



## General Assembly

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Forty-fifth session  
Agenda item 109TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING  
TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENTUnited Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of TortureReport of the Secretary-General

1. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 36/151 of 16 December 1961 for the purpose of receiving voluntary contributions for distribution, through established channels of humanitarian assistance, as humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of torture and to relatives of such victims. In accordance with that resolution, priority is to be given to aid *victims* of violations by States in which the human rights situation has been the subject of resolutions or decisions adopted by either the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or the Commission on Human Rights.
2. The Voluntary Fund is administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the United Nations by the Secretary-General, with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of a chairman and four members with wide experience in the field of human rights, acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. The membership of the Board of Trustees is as follows: Mr. Jaap Walkate (Chairman) (Netherlands); Ms. Elizabeth Odio Benito (Costa Rica); Mr. Waleed Sadi (Jordan); Mr. Ivan Tosevski (Yugoslavia); and Mr. Amos Wako (Kenya).
3. In resolution 361151, the General Assembly also appealed to all Governments to respond favourably to requests for contributions to the Fund. By the same resolution, the Board of Trustees of the Fund is authorized to promote and solicit contribution: and pledges and the Secretary-General is requested to give the Board of Trustees all the assistance it may require. The Secretary-General reports

annually to the General Assembly and to the Commission on Human Rights on the administration of the Fund. The previous reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly are contained in documents A/37/618, A/30/221, A/39/662, A/40/876, A/41/706, A/42/701, A/43/779 and A/44/708.

4. By its resolution 44/145, the General Assembly, taking note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/44/708), expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the Governments, organizations and individuals that had contributed to the Fund; called upon all Governments, organizations and individuals in a position to do so to respond favourably to requests for initial as well as further contributions to the Fund; invited Governments, if possible, to make contributions on a regular basis, in order to enable the Fund to provide continuous support to projects that depend on recurrent grants; requested the Secretary-General to include, on an annual basis, the Fund among the programmes for which funds are pledged at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities; expressed its appreciation to the Board of Trustees of the Fund for the work it has carried out and to the Secretary-General for the support given to the Board and requested the Secretary-General to make use of all existing possibilities, including the preparation, production and dissemination of information materials, to assist the Board of Trustees of the Fund in its efforts to make the Fund and its humanitarian work better known and in its appeal for contributions.

5. Since it began operations, in 1983, pursuant to recommendations of the Board of Trustees, 198 grants, totalling \$US 5,375,794, have been authorised for 118 projects, from some 38 countries on four continents. These projects fall essentially into the following fields, psychotherapy, medical care, social rehabilitation and training of doctors, psychologists, physiotherapists, paramedical personnel, social workers for the specialised treatment of torture victims and their relatives, who also suffer psychologically, economically and socially.

6. Since the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, the following contributions to the Voluntary Fund have been received from Governments during the period from 16 October 1989 to 16 October 1990:

| <u>Government</u>             | <u>Contribution</u><br>(United States dollars) |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Austria                       | 5 000  |
| Canada                        | 25 032   |
| Colombia                      | 11 043   |
| Finland                       | 171 198  |
| France                        | 91 497   |
| Germany (Federal Republic of) | 112 549  |
| Greece                        | 6 245  |
| Iceland                       | 2 300  |
| Japan                         | 50 000   |
| Luxembourg                    | 2 917  |
| Netherlands                   | 40 522   |

| <u>Government</u>                                       | <u>Contribution</u><br>(United States dollars) |
|---|--|
| New Zealand   | 17 685   |
| Republic of Korea                                       | 5 000  |
| Spain   | 36 730   |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain<br>and Northern Ireland | 50 733   |

7. In addition, during that period, the Government of Italy pledged 40 million lires per year for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and the Government of the United States of America pledged \$US 100,000 for 1990, to be added to \$US 100,000 already pledged for 1989 and to \$US 90,000 pledged for 1988. Contributions have also been received from a number of individuals.

8. Having in mind the request made by the General Assembly to the Secretary-General, in its resolution 44/145, to make use of all existing possibilities, including the preparation, production and dissemination of information materials, to assist the Board of Trustees in its efforts to make the Fund and its work better known and in its appeal for contributions, the Secretariat has prepared, produced and disseminated the information material described below.

9. In March 1990, the Centre for Human Rights has reprinted 5,000 copies of Fact Sheet No. 4, entitled "Methods of Combating Torture", which contain a chapter on the activities of the Fund. A new fact sheet is under preparation, on the United Nations voluntary funds in the field of human rights, which will also refer to the Fund for Victims of Torture.

10. A press release on the ninth session of the Board of Trustees (HR/2601) was published in French, on 9 July, and in English, on 16 July 1990, by the Information Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva. On 24 July 1990, a copy of this press release was sent for information to all Governments that had contributed to the Fund.

11. The Fund will be included among the programmes for which funds are pledged at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities.

12. The Secretary-General has received from the Chairman of the Board of Trustees additional information on the Board's activities, which is annexed to the present report,

ANNEX

Information on the activities of the Board of Trustees of the  
United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, provided

- C h a i r m a n

1. The Board of Trustees wishes to express its deep concern that, in spite of the clear prohibition under international law of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including corporal punishment, these are still widely practised under the jurisdiction of Member States. The Board, however, is proud that it is placed in a position to offer concrete help to the victims of such practices.

2. The Board of Trustees has held *nine sessions*: in March 1983, October 1983, August 1984, April 1985, February 1986, February 1987, February 1988, April 1989 and June 1990. At each session the Board has scrutinised a large number of projects submitted to it and has made recommendations to the Secretary-General for grants to choose projects that the Board considered worthy of financial support from the Fund. In many cases, the Board, before making any recommendations, requested further information or clarifications from the sponsors. The Board attaches the highest importance to careful and detailed reporting on the use made of each grant and, at each session, it reviews the reports submitted by the sponsors. It has insisted that such reports, containing a description of how the project was carried out and an accounting of the use made of the grant from the Fund, should be submitted before the Board could recommend any further grant to the same project.

3. At its ninth session held in Geneva from 11 to 15 June 1990 the Board considered 60 requests *for* assistance concerning continuing projects and 30 requests concerning new projects. The Board has recommended to the Secretary-General for approval 61 grants representing a total amount of \$US 1,766,300. The disbursement of 13 grants, representing an amount of \$US 300,000, already attributed in the past, remains conditional on the receipt of satisfactory reports and accountings. This brings the total of commitments to \$US 2,066,300.

4. During its sessions the Board has met with representatives of a number of sponsors of projects in order to receive information from them and to discuss the best way of using a grant from the Fund. At its ninth session, the Board heard 16 representatives of organizations sponsoring 20 of these projects. The Board has adopted a policy not to finance a large project in full, in order not to make these projects totally dependent on the United Nations Fund. At the same time, the Board encourages project leaders to seek support from other sources as well. This is done with a view to spreading the responsibilities for helping victims of torture.

5. The Board hopes to be able, during the coming years, to continue its activities at least on the same scale as in the past. This will only be possible if sufficient contributions are received each year from Governments and other sources. The Board therefore again wishes to express the hope that, in particular,

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Governments will consider contributing to the Fund preferably by making annual contributions to the Fund, in order to show their solidarity with victims of torture, with those who offer medical and other help and with the purposes of the Fund. It must be recalled in this context that the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in 1975.

6. As in the past, the focus of the Board's recommendations made at its ninth session is on supporting programmes providing direct medical, psychological, social or other assistance to torture victims and their family members. The Board has also made recommendations for support for training programmes for health professionals of several countries on the techniques of treatment of victims of torture as well as for meetings of health professionals, at which they learn from each other's experience. These projects are carried out in some 30 countries and benefit persons from many other countries.

7. The Board, in reviewing the projects under way, decided that it would be important for its members to have a first-hand understanding of how projects are carried out and how the Fund's resources are used. It, therefore, decided to recommend that members of the Board visit some of the most important projects to discuss the projects' needs with their sponsors.

8. With an increasing number of contributions and requests for assistance, the highest standards should be applied to procedures followed by the Board and the Secretariat. The Board, therefore, decided to start reviewing its own procedures and the guidelines for applicants for grants.

9. The Board expressed the wish to meet in April of each year for seven or eight working days, starting in April 1991. The reason for this suggested extension from five to seven or eight working days is that the number of applications and hearings of applicants has increased every year. The Board attaches great importance to hearing as many applicants of new projects as possible. The Board would also hope that sponsors of already subsidized projects could be heard, from time to time, on the work achieved,

10. As in the past, the Board of Trustees has found that, in some cases, very rapid action is needed to help torture victims. On the one hand, it may be necessary to make funds available to provide medical care in a person's home country. On the other hand, it may be necessary to provide funds to enable a person and his family to leave a country rapidly to go to a place where medical care is available. At its ninth session, the Board has therefore made special provisions for that purpose.

11. Concerning the programme support costs paid by the Fund to the United Nations, the Board wishes to point out that it was agreed in 1933 that, in view of the humanitarian nature of the Fund and the relatively modest services it requires, it would be kept at 5 per cent and not at the usual 13 per cent. The Board has expressed the wish that the programme support costs remain at the lower level.

**12. In order to provide the general public with information about the Fund, a leaflet entitled "How Can You Help Torture Victims?"\*\* has been produced with the assistance of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. More detailed information about the activities of the Fund is provided in an article published by the first Chairman of the Board of Trustees in his own name. The article is entitled "The United Nations Fund for Torture Victims: The first years of activity" and has been published in the Human Rights Quarterly, volume 8, No. 2, May 1986 and in a revised and updated version in the Review of the International Commission of Jurists, No. 37, December 1986.**

**13. Potential applicants for funds should refer to the chapter on the Fund contained in the United Nations publication \*\*Methods of Combating Torture" (Fact Sheet No. 4). Further information on making contributions or submitting projects for support may be obtained by writing to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Centre for Human Rights, United Nations Office at Geneva.**