

Survivor-organisation in the search for justice and reparation: a vision from grassroots organising

Pau Pérez-Sales¹

This issue of Torture Journal is devoted to one of the strategic objectives of the IRCT and one of the priorities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture: to increase the participation of survivors in rehabilitation programmes.

There have been important theoretical developments in the field - outlined in this issue in the review by Wyatt et al. that opens the special section. Furthermore, Einholff and colleagues have undertaken a significant review of good practice experiences among IRCT partner centres, also published in this issue.

In this editorial, we would like to add a perspective based on historical experiences of organisational processes of victims of political violence and recover some of the lessons learned as contributions to the debate.

This is important as, historically, most of the achievements in the struggle for truth, justice and reparation have been led by victims. Currently, when there are discussions regarding the incorporation of the survivors' perspective in human rights work, the voice of refugee centres from the global North prevails. Nonetheless, survivor-led programmes are at the

heart of social and collective movements in the Global South. For instance, many organisations in Latin America have been working with a rehabilitation model where survivors' participation was always at the core of their interventions and where therapists were, more often than not, victims themselves.

Hence, in the first part of this editorial, we would like to highlight the experience of some survivors' organisations that have marked a *before* and *after* in the history of the fight against torture and for human rights. In the second we will try to recover some of the key points of the debates at that time with a focus on Latin American experiences, and draw some conclusions that might enrich the debate on survivor's participation.

Three examples of survivor-led organisations.

We would like to briefly recover the story of CONAVIGUA (Guatemala), the Khumani Support Groups (South Africa) and MOVICE (Colombia)

1) MD, PhD, Psychiatrist, Clinical Director at SiRa Center (Madrid), Editor in Chief.

Correspondence to: pauperez@runbox.com

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International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims.

1.- CONAVIGUA – Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala - National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala¹

CONAVIGUA was established at an assembly on the 10th, 11th and 12th of September 1988. It was created as a women's organisation that acted in defence of the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, especially Mayan women. Some women were direct victims of sexual violence or torture. Others were relatives of people who had disappeared or had to seek refuge in exile.

They started through *actions of economic survival* in areas of extreme poverty, under the protection of the Catholic Church. Soon, both them and the church began to suffer massive repression and this made them aware of the need to unite and to have a more political and vindicative character. Class awareness and their subsequent positioning as political actors were born as a means of resistance in the face of repression. They started with a small community private spaces of mutual support to make the move into the sphere of protest and advocacy while trying, at the same time, to

solve the problems of economic survival and livelihoods. They demanded the right to search for their relatives, the cessation of forced recruitment and the protection of their children. The organisation had a great deal of internal debate about the possibility of resorting to the justice system. As indigenous women, they were sceptical of its usefulness and feared that the judiciary, which lacked (and still lacks) independence, would eventually turn against them. For this reason, the litigation and legal area was the last to be developed.

How are they organised? At its peak of work, with thousands of women affiliated along the indigenous areas of the country, CONAVIGUA had a complex structure composed exclusively of survivors, although they counted on the work of technicians that they hired. They had local and regional committees that gathered in a national assembly that elected the executive governing body. After several internal discussions, the women decided to organise their work in 5 areas, showing which would be the priorities for a survivor-led organisation that works 100% under the priorities and needs of survivors²: 1. *Organisational*

1 The case of CONAVIGUA is the expression of a generation of groups that emerged as forms of resistance among peasant and indigenous women in the face of violence. This is the case of Mamá Maquin in Chiapas, COMADRES (Comité de Madres y Familias de Presos, Desaparecidos y Asesinados Políticos de El Salvador Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero) and other similar movements. In some cases its function is more linked to handicrafts as a means of survival (sackcloth or other), in others to sharing resources (common pots) and in some it is acquiring greater and stronger political awareness and organisational and structural capacity to ask for justice and reparation. In almost all of them, the Catholic Church played a fundamental role first, and then some evangelical churches. In Guatemala there were other organisations of survivors that also organised as a form of resistance: Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo (GAM)

2 1. *Organisational Strengthening*: This area was designed to raise awareness of the organisation and broaden its social base and carrying out participatory diagnoses in the small rural communities in order to define local development strategies with an indigenous and gender perspective. Over time, they sought to develop teams capable of formulating and managing programmes and projects at a local level in each territory using participatory-action-research methodologies. 2. *Education and Training Programme*: to detect and train female traditional leaders and new young potential leaders who could play a role in social healing and community development. 3. *Communication and Advocacy Programme*; 4. *Justice and Dignity Programme*: devoted to following up on the Peace Agreements and the recommendations of the Historical Clarification Commission, supporting

Strengthening; 2. Education and Training. 3. Communication and Advocacy; 4. Justice and Dignity. 5. Youth Programme (see footnote)

What is striking about the CONAVIGUA process is how they were able to integrate Mayan and women thinking with the external logic of a globalised world and, without losing their community and assembly identity, know how to have a strategic perspective, keeping one focus on economic survival and the other on political struggle.

2.- Khulumani Support Group – South Africa

The Khulumani groups constitute a unique international experience of a survivor-led self-organisation process, which has been the subject of extensive literature. Khulumani (Zulu for “Speak Out!”) was formed in 1995, largely by survivors and families of the political violence that happened in the 1980s. With over 5,000 official members but many more cooperating with it, it had branches in many parts of the country³. Unlike CONAVIGUA, Khulumani began with the initiative of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), but due to its strength and nature, Khulumani continued to work as an autonomous organisation since 1999.

Furthermore, while CONAVIGUA was oriented in its origins towards community development and later evolved to the pursuit of justice, Khulumani focused on supporting survivors in the process of testifying before

the Truth Commission (TRC) and negotiating with the government on reparation policies for victims. In this sense, its objectives were initially more oriented towards psychological well-being and mutual support and soon also evolved through doing strong advocacy work linked to justice processes. This was part of internal discussions when they realised that neither the Commission met the expectations of the survivors, nor did the government fulfil most of the promises it had made regarding reparations. Hence, they adopted an increasingly combative tone that did not conform to the classical role assigned to survivors. As it happened in Guatemala, trauma-based models were not useful in a context where the number of victims was enormous, some in remote communities hundreds of kilometres away and without telephone communication, culture and religion played a key role and the approach, historically, had always been community-based. Attempts to create counselling strategies or trauma-informed models of *therapy* failed (Hamber et al., 2000). They worked through community workshops where survivors shared their testimony and carried out symbolic exercises. From 1995 to 1998, up to 35 Khulumani groups were operated in different geographical areas and articulated into a national organisation, with a steering committee and a central administrative office in Johannesburg, only staffed by survivors or relatives. Most of the survivors that were leading the process were, as in Guatemala, powerful women (Hamber et al., 2000), but contrary to the experience there, the organisation did not have plans to include new generations and young people felt increasingly detached and felt that the organisation’s mission did not reflect their current problems of unemployment and lack of access to education. This weakened the organisation.

processes of exhumation of mass graves, working with families of the disappeared and torture survivors and promoting legal processes to seek justice and redress. 5. *Youth Programme*: focused on the development of young women from new generations to pass on the organisation’s legacy and to ensure the continuity of CONAVIGUA’S work when the old leaders retire.

3 <https://khulumani.net/about-us/>

When the Truth Commission ended its work, there was a sense of frustration⁴: it did not fulfil the needs for truth and justice and did not address the concerns around poverty and livelihoods (Wilson, 2001) disclosing the dangers of transitional processes that are not rooted enough on survivors' participation (Bohler-Muller, 2013).

All this together led Khulumani towards a slow and progressive development of an area of strategic litigation, both nationally and internationally, which sought to achieve part of what the state had denied to them. Furthermore, Khulumani had a powerful network of grassroots groups that demanded an active focus on facing the marginalised and impoverished situation of most of the survivors and began some pilot processes of community diagnosis through participatory-action research methodologies (Tshepiso, 2007), very similar to those developed in Latin America (Sishuba et al., 2017). They found that social transformation in the present required redress for abuses in the past, and the difficulties of being a social movement with a political perspective and the focus on activism and at the same time entering the logic of NGOs. The challenge of evolving without losing the

roots⁵ and integrating historical claims with the needs of young urban populations (Bran-kovic et al., 2020).

It is not difficult to see the parallels and shared challenges of two extraordinarily powerful experiences that have tried to maintain a holistic and grassroots perspective on working with survivors of political violence and torture.

3.- MOVICE. Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes De Estado – National Movement of Victims of State Crimes - Colombia⁷

MOVICE in Colombia is a unique and powerful initiative consisting of a survivor-led organisational process taking place amid a conflict. It will soon be twenty years since its official establishment in 2005, by the confluence of more than 200 small organisations of victims of displacement, torture, forced disappearance and extrajudicial executions.

The origin of the movement began in 1996 when an initial group of 17 organisations from different ideological, political and religious backgrounds promoted the *Colombia Never More* project, an attempt at a “truth commission” carried out and led by survivors

4 On the one hand, it recorded 22,000 statements; while the Khulumani database documented over 90,000 records of people who fit the categories accepted by the commission. Accordingly, the government provided “final reparations” to around 16,100 people, a fraction of those claimed by Khulumani. Furthermore, the amount paid out was a quarter of that recommended by the Truth commissioners, clearly not enough to rebuild a life project (Norval, 2009). Additionally, while most perpetrators refused to give testimony before the commission, the government only charged a very small group of perpetrators for apartheid violations (Bohler-Muller, 2013).

5 The group developed methodologies like The River of Life to help establish the links between past and future in the workshops.

6 Also the complexities of participatory-action processes including the value of negotiating levels of participation between survivors, committees and external consultants, the utility of capacity building, regular learning, monitoring and evaluation exercises, the need for flexibility to adjust expectancies of donors to the times and evolving needs of survivors, tailored trainings to the skills needed for everyday problems in each local community over general trainings, the usefulness of keeping a collaborative work at all stages, the cultural barriers between consultants and survivors, and the need of training while at the same time not overburdening survivors.

7 <https://movimientodevictimas.org/>

(Barrero & Jaime, 2010) that tried to learn from the positive and less positive learnings of the polemic South African Truth Commission and the participation of survivors in it. The project was developed all around the country in the context of constant threats, torture, kidnappings, disappearances and assassinations.

The MOVICE was set up as a National Movement with a decentralised structure of regional “chapters” (Capitulos) with an additional Chapter for people in exile. Despite the vast size of the movement, it combined a horizontal structure that submitted most strategic decisions to root and local consultation processes, with a complex coordination area that included the Impulse Committee, different technical and operational committees, a technical secretariat, a spokespersons’ commission, an ethical commission and ten sectorial and thematic workgroups, who provided a constant source of debate and initiatives at all levels. This was made possible by the markedly urban character of the core promoters, with a solid ideological, technical and political background, with deep roots in political structures and academia. At the same time, MOVICE was rooted in participatory action-research processes, developed to the extent that security concerns allowed to make the work visible.

MOVICE represents a unique Movement in which an important part of the leaders are at the same time professionals, which means that a highly skilled vision can be combined with the logic of victimhood. The *Colombia Never More* database has nourished the database of the official Truth Commission (Comision de la Verdad, 2022). On behalf of the survivors, the Movement has become an advocate with the national and regional authorities in legislative measures related to victims, including psychosocial support and reparation, with a wide range of initiatives involving community mobilization, memory, defence of the land,

exhumations and search for truth, and advocacy and strategic litigation both in individual and collective cases (Castro, C. y Melo, 2015; Gomez, 2015; Vidales, 2014). Furthermore, the Movement has always developed initiatives to be in tune with the current struggles of the new Colombian generations expressed in different national wide uprisings since 2018. MOVICE has probably been the most important survivors’ movement of the 21st century in Latin America.

These three cases are among the hundreds of similar experiences that have been developed by victims and they reveal some common elements. In some cases, the starting point for gathering efforts was memory (MOVICE), in others the support to witnesses and communities (Khulumani) and in others the basic day-to-day needs of survival (CONAVIGUA), but in the three cases there is an expansion and growth towards a holistic approach that combines [1] a focus on the practical difficulties of daily struggle and poverty, [2] mutual support and empowering, [3] promoting a participatory structure and internal capacity at both organisational and community levels combined with teamwork and training, [4] political advocacy and community sensitization including litigation.

Implications for victim rehabilitation programmes.

These historical processes are undoubtedly a source of learning. None of them had *rehabilitation* at the forefront of activities, although well-being and support have always been an integral part of the overall process. In contexts of massive human rights violations, Western models of intervention with trained professionals have been difficult to apply. There are not enough qualified professionals, within a weak public mental health network, usually centred on a community mental health centre

or a psychiatric hospital, with little community work. Added to this is the stigma of mental illness, especially damaging when torture is a political condition and not an illness. In the end, if not corrected, rehabilitation services tend to attend survivors where psychotherapy is a culturally congruent concept and where people are fluent enough to move and ask in their search for treatment. Outreach programs are essential and survivors are in a unique position to undertake community activities with a focus on detecting people with severe suffering and to provide the initial stages of counselling.

Rehabilitation programmes with a full community-based approach make it possible to reach a larger number of people affected, but they are hardly sustainable and generate disenchantment if they are not accompanied by other measures (justice, truth, development, etc.). A victim-inclusive approach should (a) integrate the work within a public health model with a national perspective, in which victim-led actions would be at the first levels of the pyramid of intervention (b) participatory diagnoses of the needs of survivors and affected communities, including historical, material and symbolic elements, (c) training of trainers processes with survivors who can work in daily proximity with those affected, with non-medical approaches based on local conceptions of trauma and community breakdown. (d) referral and counter-referral systems connecting actions with the remaining levels of the intervention pyramid, where clinical work complements community work.

Experiences of involving survivors in rehabilitation processes

There have been many interesting experiences in Latin America, Africa and India based on training people from the community of survivors as human rights, health or mental health promoters. A good example is El Salvador

where, during the war, and usually with the support of the churches, many initiatives could work silently during the conflict. ACISAM (Association for Training and Research on Mental Health) still works and uses popular education techniques to develop coordination, training, research, support groups, direct action and participatory communication to address issues affecting post-war mental health. Perhaps the most impressive experience is that of the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPR) in Guatemala. Mayan families who for several decades between the 1970s and 1990s lived hidden in the Ixil area, in northern Guatemala, protecting themselves from the different armed actors. They developed a way of resistance by moving constantly. In extremely precarious conditions, the CPR were able to build an autonomous, self-managed mental health system based on health promoters trained clandestinely. Through oral transmission and combining Mayan rites and basic psychological skills, they provided stable peer support to the families that were under constant threat and stress⁸.

In El Salvador, the Universidad Centro-Americana (Central American University) where Ignacio Martín-Baró, the founder of the Liberation Psychology Movement (Martín-Baró, 1990), promoted efforts around these models, tried to create a stable network of promoters covering the whole country. The aim was for this network to provide care for victims of armed conflict based on bonds of trust between survivors. Over three years, they trained more than a thousand mental health and psychosocial promoters from the areas

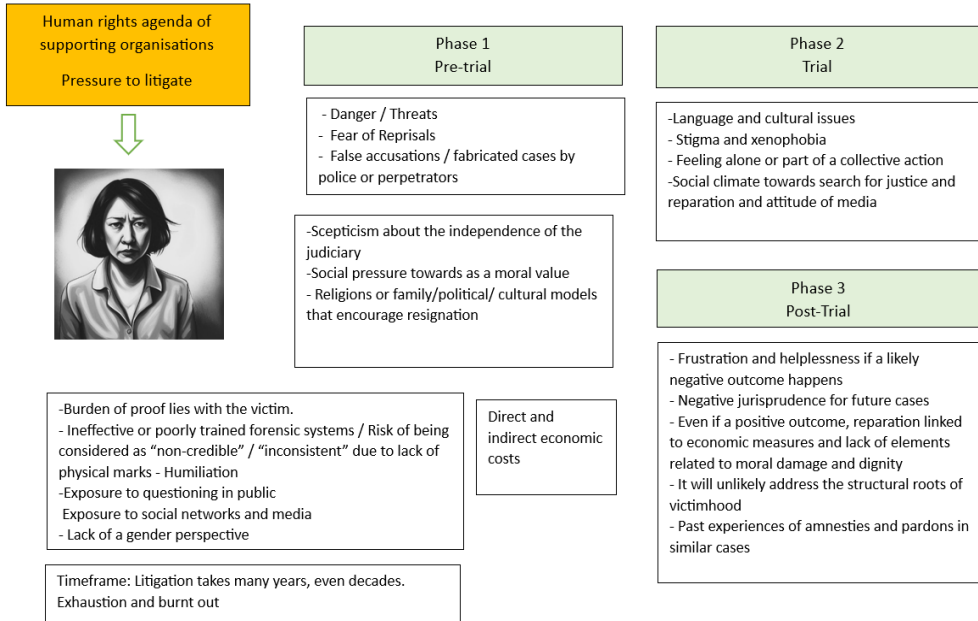
8 IACHR (1994). "Special report on the human rights situation of the so-called "Communities of People in Resistance" in Guatemala". Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Organisation of American States (OAS)

most affected by political violence. *Mental health by and for victims* was seen a political menace, a it empowered potential enemies. The UCA learnt soon that training people was not enough and nationwide systems based on promoters are extremely difficult to sustain unless there is strong economic support and on-going training and accompaniment that only coordination with the public health system or a long-term compromise by iNGO's can provide, even if the communities assumed some kind of compensation for the people involved. Similar experiences in Nicaragua, Colombia and Ecuador have shown that these initiatives have proven very successful in the short term. Their applicability in protracted conflicts remains an issue, probably requiring some kind of salary and institutionalisation of the survivors involved. There have also been some similar experiences in Asian and African contexts (Jong, 2002)

In countries where there was no precedent, many of the pioneering torture survivors' rehabilitation centres were created and led by torture survivors (EATIP et al., 2002). The reference book for many years in the clinical care of torture victims in Spanish-speaking countries has been Marcelo Viñar's *Fractures of Memory*. The book, published in exile, is based on the description of clinical cases of torture survivors, the first of which is, under a pseudonym, that of the author's own torture. The working model, far from the Western concepts of PTSD, draws on the sources of the victim's own experience to describe the identity rupture that the experience of torture entails and the way to approach it in therapy. Similar experiences have permeated the texts of *Tortura Nunca Mais* (Brazil), *EATIP* (Argentina) or *SERSOC* (Uruguay) to mention but a few (Kordon et al., 2005; Lira et al., 2022; Pérez-Sales, 1999; Viñar & Ulriksen, 1990; Vi-tal-Brasil, 2018).

In some countries, the State has developed clinical and community programs for survivors that have prioritised hiring professionals who have been victims themselves or who are relatives of victims. Moreover, the protocols are sometimes based on models rooted in the experience of victims' organisations. The well-known PRAIS (Programa de Reparación y Atención Integral en Salud y Derechos Humanos - Programme of Reparation and Integral Health and Human Rights Care) in Chile is a unique experience and, probably, the best example to follow worldwide. PRAIS is a programme of the Ministry of Health that provides free medical and psychological assistance to torture survivors through 28 multidisciplinary teams in all regions of the country. Although initially designed for victims of human rights violations that occurred between September 1973 and March 1990, it now covers second and third-generation impacts. Furthermore, after the last popular mobilisations of 2019, in which police repression caused thousands of people to be injured in demonstrations, the professionals of the PRAIS teams took on tasks of clinical care of the new victims. Not with full government support, the new generations of children and grandchildren of the victims took on the experience of their parents to respond to the new victims of torture.

Finally, an important and unique experience of survivor participation is the State-funded Psychosocial and Integral Health Care Programme for Victims (PAPSIVI) in Colombia. Although much more limited in scope and temporal projection than PRAIS, the PAPSIVI programme has teams in most regions of the country. Interestingly, as a consequence of a strong survivor's advocacy work, the program developed a pioneering initiative of a cross-cutting strategy of survivor participation, through monitoring *mesas* (working

Table 1. Roadblocks for survivor-led initiatives when seeking justice

tables) at local and regional levels. Through these working tables, survivors are an active part and supervise the design, implementation, follow-up and evaluation of the PAPSIVI program in regular monthly or bi-monthly accountability meetings at departmental, regional and national levels. Unnecessary to say that MOVICE has been key in this process, besides the organisations that have historically been closer to torture survivors, Corporación AVRE or Fundación Vínculos⁹.

9 Corporación AVRE and Corporación Vínculos. 2011. Modules of the “Diploma in Psychosocial Accompaniment Tools for Victims of Political Violence. Psychosocial and Mental Health Accompaniment in Rehabilitation Processes for Victims of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Colombia”. Bogotá. Pp. 10.

The special complexity of victims’ participation in legal proceedings. The psycho-legal approach.

Of all the elements in which interaction and work between survivors and professional teams is delicate, the most complex is probably the accompaniment during litigation. We would like to devote a special focus to it. It has classically been said that justice has a restorative value and that there is a connection between truth, justice and overcoming trauma. But this relationship is far more complex than it might appear at first sight. Table 1 shows a summary of roadblocks for survivor-led initiatives when seeking justice.

Survivor participation is essential in litigation, but this means an open and transparent discussion of all the roadblocks and a joint work to overcome them.

This entails addressing at least 11 essential aspects

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking a legal route?
2. What are the motivations of the victim: official acknowledgement of the facts, recognition of the suffering, moral restoration, financial or other compensation, prosecution of the perpetrators or other. Discuss to what extent a trial is a space in which these (or other) expectations can be fulfilled and steps to achieve them.
3. Is it important for the person to set precedents for other cases similar to his or her own? What risks are there if the outcome is negative?
4. Scenario forecasting: what happens if all goes well; what happens if all goes badly; what is likely to happen.
5. What is required of the victim, what is the level of media exposure.
6. What are the potential security risks and how to deal with them. How far is the person willing to go?
7. What are the economic costs in an optimistic scenario and in a pessimistic scenario.
8. What are the agendas of the different actors: what are the human rights organisations pursuing? what are the social movements or support groups pursuing? what is the victim pursuing? Are these agendas compatible? Can they be made to be so?
9. Does the person have the conviction and strength to sustain a process that can last for years? Is there a risk of burnout? Can a pedagogical team provide advice and support?
10. Can the person sustain a pressurising interrogation or the pressure of a courtroom? Is it possible to train these aspects?
11. Does the survivor have enough information to manage the process and make

key decisions? What additional information must be sought?

Table 2 shows some practical examples. In many cases, a legal process can mean

Table 2. Examples of topics to be addressed in the psychological work with a survivor-led litigation process

- In a torture trial, maintaining a high media presence may mean multiplying the impact of the legal process, but may put the victim or witnesses at serious security risks.
- To be successful, it is important to have an expert testimony that exposes the facts, the suffering and the damage, but this information can be humiliating, or give the perpetrators the impression that they have achieved their goal of breaking the person. How will the survivor live through this process?
- Re-victimisation can occur if judges, prosecutors or lawyers for the other side maintain an attitude that questions credibility or evidence. Is the person prepared to deal with such situations?
- In some places, victims who denounce torture are in turn denounced by the police for having been the aggressors or for having carried out violent acts, sometimes with heavy sentences. Or the police may accuse the victim of defamation and damage to honour. What to do in such cases, and are the consequences manageable?

the victim enters a situation of “life in detention” that lasts for years.

The key to a victim-led process is that the victim is in control of what happens at all times. Accompaniment teams help in this interlocution and work on critical moments (press conferences and statements, trials, forensic evaluations, confrontations with perpe-

trators and others). And to do so, they learn to deal with insecurity and fear.

Beyond the participation of survivors per se, accompaniment programmes are required to ensure that the overall process can have a reparative value. This is an enormous challenge that requires an investment of energy from a multidisciplinary legal and psychological perspective.

Of course, from a long-term perspective of democratic strengthening and empowerment, and according to the experiences reviewed above, these processes should ideally be developed by self-organised survivors themselves, creating systems of interlocution between these grassroots movements and the psychosocial and legal structures that will support them.

From a holistic perspective of shared knowledge and alliances, this would mean investing time and efforts in supporting the creation of survivors' associations (which would ultimately lead the process), as a previous step to wide-scale legal processes. It means trying to build a working team linking the legal and psychosocial teams with the survivors (or their organisations) seeking, as far as possible, a direct interaction between survivors and justice structures to give voice and stimulate self-management processes led and developed by survivors.

In Latin America, this has been labelled a *psycho-legal approach* (enfoque psicojurídico). What is most relevant is how the work is approached in pre-trial, trial and post-trial stages unfolded in a way in which, seen as a whole, this process of searching for justice has had an empowering and restorative effect because, as a survivor-led process, means gaining control, facing fears and memories and struggling for dignity and moral reparation¹⁰.

The Sepur Zarco case

An example of how this working alliance is articulated and what a survivor-led legal process works is the historical Sepur Zarco case in Guatemala. It was known that the indigenous women of the Sepur Zarco village, who had for years gone to the military base to work for the soldiers, were, used as sex slaves. The women kept a pact of silence for decades, even after the military left, to avoid personal humiliation for themselves and their children, and the possibility of being accused and rejected by their husbands according to old traditional patriarchal values.

A mutual support group developed with the aid of the Guatemalan human rights organisation ECAP and the Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (National Union of Guatemalan Women) made it possible to open up spaces for the women to speak out. It took years of work before this mutual support group of women felt strong enough to decide to take legal action through a legal organisation, (Mujeres Transformando el Mundo -MTM / Women Changing the World), which was accustomed to working with an integrated psycho-legal perspective where survivors lead the process (LeDuc, 2018; Lira et al., 2022). The three pillars (survivors, psychosocial and legal teams) worked hand in hand for nearly a decade until a historic conviction of two high-ranking army officers in charge of the military place of Sepur Zarco for multiple acts of sexual assault and torture. The image of these women with their faces

implementing essential reforms of legal systems. From a psychosocial point of view, there should be systems of internal accountability that ensure that no legal process involving victims can last longer than 5 years, with a desirable maximum of 3 years. Longer times create scepticism, frustration and causes the process to lose much of its restorative value.

10 Of course, this is not to the detriment of

covered with their headscarves during the trial, and the way they uncovered and showed their faces after the sentence was read, has become mythical and a symbol of the reparative potential of strategic litigation with a psycho-legal perspective

Therefore, survivor engagement is not an innovative approach in itself, as it has been present in many Global South survivor organisations, yet some elements can be integrated and challenges can be addressed when following a survivor-centred approach in Global North's anti-torture organisations.

In this issue

The Journal has a Special Section on Survivor Engagement in the Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors. Susan Wyatt opens the section with a paper that reflects on the notions of restoring power or 'agency' to survivors, discussing different conceptual frameworks and pathways for effective and strategic mechanisms for facilitating 'agency' within the spectrum of torture rehabilitation. This paper deep dives into theories on agency, looking at the broader models that provide commonality and structure, exploring characteristics from different contexts, and discussing implications for practice protracted from the findings. Einolf et al. present a qualitative study that explores current practices, best practices, and the advantages and disadvantages of engaging survivors in the direction and provision of rehabilitation services. It discusses re-traumatization and presents practices that involve engaging survivors in ways that do not instigate their trauma. Henceforth, Seini O'Connor and colleagues contribute to the special section with three articles. The first one describes TASSC's model for engaging survivors in advocacy and presents evidence of the personal impacts such engagement can have. The second one looks at the characteristics of survivors who engage

in advocacy in comparison with those who do not. The third one explores survivor engagement in the form of cultural facilitation, drawing on a case example of cultural bridging involving a pilot programme to train torture survivors and former refugees to become cross-cultural facilitators supporting mental health services for displaced communities. Moreover, Rachel Hoare further expands on the benefits of the befriending programme within Spirasi's holistic approach and the importance of collaborative expressive arts activities in building befriending relationships. She does this through an empirical study that explores, in complementary ways, the impact of this befriending programme on befrienders and befriendees and incorporates their voices into recommendations for optimising the service. The special section is closed with the contribution from Mikel Soto, a torture survivor from Navarra (Spain) that presents the survivor-lead experience of the Network of Tortured People of Navarre and analyses the keys to this process of collective empowerment, describing the self-organising process of the victims and some lessons that may be useful for other realities and groups of torture victims who want to engage in self-organising processes.

The Perspective section entails two contributions. José Quiroga and Ana Deutsch share their memories to describe and reconstruct the journey to the development of forensic torture assessment tools, before the existence of the Istanbul Protocol. They review the historical precedents of the Forensic Assessment of Torture Survivors in the US in the 1970s and 1980s, the first model of affidavit developed in Los Angeles, setting the precedents of the US branch of the construction of the Istanbul Protocol that was developed in the late 1990s.

Christian DeVos and colleagues explore extra-carceral governmental actions that con-

stitute torture or ill-treatment of socially and economically marginalized populations, advocating for a more contextual approach to the understanding of what constitutes torture or ill-treatment, and, consequently, a more expansive interpretation of states' obligations to prohibit and prevent it under international law. Building on examples that unsettle the conventional understanding of torture focused on carceral and custodial settings, they also offer recommendations for how clinicians and health and human rights researchers, can better elucidate the links among torture, poverty, and vulnerability to hold perpetrators accountable and help states develop laws, policies, and other measures to prevent the perpetration of state-promoted or sanctioned acts of torture or ill-treatment.

This is followed by a contribution from Daniel Weishut and colleagues with insights about the use of the updated version of the Istanbul Protocol in Israel, as collected by a group of experts in the documentation of torture and ill-treatment.

This issue also includes a book review by Giulia Berta of the volume *Migration and Torture in Today's World*, curated by Fabio Perocco and published by Ca' Foscari Editions in 2023.

Finally, we celebrate that Dr Mahmud Sehwail's paper "Personal Reflection" won the 2022 CTI Prize, after being the most voted by the IRCT membership and the Torture Journal readership. Congratulations, Dr. Mahmud!

All together make 185 pages of an issue that we hope will constitute a useful merge of theory and ideas for action for our readership.

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