It was a special moment for those of us in the torture treatment field, and I was honored to be a part of it. On December 7 and 8, 2006, more than 110 representatives out of a total of 130 accredited torture treatment centers from throughout the world gathered in Berlin, Germany, for the first general assembly of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). Immediately after the general assembly, the 9th International Symposium on Torture was held on December 9 and 10 for more than 400 participants. Numerous European governments, private foundations and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture funded this historic event.

The main purpose of the general assembly was to debate matters regarding the mandate of the IRCT as the growing movement seeks a viable way to address the plight of the world’s torture survivors. It also provided an international forum to facilitate and advance the global work in support of rehabilitation of torture survivors.

(Continued on page 3)
Words from the Chair
Jeanette Barrack, PTR

I am happy to say that we are moving forward in this new year. We have been awarded a contract with the County of San Diego as well as grants from the U.S. government, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, The California Endowment, The Fieldstone Foundation, Change a Life Foundation, Grossmont Healthcare District, and Las Patronas. The board applauds the executive director, Kathi Anderson, and the staff for their hard work, expertise and dedication.

Knowing that these funds are allocated for very specific uses but that everyday costs continue to be difficult to pay for, the board of directors successfully has met its goal of 100 percent giving of all of our members. We encourage you, too, to join us in giving to Survivors of Torture, International. For the organization to continue to be strong and healthy, we need your ongoing support. We are committed to continuing to be good stewards of your trust and your donations as we carry out the mission of serving survivors of torture, educating the public about torture and its consequences, and ending torture.

SURVIVORS Launches Statewide Demographic Study and Awareness Activities

Research, education and policy advocacy activities will address health access needs of torture survivors throughout California

Torture survivors are an invisible and marginalized population – a group so hidden that there are no comprehensive statistics of their numbers and countries of origin. SURVIVORS estimates that at least 11,000 torture survivors live in San Diego County, but similar studies have not yet been done in other counties in California.

SURVIVORS is partnering with the University of the Pacific’s School of International Studies in Stockton, California, to establish baseline population data of torture survivors. The study is funded through a two-year grant of $326,628 from The California Endowment, a private statewide health foundation.

The California Endowment is also funding communications and advocacy activities to raise awareness regarding the health access needs of torture survivors. To conduct these activities, SURVIVORS selected the The Border Agency, a multicultural marketing agency in San Diego, and Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP, a law and consulting firm providing pro bono services from its Sacramento office.

Stay tuned to SURVIVORS’ web site, www.notorture.org, for information about upcoming projects and events. To sign up for our e-newsletter, please e-mail Maren Dougherty at mdougherty@notorture.org.

Top 10 Reasons for You to Attend SURVIVORS’ Coming Special Events

1. Learn more about what you can do to help local survivors heal.
2. Celebrate 10 years of torture treatment and awareness in San Diego.
3. Support our cause in person.
4. Bring a friend or friends to introduce to our organization.
5. Enjoy some delicious chocolates (and not feel guilty about the calories!).
6. Taste a variety of elegant wines.
7. Make a charitable, tax-deductible contribution.
8. Meet new friends interested in international human rights.
9. Help us meet our goal of the largest event attendance ever.
10. Kick off another decade of hope and healing!

Stay tuned to SURVIVORS’ web site, www.notorture.org, for event details.
Donation Drives Brighten Lives

SURVIVORS would like to thank all of the generous groups and individuals who participate in collection drives for our clients.

For the third year in a row, Girl Scout Troop 6121 in La Mesa organized a winter blanket drive for our clients. Also, the Presbyterian Crisis Center and Third Avenue Charitable Organization (TACO) partnered with SURVIVORS to distribute bags of food to clients during the holiday season. Jim Lovell and Lisa Seiler assisted with this collection effort.

“Especially for people who were not expecting anything, this was a nice surprise for the holidays,” said SURVIVORS’ case manager, Beatriz Ledezma.

At San Diego State University, the Graduate Social Work Association is joining with the Asian Pacific Islander Social Work Association to coordinate a spring drive called Suds by the Sea to collect much-needed shampoo, soap, and toothpaste for our clients’ children.

“There are many reasons for doing this—supporting an organization as dedicated as SURVIVORS with such a strong and significant mission and hopefully in doing so, making the lives of asylees and refugees just a little easier is certainly a big part of it,” said Dawn Tol, SDSU student and Social Work groups liaison.

Thank You, Elizabeth!

Elizabeth Michel, M.D., recently completed two terms on SURVIVORS’ board of directors. She volunteered as a board member for six years, and had served as the secretary since 2003. Elizabeth wrote newspaper editorials for SURVIVORS, participated in several committees, and made numerous other valuable contributions during her service.

She first became involved with SURVIVORS when she sought help for a young Guatemalan man who was a survivor of politically motivated torture. By helping her friend to heal and supporting him through his political asylum case, Elizabeth gained an intense education in the needs of survivors of torture.

Thank you, Elizabeth, for the dedication and thoughtfulness you have brought to SURVIVORS’ board. You will continue to be a treasured friend. Good luck in the other wonderful work that you do.

Director’s Reflections
Kathi Anderson, Executive Director

(Continued from page 1)

At the symposium, leading experts (including our clinical director, Dr. David Gangsei) addressed a variety of subjects and topics, such as combating impunity for torturers, new treatment approaches, care for caregivers and the impact of recent counterterrorism measures on the prohibition of torture. The symposium offered an excellent opportunity for health, legal and other professionals to familiarize ourselves with the latest developments in the field and for exchanging knowledge and experiences.

During the four days, we listened to and deliberated with our many colleagues from around the globe. The two interrelated events contributed strongly to consolidating and reinforcing the efforts of our common struggle to end torture and to ensure torture survivors’ rights to rehabilitation and redress. The challenges are still massive but the determination to stand united to overcome them is even greater. At the end, we were even more inspired to help some of the most vulnerable people of the world. I hope all of you remain as committed to this effort as my colleagues.
SURVIVORS Hosts a Former Political Prisoner and Human Rights Activist From Tunisia

This fall SURVIVORS hosted Samir Dilou, a former political prisoner from Tunisia. Samir was invited to visit the United States by Freedom House, an independent nongovernmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom in the world. After spending some time in Washington, D.C., Samir spent three weeks learning about SURVIVORS, meeting with our staff and visiting with other San Diego nonprofit organizations.

Samir survived ten years, two months and eight days in a Tunisian prison. An outspoken but nonviolent young activist, Samir was put in prison for being the leader of a student union. While in prison from 1991-2001, he coordinated and participated in hunger strikes to protest the inhumane conditions. At times, he was placed in isolation and tortured.

“We were tortured because the government knew that the case files on us were empty, and they wanted to connect us with violence committed against police,” he said in an interview conducted alongside his interpreter, Marianne Reiner.

One time, after torturing the prisoners severely, the guards brought the prisoners together and invited their families to come visit. “My mom did not even recognize me because I was so badly tortured,” he said.

Samir was finally released in July of 2001. When he came out of prison, he said that he had lost all knowledge of everyday life. He was scared of cars, and he hadn’t worn shoes in ten years. He also hadn’t seen his fiancée in a decade. “She did the most for me,” he said. “She waited.”

After his release, Samir continued his struggle for human rights with the International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners in Tunisia and Vérité-Action in Switzerland. His friends call him the “Kamikaze of Human Rights.”

He said he has genuine passion for his work and that he can’t imagine doing anything else with his life. “I have to do what I’m doing. If I had chosen the easy path, I would have had a past and a future but I would not have a present.”

SURVIVORS Joins with 6th @ Penn Theatre to Produce a Human Rights Festival

This spring and summer, Hillcrest’s 6th @ Penn Theatre will host its inaugural Resilience of the Spirit Human Rights Festival. The festival’s mission is to use performance as a creative means to document human rights abuses and demonstrate the resilience of the human spirit. The theatre has put out a call for play submissions and has already started to receive human rights-related plays from across the country. Charlene Penner will open the festival with a Butoh dance specifically commissioned for the festival entitled “Backbone, Survivors Dance.”

SURVIVORS is collaborating with 6th @ Penn for this festival, and some of our staff members will assist with the selection and promotion of the plays. SURVIVORS’ relationship with 6th @ Penn began last year when the theatre performed a play about a young Rwandan refugee for our Celebration of Hope and Healing event in February. That play, I Have Before Me a Remarkable Document Given to Me by a Young Lady from Rwanda, left such a lasting impression on the theatre’s producing artistic director, Dale Morris, that he decided to organize the human rights festival. Morris hopes that the festival will raise awareness and action.

The aims of the festival are to:

- Recognize and celebrate the lives of survivors of genocide and torture;
- Raise awareness of human rights as a social justice issue;
- Document the life stories of survivors of genocide and torture;
- Raise awareness of the plight of refugees both locally and globally;
- Recognize the power of transformation in telling and performing stories;
- Support artists who are creating works that shed light on human rights concerns; and
- Foster collaborations and partnerships among the arts community and those organizations and individuals involved in social justice initiatives.

The schedule has not yet been finalized, but the details will be posted at 6th @ Penn’s website, www.sixthpenn.com and also at the festival’s website, www.resilienceofthespirit.com.
Mana: Torture Survivor (contd.)

(Continued from page 1)

For 18 months, she was imprisoned and tortured. "I was in solitary all the time. I was like a blind person. I lost that time. I didn’t have any news from my family. As a single mother, I didn’t know the situation of my two kids.

"They tortured me physically. The food was rubbish, you cannot imagine. For example, if the food was soup, it was only a dirty liquid. If it was a potato, it was full of sand and dust, they didn’t wash it." Mana became seriously ill, and was not allowed to take her medicine. "I was in a really critical health situation, and it got worse and worse from the lack of cleanliness, the lack of light, the lack of nutrition." Finally, Mana became so ill that she was sent to the district hospital. "This was my chance to escape."

Mana managed to escape to Turkey, then moved to the Netherlands. She stayed in refugee camps that she describes as "even worse than prison." After four years, she was accepted to the United States as a refugee. In 2002 she arrived in San Diego, where local organization Survivors of Torture, International has helped her start a new life here.

Torture, defined as any act which intentionally inflicts severe physical or mental suffering, occurs in at least 150 countries, according to Amnesty International reports. It is illegal under U.S. and international law. Over half a million torture survivors live in the United States, including 11,000 in San Diego County.

SURVIVORS, founded in 1997, works to provide torture victims with the basic needs and professional care to help rebuild their lives. The organization has worked with more than 650 torture survivors from more than 55 countries. Housing, medical, dental, psychiatric, psychological, and legal services are offered, as well as English language education, and other case-by-case needs, such as new eyeglasses, or public transportation instructions.

Through SURVIVORS Mana has received medical and psychiatric care, as well as found a place to live. Mana says that SURVIVORS and other humanitarian organizations "are the only way that we can survive and adjust in this country. I think that SURVIVORS is my family, my second home. If they didn’t accept me and help me, I could have committed suicide or gone crazy. And it’s not only me. There are many, many victims of torture who can get treatment, get lawyers."

But still, the aftermath of her arrest and torture is painful. Panic attacks, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder. Though her daughter came with her, Mana is separated from her son. "I don’t dare call my son directly, because maybe they will listen to his telephone. Sometimes we e-mail each other and contact each other very secretly." Even her new friends here in the United States do not know of her background of imprisonment and torture. "I am so scared, I have to keep it all secret because I don’t want to cause problems for my family." She knows of many situations in which dissidents’ family members have been killed.

Mana is now a teacher in a Middle Eastern school here in San Diego. She also works at an organization for immigrant victims of domestic violence. She is thankful to be here, and feels fortunate to have escaped, though many of her peers did not. "Most of them are in prison, executed, or have a very bad situation. Many, many educated women, innocent people, are tortured—for nothing. I am the luckiest

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CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

20 new clients were served
October 2006 through December 2006

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SURVIVORS Contracts with San Diego County Under California’s Mental Health Services Act

San Diego County’s Health and Human Services Agency has contracted with Survivors of Torture, International (SURVIVORS) to provide services to victims of trauma and torture. The contract became effective on November 6, 2006, and services under the contract began on December 18, 2006.

The six-and-a-half-year agreement of $194,000 per year assures funding for SURVIVORS to provide outpatient mental health services to young adult, adult and older adult victims of trauma and torture who are severely mentally ill and children and adolescents who suffer from a severe emotional disturbance.

SURVIVORS is the area’s only torture treatment center and has been providing services since 1997, but this contract marks the first time the nonprofit has received funding from San Diego County. SURVIVORS has been a pioneering agency in the national movement to provide integrated services to survivors of torture and also provides unique leadership in this service sector in the state of California.

Funds for this contract were generated by Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act passed in November 2004. The act imposed a 1% tax on personal incomes in excess of one million dollars to generate money for mental health programs statewide. SURVIVORS’ contract is part of the Community Services and Supports component of the plan.
Thank You to All of Our Community Supporters
September 2006 through December 2006

We are grateful to the following individuals and companies for your generous support. Your donations of time and in-kind goods and services help SURVIVORS’ programs run smoothly.

Companies and Organizations

Anthony’s Fish Grotto – San Diego
Best City Bagels – San Diego
BJ’s Restaurant and Brewhouse – San Diego
Corporation for National & Community Service (AmeriCorps*VISTA)
Crepes de Paris – Hillcrest
deluca’s Pizza – Fashion Valley
D’Lush – San Diego
Family Health Center of San Diego
Fred’s Mexican Cafe – Old Town
Manatt, Phelps, Phillips, LLP

Mimi’s Cafe – Mission Valley
Our Savior’s Lutheran Church – San Diego
Peet’s Coffee – La Jolla
Presbyterian Crisis Center
Relax the Back – Fashion Valley
Sea World – San Diego
T.G.I. Friday’s – Rancho San Diego
The Cheesecake Factory – Fashion Valley
The Fish Market – San Diego
The Flame Broiler – La Jolla

Thank you!

Healing Club Enjoy Day with Dolphins, Whales and Polar Bears

Last fall, SURVIVORS’ Healing Club enjoyed a warm day at Sea World. For the second time, the park donated single-day passes to SURVIVORS. More than 48 clients participated in the trip, including many families. For most of the children, this was their first visit to see Shamu. One young girl said that she hadn’t been able to sleep all night because she was so excited.

Samir Dilou, SURVIVORS’ visiting fellow from Tunisia, enjoyed the day along with the clients. He said that when he was a political prisoner, he often day-dreamed about such excursions. “It was a dream for me to have a child in my hands and to see Shamu,” Samir said.

The following week, many parents called SURVIVORS to express their gratitude for Sea World’s generosity. Thank you, Sea World!

We apologize for errors or omissions and extend our gratitude for support that may not have been recognized

Clients Meet, Share, and Sauté Together at Monthly Cooking Classes

One of SURVIVORS’ most popular and longest-running programs is our cooking class, held once a month at the City Heights Wellness Center. “It’s a good opportunity for clients to share their food traditions with other clients,” said Beatriz Ledeza, SURVIVORS’ case manager. “It’s also an introduction to different tastes and flavors.”

A trained chef, Beatriz plans the menu each month and leads the classes. Participants are male and female clients ranging from 20 to 65 years old. Beatriz said that there can be as many as nine nationalities in one class. She said it’s exciting to watch people try foods they’ve never had before, such as certain Asian vegetables or spices.

They cook food from all over the world and sometimes make themed food for certain times of the year. In November, the class cooked turkey and potatoes for Thanksgiving.

“It’s not just about safety and healing. It’s also a way to build a community again,” Beatriz said. “That’s something that many of them have lost.”

YOU can contribute to the class! SURVIVORS welcomes donations of new aprons, as well as gift cards from supermarkets in the San Diego area. To donate, please call SURVIVORS at (619) 278-2400.
SURVIVORS’ Financial Supporters
January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2006

Healing broken hearts and restoring the spirits of torture survivors in San Diego County is accomplished with the help of our financial supporters. Because of you, the survivors are able to rebuild their lives. We are grateful.

 Foundations, Corporations, and Organization

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Casa Cornelia Law Center – San Diego
Cathedral Church of St. Paul – San Diego
Combined Federal Campaign
Freedom House
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Thank you!

We apologize for any errors or omissions and extend our gratitude to donors who may not have been recognized.
SURVIVORS of Torture, International
Phone: 619-278-2400
Fax: 619-294-9405
e-mail: survivors@notorture.org
website: www.notorture.org

Kathi Anderson, M.A., N.C.C., Executive Director
Phone: 619-278-2407
Fax: 619-294-9429
e-mail: kanderson@notorture.org

David Gangsei, Ph.D., Clinical Director
Phone: 619-278-2403
e-mail: dgangsei@notorture.org

Crystal Green, Ph.D., Associate Clinical Director
Phone: 619-278-2404
e-mail: cgreen@notorture.org

Alexey Kirillov, Finance Coordinator
Phone: 619-278-2406
e-mail: akirillov@notorture.org

Beatriz Ledezma, Case Manager
Phone: 619-278-2402
e-mail: bledezma@notorture.org

Sarak Suon, P.A., Medical Services Coordinator
Phone: 619-278-2412
e-mail: ssuon@notorture.org

Jennifer Varsak, Development Manager
Phone: 619-278-2408
e-mail: jvarsak@notorture.org

Maren Dougherty, AmeriCorps*VISTA Member
Phone: 619-278-2422
e-mail: mdougherty@notorture.org

Kathleen Bolus, AmeriCorps*VISTA Member
Phone: 619-278-2409
e-mail: kbolus@notorture.org

Jess Jollett, AmeriCorps*VISTA Member
Phone: 619-278-2421
e-mail: jjollett@notorture.org

Molly Meehan, AmeriCorps*VISTA Member
Phone: 619-278-2411
e-mail: mmeehan@notorture.org

SURVIVORS of Torture . . .
. . . . . . . . . was incorporated in February 1997 in response to a need in our community to bring assistance to that segment of the population which struggles with the wounds of politically motivated torture.

Since then, SURVIVORS has engaged a caring network of professionals — board members, attorneys, interpreters, therapists, physicians — and all of YOU in the community who give faithful support and encouragement in many ways.

We serve survivors who reside in the greater San Diego and Southern California area, but are prepared to assist the legitimate needs of all survivors of politically motivated torture.

For more information about SURVIVORS, or to participate in our mission, please visit our website: www.notorture.org — or contact us by e-mail at: survivors@notorture.org.