

# Therapy centre for victims of torture needs funds : towards a condition fit for humanity

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Therapy centre for victims of torture needs funds

## Towards a condition fit for humanity

**Switzerland wishes to help torture sufferers from all over the world. Since autumn 1995 the Swiss Red Cross has been operating a therapy centre for victims of torture at the Insel Hospital in Berne.**

**S**o far the Swiss Red Cross has treated 58 victims of torture and war at the therapy centre. An equal number of other refugees have sought treatment, but without success.

The number may be small, but the suffering is not. These are 58 victims of war and torture who have been injured in their bodies and robbed of human values such as dignity, integrity and trust. By the infliction of severe pain they have been forced to divulge information, to make confessions, some-

times false ones, and to betray or accuse others.

Therapy for torture victims is very costly. 80% of all language must be translated. One-third of those treated were born in ex-Yugoslavia and one-third in Turkey. Others come from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and other countries. Three-quarters are men and one-quarter women. Half of the victims were persecuted because of their political activities, while about 40% were tortured in the course of war.

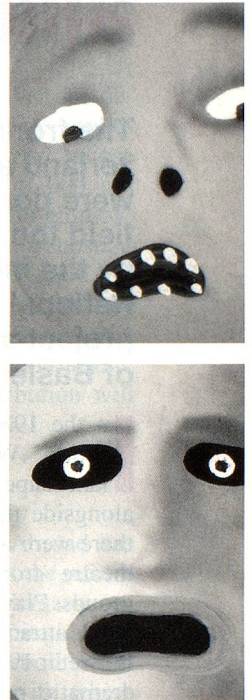
Looking after people with experience of such a high level of pain lays very high demands on the team of carers. This is particularly so since these therapeutic specialists must carefully process all that they hear. Their most important task is to return to the torture victims the capacity to trust other people.

The therapy centre itself should also be able to have trust in its future. But this is not guaranteed. The centre is supported

by the federal government and cantonal authorities, but not by the private sector. Refugees and torture seem to be just as much taboo subjects as cancer and death; they cloud our view of the world and disturb our sense of well-being. This is even true in a country which claims to be the embodiment of freedom, democracy and human dignity.

**Alice Baumann** ■

Gifts may be made to the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) at postal giro account no. 30-877-4 with the mention "SRC Therapy Centre". Further information may be obtained from the Association of Friends of the Therapy Project for Tortured Refugees, c/o SRC, Rainmattstrasse 10, CH-3001 Berne.



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