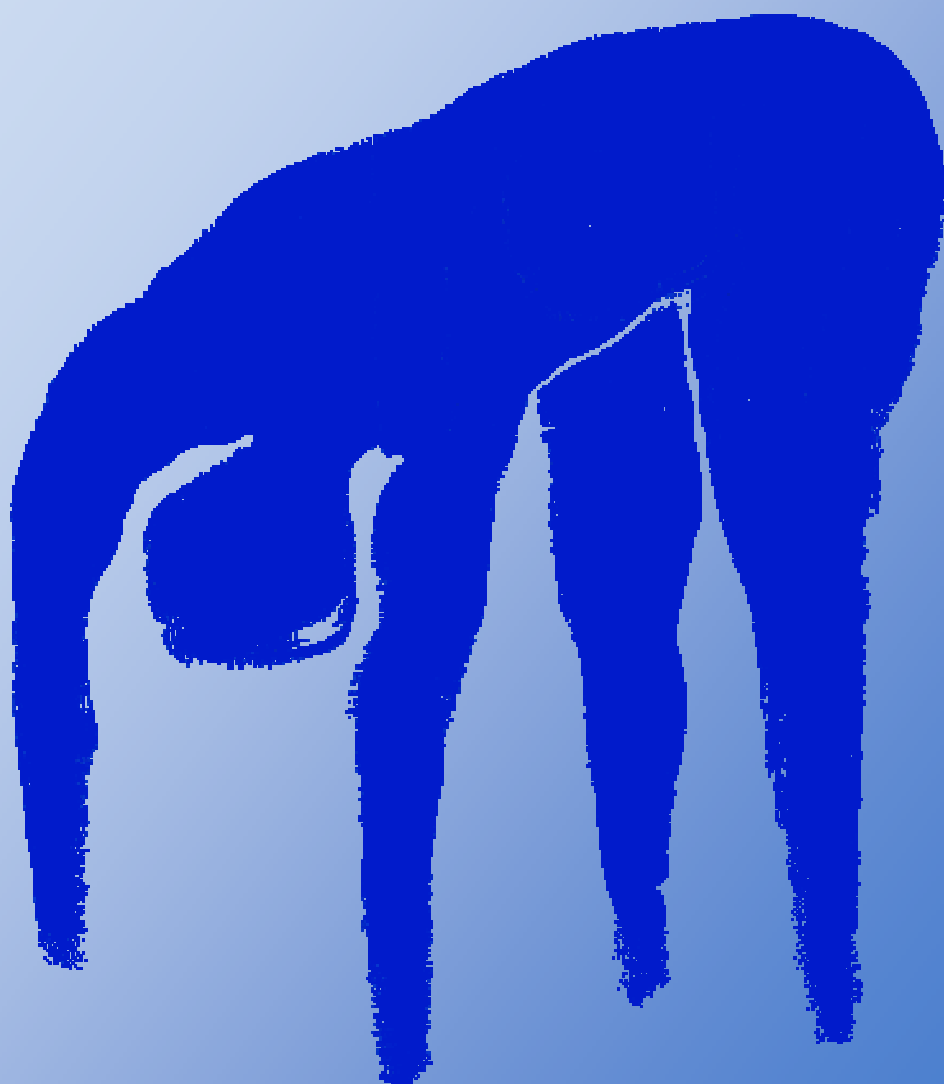


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PROMOTING THE REHABILITATION OF TORTURE
VICTIMS AND THE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Introduction



Camelia Doru,
Medical Director ICAR

*ICAR is the
first and only
organization in
Romania
dedicated to
helping torture
survivors.*

ICAR Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit organization set up in 1991 by Dr. Camelia Doru with the support of 19 honorific members.

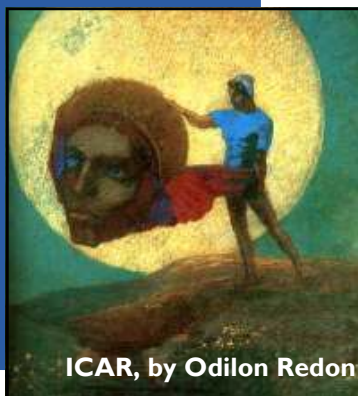
Short history

It was legally registered in 1992 and its main aim was to provide free medical, psychological, social and legal assistance for those who, for political reasons, experienced the communist detention regime. ICAR Foundation is the first and also the only organization in Romania that has set out and implemented such a program. The Foundation operates three rehabilitation centers in Romania, one in Bucharest (opened in 1993), one in Iasi (opened in 1995) and one in Craiova (opened in 1998). The centers provide free medical, psychiatric/psychological, social and legal services to victims of torture and ill-treatment among former political prisoners and their immediate families either by in-house staff or by referral to external services with which the Foundation has contracts.

From 2002, ICAR Foundation has extended its target population by offering medical and psychosocial services also to refugees and asylum seekers. For this purpose ICAR signed a collaboration protocol with the National Office for Refugees (now the Romanian Immigration Office) that allows ICAR to operate an office in the “Vasile Stolnicu” refugee reception centre, where the Foundation’s psychologist and volunteers organise psychosocial counselling sessions, Romanian language classes, information sessions, cultural orientation sessions and different social activities for asylum seekers and refugees accommodated in the centre.

Mission

To promote the rights of torture survivors by facilitating their access to comprehensive medical, psychosocial rehabilitation as well to legal redress and reparation, and promote the respect for torture survivors and for human rights in Romania and abroad.



ICAR, by Odilon Redon

Objectives

- Provide medical and psychosocial rehabilitation services and legal support to primary and secondary victims of torture.
- Promote the rights of torture survivors to moral, legal and social redress.
- Provide technical assistance to other rehabilitation centers for torture victims at national, regional and international level.
- Support all activities contributing to the prevention of torture and to raising public awareness of torture and its human consequences.

MISSION:

To promote the rights of torture survivors by facilitating their access to comprehensive medical and psychosocial rehabilitation as well to legal redress and reparation, and promote the respect for human rights.

Rehabilitation



ICAR Foundation is the first and the only organization in Romania that offers comprehensive rehabilitation services to victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The beneficiaries of ICAR's services are Romanian former political prisoners that were subjected to torture and ill-treatment in the communist prisons and refugees and asylum seekers that suffered similar persecutions in their country of origin. ICAR assists torture survivors through the work of its three rehabilitation centers in Romania: in Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova.

MEDICAL SERVICES

The medical assistance

that ICAR Foundation offers to torture survivors includes both general medical services and specialized medical services: psychiatry, physiotherapy, pain therapy, cardiology and internal medicine, urology, dentistry, and basic laboratory investigations. For specialist services that are not offered as in-house services (e.g. ENT, ophthalmology, special investigations, hospitalisations) ICAR refers its patients to medical cabinets or medical institutions outside the foundation. During 2007, 906 patients were assisted on a regular basis, out of whom approximately 60% were males and 40% females, 80% were primary victims of torture and 20% secondary victims (close family members). Among these patients about 90% were victims of torture in Romanian communist interrogation centers and prisons while the rest were asylum seekers and refugees in Romania that

have been subjected to torture and other gross human rights violations in their country of origin. The asylum seekers and refugees treated at ICAR came mostly from Iraq, Congo, Somalia and Zimbabwe.

The medical staff at ICAR's rehabilitation centers offered 11.102 consultations and 348 external referrals to other medical institutions. Out of these 11.102 consultations, 4.286 were made by general physicians, 1.860 by the cardiologists, 1.163 by the urologist, 867 by the physiotherapy specialists and 451 by the dentists. The psychiatrists offered 2.036 specialized consultations. Blood samples for approximately 418 laboratory investigations were collected in-house as a convenience for the clients. The external referrals were generally for ophthalmology and ENT consultations and for other diagnostic investigations.

M E D I C A L DOCUMENTATION OF ALLEGED CASES OF TORTURE

ICAR Foundation is providing medical investigations and reports to asylum seekers in Romania that claim to have been tortured in their country of origin, but to whom the Romanian authorities refused the refugee status. They use these medical reports as evidence in the court case for obtaining asylum. In 2007 ICAR Foundation issued 35 such medical certificates. Out of these 35, 19 were somatic and 16 were psychiatric reports.

P S Y C H O S O C I A L COUNSELLING AT THE REFUGEE CENTRE

In March 2007, ICAR Foundation renewed the protocol of collaboration with the National Office for Refugees (now the Romanian Immigration Office), which gives ICAR access to the "Vasile Stolnicu" refugee reception centre, situated in the outskirts of Bucharest, hosting asylum seekers as well as legalized refugees who cannot afford to live in town. ICAR's social worker, with a background in psychology and expertise in refugee assistance, provides counselling twice a week at the reception centre with the aim of enabling the victims to become self-sufficient and facilitate their integration into Romanian society. Counselling sessions cover a wide range of topics from psychological rehabilitation to advice and information on social issues such as the asylum process, accommodation, employment, education/vocational training, cultural orientation, and life-skills. The counsellor also conducts screening in order to identify torture victims among new-comers requiring medical



**ICAR - wall painting
in Pompey**

assistance. 128 psycho-social counselling sessions were conducted with 46 beneficiaries during 2007.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

In a needs assessment survey conducted in the refugee camp in Bucharest, many beneficiaries expressed the desire for further activities in cultural orientation, language training and information sessions. In order to meet such needs, seven volunteers in providing social assistance to victims of trauma were recruited and trained in July 2007. Two of the volunteers are refugees themselves, with a medical background. This not only empowers the refugee community, but also creates trust among beneficiaries and provides ICAR Foundation with valuable interpretation assistance. Another volunteer recruiting session was conducted in October-November after which another four volunteers were selected and trained. They are now helping to maintain and improve the social services offered to the refugees and asylum seekers in the "Vasile Stolnicu" centre.

Some of the activities implemented by volunteers in Bucharest: Romanian language classes; women and child drop

-in group information sessions; information sessions on various themes e.g. cultural orientation.

The centre in Iasi offers specialized social services, such as: social counselling sessions; purchasing and distributing free of charge medicines to the client's domicile (cases of physical disabilities and reduced mobility); psychosocial support for patients with various handicaps; frequent re-evaluations of patients' needs (due to their changing situation e.g. death of spouse, loss of a part of the income, increased need for medication).

The centre in Craiova collaborated with the Local Council for the Elderly to carry out cultural and social events with the aim of raising the psychological comfort of the patients and reducing their social marginalization.

In Bucharest, the beneficiaries are consulted about and involved in various projects activities, but also in social events with the aim to reduce their isolation, loneliness and lack of social network. Celebration of 26th of June is every year attended by many clients.

ICAR's centers

offer

specialized services

to victims of

torture: medical

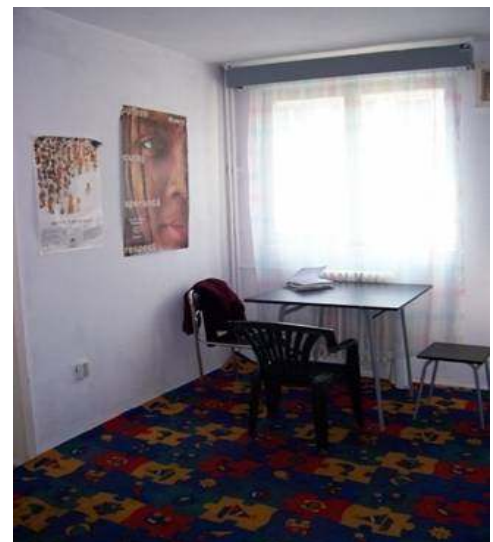
assistance,

psycho-social

counseling and

legal advice.

ICAR outreach in "Vasile Stolnicu" Refugee Centre



European Commission evaluation visit, December 2007



**L E G A L
A S S I S T A N C E
A N D C O U R T
C A S E S**

I C A R Foundation Bucharest provides legal counselling sessions to its clients on a weekly basis. Such sessions

helped them to better understand the complicated legal framework relating to their rights. The legal counsellor also focused on gathering documents to build up cases in Court for reparation and annulment of sentences received by the former political prisoners during the communist regime.

Documentation



Information and Documentation Centre on ICAR's website

torture, testimonies from torture survivors, definitions of torture, torture throughout history, torture around the world, methods of torture, physical and psychological consequences of torture, and treatment of torture victims.

The improvement of the website also involved the development of a Virtual Platform containing discussion forums on different relevant topics such as: the Trial of Communism, Refugees and asylum seekers, Former political prisoners, and a section dedicated to the working group set up after the workshop held in May 2007 on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol in Romania.

ICAR's website is used not only as a database of information on torture issues, but also as an advocacy tool.

The format of ICAR Foundation Bucharest's web page (www.icarfoundation.ro) was improved with a view make more information related to the documentation and consequences of torture available for other institutions, NGOs and professionals working in the field of human rights.

The web site now contains more than 200 downloadable documents in the section called Information and Documentation Center. Some of the topics addressed are: documents and reports on torture from international institutions and organizations, analyses, studies and research on

Advocacy

In 2007, on the occasion of the 26th of June – United Nations Day in Support of the Victims of Torture - ICAR Foundation sent out open letters to four key ministers: the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Economy and Finance and the Minister of Health with the aim of influencing policies relating to torture victims. With the Ministry of Justice ICAR Foundation ad-

vocated for legislation to annul the sentences for the political prisoners of the former communist regime and for the urgent endorsement of the lustration law that was first drafted in 1994. In the letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs ICAR asked that Romania, as a former communist country, become a contributor to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Tor-



Visit from international expert with the view of improving client monitoring program

Open letters

ture and thus contribute to the strengthening of democracy and human rights worldwide. In 2007 Romania’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Doru Romulus Costea, was the chair of the Human Rights Council and this was all the more reason for Romania to contribute to the UNVFVT. In the letters to the Ministers of Health and of Economy and Finance ICAR Foundation argued the need to mainstream free specialized rehabilitation services for victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the need for specific training for medical professionals working with torture survivors, the inclusion in the academic curricula of the study of physical and psychological consequences of torture, the need for a nursing home for the elderly former political prison-

ers of the communist regime and also for the financial contributions to the ICAR centers in Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova from the state budget. This advocacy action contributed to two important outcomes. First, the Ministry of Justice announced a draft law that would annul the sentences of those convicted for political reasons during the former communist regime. Secondly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs

expressed his willingness to put Romania on the list of contributors to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.



Response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ICAR

Open letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Training



“Istanbul Protocol”
Seminar,
May 2007

Istanbul Protocol Seminar (May 2007)

On the 24th and 25th of May 2007 ICAR Foundation organized in Bucharest a seminar on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol – the United Nations manual on the effective investigation and documentation of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The seminar had participants from the UNHCR Romania, USAID Romania, Romanian Immigration Office, the Romanian National Council for Refugees, ARCA – the Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants, the Jesuit Services for Refugees. The Romanian representative at the Committee for the Prevention of Torture of the Council of Europe, as well as other doctors, lawyers and psychologists also attended the seminar.

The two-day training was structured in ten modules. The first six were dedicated to providing information on the Istanbul Protocol, on Romanian

legislation regarding the asylum procedure, on the international legal standards, the model and principles of conducting an interview with an asylum seeker, and on the physical and psychological evidences of torture. The other four covered specific areas of interest and were more practical – they consisted of role plays on medical examination of cases of torture and preparation of medical reports and on using medical evidence in legal proceedings, and also included a discussion of strategies in putting the Istanbul Protocol into practice.



Role play during the
seminar

The seminar was conducted by two international trainers: Dr. Alejandro Moreno, Associate Professor at Texas University, having worked with Boston Medical Centre’s for Refugee Health and Human Rights at the Boston University School of

Public Health, and Dr. Lutz Oette from Redress Trust London – a British NGO dedicated to legal reparation for torture survivors. Also, Ms. Florentina Covaliu – Asylum and Protection Officer at UNHCR Romania delivered a general presentation on current Romanian asylum legislation.

At the end of the seminar participants established an ad-hoc working group on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol which ICAR Foundation engaged itself to coordinate.

ICAR Foundation was afterwards invited to become a member of the National Task Force for Vulnerable Groups (initiative of UNCHR in partnership with the Ministry of Interior).

In-house staff training (Craiova, Iasi and Chisinau)

Several in-house staff trainings in Craiova, Iasi and Chisinau in connection with the site visits at the partner centers took place during the year. The trainings helped to improve the staff’s professional and managerial capacity. Topics included: Strategic organizational development, Client Monitoring Program, Fundraising and Financial management of rehabilitation centers.

Joint project management activities (under EU project)

In 2007 the joint project coordination team of the EU project “Providing rehabilitation and seeking justice for victims of torture” has periodically gathered reports from all implementing partners (ICAR centers in Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova and MEMORIA Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims in Chisinau) and continuously

up-dated them on the development of the main activities taking place within the centres. The four centers involved in the project participated in on-line sessions dedicated to exchange of knowledge and of experience. Between 10 and 11 of July 2007 a meeting for the mid-term evaluation of the 3 year EU financed project took place in Chisinau with the participation of the represen-

tatives from all four centres. During the meeting a review of the activities was realized and issues like implemented activities, results, encountered problems and future activities to be performed by the centers were discussed.



Site visit in Chisinau, July 2007

National events

26 of June celebration

On the 26th of June 2007 ICAR Foundation had a double celebration: the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and reaching 15 years of continuous activity of the ICAR Foundation. So ICAR decided to mark the two events by producing and launching a documentary about the persons served by ICAR during these 15 years and celebrated by the international community on the 26 of June – torture survivors.

The interviews for the documentary took place in Bucharest, Iasi, and Craiova during the spring of 2007. The film directors, Nicolae Margineanu and Mihai Preda gathered testimonies from torture survivors about their experiences before imprisonment, during the time spent in the communist prisons and especially after their release. The documentary is called “So close to us” and lasts about 50 minutes.

The pre-premiere of the film took place on the 26 of June at the Romanian Peasant Museum in the “Horia Bernea” Studio. Before the viewing of the documentary Dr. Camelia Doru (founder and director of ICAR Foundation) explained the meaning and importance of the 26th of June day and Mr. Nicolae Margineanu presented the film. The screening of the documentary was followed by a press conference and a reception.

High officials participated in this event (e.g. the Prefect of Bucharest, the Deputy Military Prosecutor of Romania) as well as members of the National Council for Studying the Communist Archives, of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes, of the Presidential Commission for Analyzing the Communist Totalitarian Regime. Personalities from civil society, the academic field and the cultural sector, as well as many former

political prisoners and their families, also attended the



Presenting the documentary
“So close to us”

celebrations.

The national newspapers “Romania Libera”, “Jurnalul National” and “Cuvantul” and the online publication www.alternativ.ro reported on

the event in their issues at the time. Also,



The logo of the international campaign against torture

two major public TV channels reported on the documentary: TVR (National Public Television) and TVR Cultural.

UNHCR seminar on refugees in need of international protection

On the 17th of October 2007 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – the Romanian office hosted a seminar in Bucharest mainly to discuss the situation of Iraqis in need of international protection. The seminar gathered representatives of national and international NGOs working with Iraqi refugees, of Romanian authorities from the immigration field, of journalists – correspondents from Iraq, of military men stationed in Iraq, as well as of the Iraqi refugee com-

munity. From ICAR Foundation, the project coordinator and the counsellor attended the seminar.

UNHCR round table on medical care for asylum seekers

ICAR Foundation was invited to take part in another meeting facilitated by UNHCR Romania: a round table on the subject of “Medical assistance for asylum seekers and persons with a form of protection in Romania”. The meeting was held on the 19th of October 2007 with representatives from Romania’s National Health Insurance House, the city of Bucharest’s Health Insurance House, the Asylum and Integration Office from the Ministry of Interior. The topics discussed were the problem of the national ID number in accessing medical services in Romania, practical aspects regarding health insurance for persons with a form of protection and the access to special health programs for asylum seekers and persons with a form of protection in Romania.

Istanbul Protocol working group

As a follow-up of the Istanbul Protocol seminar, ICAR Foundation initiated and now coordinates a working group on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol in Romania, comprising, besides ICAR Foundation members, rep-

resentatives from UNHCR Romania, the Romanian Immigration Office, the Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR), ARCA – the Romanian Forum for Refugees and Migrants, the Jesuit Services for Refugees. The working group already had two meetings, one on the 3rd of October and one on the 21st of November. The first meeting focused on the feed-back on ICAR’s new format for its somatic and psychiatric medical reports evaluating alleged victims of torture, and on the relationship between ICAR and the Romanian Immigration Office in the Vasile Stolnicu refugee centre. During the second meeting the members of the group discussed the need for an information session on the identification of torture victims for the new staff at ARCA and CNRR working directly with refugees and asylum seekers.

The working group is now drafting a strategy on the effective early identification of torture victims for the use of authorities’ representatives during the asylum procedure, as a concrete way of implementing the Istanbul Protocol guidelines in Romania.

World Learning – USAID closing conference

Two ICAR staff members



Watching the documentary and debates



attended the conference “Civil Society: Future Perspectives” organized in Bucharest on the 14th and the 15th of November 2007 by World Learning and United States Agency for International Development, marking the closing of the Romanian Civil Society Strengthening Program. During the two-day conference there were discussed subjects on sustainability (NGOs’ visibility in mass-media, the “2%” campaign),

on watchdog and advocacy activities (strategies, instruments, challenges), on Romanian civil society organizations in the international arena in general and in the context of Romania’s accession to the European Union in particular. There was also a presentation of donors that support NGOs in the region, as possible ways to cover the gap left by World Learning and USAID’s departure from Romania.



USAID closing conference

International events

IRCT workshop (February 2007, Brussels)

Between the 26th and the 28th of February 2007 one staff member from each ICAR center in Romania (Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova) attended a fundraising and advocacy workshop organized in Brussels by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) for the European accredited centers. The innovative aspect of this workshop was the facilitation of meetings between participants and members of the European Parliament and of the

European Commission and discussions with them about the support given by these institutions to torture rehabilitation.

EURONET annual meeting (April 2007, Antalya)

ICAR has further developed its international collaboration with other rehabilitation centers in Europe, being entrusted with the coordination of several key initiatives within the Network of European Treatment and Rehabilitation centers for Victims of Torture and Human Rights Violations – EURONET. Two ICAR representatives participated in the annual

meeting of the network which was held in Antalya in April 2007.



IRCT workshop in Brussels, February 2007

Publications

Newsletters (February and August 2007)

In 2007 ICAR Foundation edited and issued a newsletter called “Together against torture”. The publication contains articles from all the three ICAR centers on torture, its practices, its consequences, its treatment and its survivors. The newsletter has had two issues, one in Febru-

ary and one in August, that can be accessed in electronic version on the ICAR web site and can also be obtained by e-mail on request. On the occasion of different events ICAR also distributed a printed version of the newsletter, produced with the financial assistance of USAID through World Learning Program in Romania

The Romanian version of the Istanbul Protocol

Istanbul Protocol – the Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is a non-binding United Nations document that became official in 1999. It is the first set of international guidelines on documentation of torture and

its consequences. Although Istanbul Protocol is a non-binding document, international law obliges governments to investigate



ICAR publications

cases of torture and other forms of ill-treatment and to punish those responsible. Istanbul Protocol is intended as a tool for doing this, setting guidelines for the medical and psychological assessment of persons who claim torture and ill treatment, for the legal investigation of cases of alleged torture and for reporting torture cases to the judiciary and other investigative institutions.

ICAR Foundation has translated the Istanbul Protocol into Romanian and displayed the electronic version on its website. The printed version of the document was used as background document during the seminars on the implementation of the Istanbul Protocol organized in Bucharest and in Chisinau.

Practical Guide for Identification of Victims of Torture among Asylum Seekers

ICAR staff began collaborating with The National Office for Refugees (now reorganized as Romanian Office for Immigration - ROI) in order to sensitize their staff working in "Vasile Stolnicu" refugee accommodation centre to the issue of torture and its consequences. A needs assessment was designed and conducted by ICAR, together with a ROI psychologist, in order to identify gaps in knowledge

among ROI health care staff. Based on this, a guidebook was produced in March 2007 on the identification of victims of torture among asylum-seekers. The guide comprises information on the definition of torture, torture methods and their prevalence, impact of torture on individuals and methods of identification of torture victims. The practical guide was then distributed to medical, psychological and social professionals in the centre.



ICAR newsletter

Getting the matching funds remains a constant challenge for the ICAR team.

Fundraising

A permanent fundraising activity is taking place at the three Romanian centers. The need for enlarging the donor basis and to reduce the dependency on the few traditional donors remains a constant challenge. This is more relevant even after Romania's membership to EU, which has recently adopted a policy of phasing out its important financial support

to rehabilitation centers within EU. And for most of their existence the rehabilitation centers for victims of torture have depended for a significant part of their operating budget on financial support from the European Commission – currently provided under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

On top of this, other big donors have ended their financial support to Romanian organizations (e.g. the USAID). However ICAR's efforts to attract local donors for assistance of victims of past political repression have not yet been very successful, mainly because torture is a reminder of direct or indirect guilt for almost everybody.

Donors

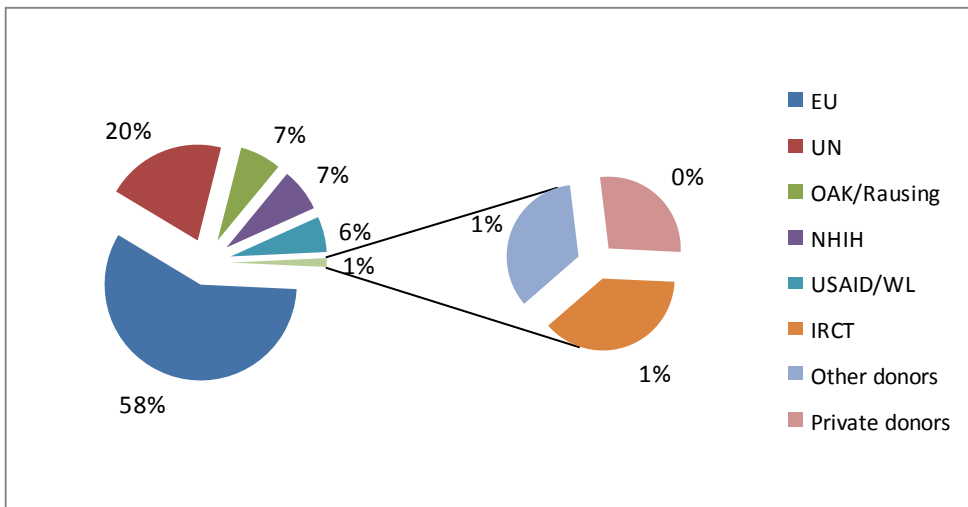
ICAR Foundation’s activity in 2007 was possible thanks to the financial support from:

International donors

- European Commission (through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights) - 173336 Euros
- United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture - 60743 Euros
- OAK Foundation and Rausing Trust - 20955 Euros
- United States Agency for International Development - World Learning for International Development - Romania Civil Society Strengthening Program - 18024 Euros
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims - 1668 Euros



“Ikaros” by G. Balikouras



ICAR is grateful to all the donors that supported the foundation’s activities and projects, as well as to the city halls’ of Bucharest, Iasi and Craiova that have made available the premises the centers currently use.

National donors

- National Health Insurance House - 21879 Euros
- Other donors (2% campaign) - 1516 Euros
- Private donors - 1217 Euros



Help the survivors

**ICAR Foundation helps torture survivors and their families.
You can do it, too!**

ICAR's bank accounts:

BRD Decebal Branch

IBAN: RO42BRDE44ISVI9070944410 (RON)

or

IBAN: RO019BRDE44ISVI9071404410 (EUR)

Swift code: BRDEROBU



The ICAR team

*Cover by
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