical therapy. Time is of the essence in dealing with trauma.

We urgently need more therapists to be able to support more torture survivors to rebuild their lives more quickly. And we need more funding to do that.

You can help by:

Funding the clinical therapy that is critical to psychological and physical rehabilitation, and the legal support that fights for people's asylum and safety.

Campaigning against torture, and for refugee rights that give people the protection and security they need to recover and look to the future.

Showing your solidarity with torture survivors as they recover their confidence, their voice, and put their lives back together.



Please scan the QR code to donate and find out what you can do to support survivors of torture.

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