



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
20 December 2019

Original: English

---

## Human Rights Council

### Forty-third session

24 February–20 March 2020

Agenda item 2

### Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

## United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, which complements the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session (A/74/233), provides information on the activities of the Fund and describes in particular the recommendations for grants adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its fiftieth session, held in Geneva from 7 to 11 October 2019.



## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Submission of the report**

1. The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/163 and complements the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (A/74/233). It contains updated information on the activities of the Fund, in particular the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees at its fiftieth session, held in Geneva from 7 to 11 October 2019.

### **B. Mandate of the Fund**

2. The Fund may receive voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with the mandate of the Fund outlined in General Assembly resolution 36/151 and the practices established by the Board of Trustees since 1982, the Fund provides grants to established channels of assistance, in particular non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and of family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, and public interest law firms that submit project proposals aimed at the provision of medical, psychological, social, financial, legal, humanitarian or other forms of direct assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

### **C. Administration of the Fund and composition of the Board of Trustees**

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of five members 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 Board of Trustees is currently composed of Sara Hossain (Bangladesh), whose mandate ends on 20 October 2020; Lawrence Murugu Mute (Kenya) and Vivienne Nathanson (Chair, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), whose mandates end on 20 October 2020; Gaby Oré Aguilar (Peru), whose mandate ends on 9 July 2020; and Mikołaj Pietrzak (Poland), whose mandate ends on 20 October 2020.

## **II. Management of grants**

### **A. Admissibility criteria**

4. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the guidelines of the Fund. The guidelines require a project proposal to be presented by an established channel of assistance, in particular non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and of family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics and public interest law firms. The beneficiaries must be victims of torture and/or their family members. Priority is given to projects providing direct assistance to torture victims, which may consist of medical or psychological assistance, help with social or financial reintegration, as well as various forms of legal assistance for victims or members of their families, including support in seeking redress or applying for asylum. As a general rule, projects are awarded on a yearly basis for a maximum of 10 consecutive years, subject to a satisfactory evaluation of the project and the availability of funds.

5. Subject to the availability of funds, the Fund also supports projects seeking to organize training or capacity-building activities for health-care professionals or other service providers, with priority given to applicant organizations that have already received a grant from the Fund. Such projects may take the form of training, workshops, seminars,

conferences, peer-to-peer training or staff exchanges – that are aimed at increasing capacity to deliver professional care to victims. They are to be conducted primarily for the benefit of the professional staff of the applicant organization. Grant requests for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or other similar activities are not admissible.

6. Outside of the regular grants cycle and subject to the availability of funds, the Fund also provides emergency assistance to projects submitted through the emergency intersessional procedure of the Fund, as outlined in the guidelines of the Fund. Emergency grants may be awarded in exceptional circumstances, such as a sudden increase in the number of victims of torture to be assisted owing to a humanitarian crisis, including armed conflict, war or natural disaster. Emergency grants may also be awarded when such crises result in a grave situation that makes it impossible for an organization to continue to provide assistance to beneficiaries (for example, destruction of premises or offices), for the purpose of enabling the organization to resume its activities.

## B. Monitoring and evaluation of grants

7. As a rule, pre-screening visits to applicant organizations are undertaken before a grant is awarded for a new project proposal. Regular monitoring visits to ongoing projects for which the renewed support of the Fund is being sought are also conducted to assess the implementation and impact of the projects funded. An internal guide on conducting visits to projects that have been funded, or are to be funded, was developed by the secretariat of the Fund to ensure coherence in the evaluation process. In 2019, a total of 92 projects were visited for technical evaluation by the secretariat of the Fund, other OHCHR staff and field presences, and members of the Board.

## III. Financial situation of the Fund

8. The Board, in close coordination with the secretariat of the Fund and the Donors and External Relations Section of OHCHR, seeks to secure a more satisfactory level of contributions from donors, which is needed to respond to the current realities of victims of torture and their family members worldwide. It is estimated that a yearly income of \$12 million is necessary to respond adequately to the requests for assistance received by the Fund from rehabilitation centres and other civil society actors worldwide. Over the past three years, the Fund has managed to secure an average yearly income of between \$8 and \$9 million.

9. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received in 2019 (up to 10 December). At the fiftieth session of the Board, at which grants were recommended for projects to be implemented in 2020, the Fund had a net total of \$8,927,677 available to be awarded for activities, mainly for grants to support critical services for victims of torture and their family members, to be implemented in the course of 2020.

### Contributions and pledges received from 1 January to 10 December 2019

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
<b>Contributions</b>		
Andorra	10 940	9 October 2019
Austria	32 822	11 October 2019
Canada*	66 102	21 March 2019
Canada	9 034	26 March 2019
Chile	5 000	18 October 2019
Denmark	734 940	2 April 2019
Egypt	10 000	3 June 2019
France	79 909	26 February 2019
Germany	227 272	15 July 2019

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount (United States dollars)</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Germany	550 055	5 December 2019
Holy See	2 000	13 February 2019
India	50 000	20 March 2019
Ireland	94 760	12 August 2019
Kuwait	10 000	7 March 2019
Luxembourg	16 411	11 October 2019
Norway	330 632	18 November 2019
Pakistan	3 000	3 July 2019
Peru	1 174	10 January 2019
Peru	1 088	5 June 2019
Saudi Arabia	75 000	23 May 2019
United Arab Emirates	10 000	9 April 2019
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	35 260	12 April 2019
Public donation	228	
<b>Total contributions</b>	<b>2 355 627</b>	
<b>Pledges</b>		
Italy	22 050	Pledge
United States of America	6 550 000	Pledge
<b>Total pledges</b>	<b>6 572 050</b>	
<b>Total contributions and pledges</b>	<b>8 927 677</b>	

\* Includes a contribution of US\$ 21,888 from the government of Quebec.

#### IV. Fiftieth session of the Board of Trustees

10. The fiftieth session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 7 to 11 October 2019. The Board examined proposals for funding and made recommendations on grants to be awarded to beneficiary organizations for activities to be implemented in the period from 1 January to 31 December 2020.

11. The amount available for distribution to projects was calculated after deducting programme support costs, the operating cash reserve and expected expenditures for non-grant activities.

12. At the fiftieth session, the Board reviewed a total of 226 admissible project proposals received under the call for applications for 2020, aimed at providing direct assistance to victims of torture and their families, as well as – to a lesser extent – training and capacity-building in the field of rehabilitation, amounting to a total request of \$13,490,899.

13. In line with the grant-making procedure set out at its forty-fifth session (A/72/278, paras. 5–8), the Board recommended that \$7,363,850 be awarded, for a total of 172 projects to be implemented in 2020 in 78 countries (for an average grant size of \$42,865). Of those projects, 165 are for the delivery of direct assistance services to victims of torture (\$7,119,500), and 7 are for training and capacity-building projects (\$244,350) aimed at strengthening the capacity of the beneficiary organizations to deliver such services. With the vital financial assistance of the Fund, it is expected that nearly 40,565 victims and their families worldwide will have access to rehabilitation and other forms of concrete assistance in the course of 2020.

14. Admissible project proposals were reviewed by the Board on a competitive basis, taking into account the merit and documented needs of each proposal and its complementarity with other initiatives, as well as the number of years of continuous support by the Fund to the same project.

15. The Board also recommended setting aside an additional \$400,000 to respond to emergency assistance requests that may be received in the course of 2020 through the Fund's intersessional emergency grants procedure.

16. Through its enhanced emergency procedure, in 2019 the Fund was able to provide financial support in the amount of \$417,313 for the immediate relief of victims of torture. Grants under the emergency procedure were awarded to support vital rehabilitation services.

17. During the session, the Board met with representatives of the Core Group of States and the secretariat of the Convention against Torture Initiative. They addressed efforts to advance towards the implementation of the right to rehabilitation and redress, as provided in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and towards synergies between their respective activities.

18. The Board also met with representatives of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims and the International Center for Health and Human Rights to discuss their Right to Rehabilitation Project to develop indicators on the topic.

19. In line with its objective to make the Fund a platform for knowledge-sharing in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims, the Board also agreed to hold an expert workshop on the theme of assisting torture survivors in the context of shrinking civic space, at its fifty-first session, in April 2020. As on previous occasions, the workshop will bring together selected experts and practitioners from organizations supported by the Fund, as well as special procedures and representatives from treaty bodies and United Nations agencies. The event will include a public segment. The findings of the last expert workshop, entitled "Surviving torture and fighting stigma: the road to recovery for victims of sexual and gender-based torture", are contained in A/74/233 (para. 10).

## V. Making a contribution

20. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other public and private entities are encouraged to contribute to the Fund. It is important to note that only specifically earmarked contributions are attributed to the Fund. For more information on how to contribute and details about the Fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; e-mail: unvft@ohchr.org; telephone: +41 22 917 9376; fax: +41 22 917 9017.

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

21. **In his statement issued on the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture on 26 June 2019, the Secretary-General stated the need to support victims and ensure respect for their right to rehabilitation and redress. He also noted that the victim-centred approach that guides the Fund had helped to create a better understanding of the different dimensions of torture, including the use of sexual and gender-based violence, and of the specific assistance that different kinds of survivors of torture need. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture continues to play an indispensable role by supporting organizations that provide specialized assistance to victims of torture.**

22. **The Fund has also affirmed itself, with expert guidance from its Board, as a platform for exchanging and collecting expertise in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims of torture by holding annual thematic workshops. The next such workshop, focusing on assisting survivors of torture in the context of shrinking civic space, will be held in Geneva in April 2020.**

23. **The Secretary-General appeals to Member States and other stakeholders to contribute to the Fund, noting that contributions are a concrete manifestation of the**

**commitment of States to the elimination of torture, in line with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in particular its article 14. There is a clear need to increase support to the Fund beyond the present annual income of around \$9 million. The Fund requires a minimum of \$12 million on a yearly basis to respond adequately to the increasing demands for assistance to victims of torture.**

---