

Integrating Economic and Socio-Cultural Rights in Torture Agenda and Holistic Rehabilitation

Torture is inflicted in the most vulnerable section of the population in different countries all over the world. It is a demonstration of inhumanity of human beings to fellow human beings. The experience of torture for many survivors was such a nightmare and its impact may linger for life not only to direct survivors but indirectly, to their families as well. Such acts can never be tolerated even for once as it hurts even the innermost sanctum of the human person.

For many years, human rights and freedom from torture advocates in different parts of the globe address torture in the context of civil and political rights violations, providing service delivery in the form of medical assistance, rehabilitation services and family support. But justice needs also to be served to these survivors so that an advocacy for prevention towards the eradication of torture in this world becomes an urgent concern and an agenda for all freedom loving and human rights advocates. Even with such efforts and global initiatives, impunity remains a challenge for everyone in the field.

To date, it becomes an imperative to look at torture in a more holistic and comprehensive manner to address its root causes and expand the needed advocacy and service delivery to help the survivors, their families and communities. The many torture survivors have been tortured not because of their political beliefs and standpoint, but more so, for fighting their rights as workers and peasants – their right to land and food; right to decent jobs; and most of all their right to life.

Human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All people are entitled to them everywhere in the world. Human rights are inherent to the dignity of every human person whether they relate to civil, cultural, economic, political or social issues. Consequently, all human rights have equal status, and cannot be positioned in a hierarchical order. Each right contributes to the realization of a person's human dignity through the satisfaction of his or her developmental, physical, psychological and spiritual needs. The fulfilment of one right often depends, wholly or in part, upon the fulfilment of others.

As human rights, psychosocial and/or development organization in the field of torture, it is best to integrate the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of rehabilitation and prevention plans and policies. The calls and messages of survivors of torture and freedom from torture advocates need to reflect the rights to health, to justice administration, right to personal security, right to psychosocial support and to political participation.

Universal standards need to be translated into locally determined benchmarks for measuring progress and enhancing accountability.

The human person is at the heart or at the centre of any intervention into their lives as owners of rights and directors of their own development process. The goal is to give the

people the power, capacities and access to needed change for their own lives, communities and influence their own destinies.

This torture agenda and rehabilitation require a high degree of participation including the communities, civil society, minorities, indigenous peoples, women and others. Such participation must be 'active, free and meaningful. Process-based methodologies and techniques need to be employed to achieve real and full participation.

Pursuing the torture survivors' right to economic and socio-cultural rights may be something new for many centers that were all part of the global movement on freedom from torture. Now is the most opportune time to broaden the services and advocacy to include and integrate the agenda of economic and socio-cultural dimensions of the rights of the survivors.

Addressing torture within the framework of economic and socio-cultural rights is simply expanding the existing advocacy and service delivery of centers that have the mandate to pursue torture rehabilitation and prevention.

This means highlighting the fact that torture is inflicted among the most marginalized section of the population whether as a class, sector, special groups on an individual or group basis. Being the most marginalized, they are deprived of the means and the opportunity to assert and fight for their rights and welfare. That is why, documenting, monitoring and reporting situations and cases in this regard is important. It provides depth and breadth into the issue and greater opportunity for waging campaigns, information dissemination, public awareness, media projection towards deeper understanding of the issue of torture.

Service delivery may come in the form of providing capacity development for survivors and their families for skills and feasibility studies on how to venture into livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurial undertaking. Income generating activities and alternative sources of income suitable to the condition and capacities of the survivors and their families can very well be thought out. At the same time, these undertakings can very well contribute to the healing and therapeutic process of the survivors.

Microfinancing schemes for the survivors of torture and their families or in the context of communities may also be considered so that survivors and their families may have wider opportunities to explore in venturing into economic undertakings that may truly be empowering for them.

This is still trailblazing thing at this point, for freedom from torture advocates – an exciting and a challenging journey. But sooner than later, this comprehensive treatment of torture becomes learning and tempering experience for them, too. And a new opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the survivors and their families.

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