30 YEARS OF IMPACT
CELEBRATING THE WORK OF REDRESS
ABOUT REDRESS

REDRESS is an NGO that pursues legal claims on behalf of survivors of torture around the world to obtain justice and reparation for the violation of their human rights. We empower survivors to access justice through human rights cases against governments, civil cases against individuals, and cases where we advocate for law enforcement bodies to prosecute perpetrators under the principle of universal jurisdiction. Our approach is strategic, so that as well as representing an individual we target the policy reasons that enabled the torture to take place, building a campaign using advocacy, community engagement, and communications to influence change.

REDRESS was founded in 1992 on Human Rights Day – 10 December – by Keith Carmichael following his experience in Saudi Arabia where he was tortured during more than two years in arbitrary detention. Keith realised that while existing British NGOs helped survivors in many ways – by campaigning for their release, providing safe havens, and medical care – none assisted them to obtain reparation. While the right to reparation existed in law, the practical difficulties in obtaining reparation proved difficult to overcome.

The concept for REDRESS was developed in consultation with the late Peter Davies OBE, former Director of Anti-Slavery International; Dame Rosalyn Higgins GBE KC, former judge of the International Court of Justice; Leah Levin OBE, former Director of Justice; and the late distinguished scholar David Weissbrodt, who shared the same interest in seeking ways of obtaining reparation for victims of torture. In 1991, the idea was discussed further during the IV International Symposium on Torture and the Medical Profession in Budapest, and again at the Symposium on Human Rights and Development in Manila. The conclusion was that there was a need for such a specialised organisation, leading to the creation of the REDRESS Trust in London in 1992. Stichting REDRESS Nederlands was established in 2016 to create a presence in The Hague and to underline our commitment to international criminal justice.

Under the five programmes in our 2025 Strategy REDRESS focuses on the practical measures that are needed to deliver justice and reparation for survivors, and to ensure holistic support throughout the process. We target particular situations where we can have the most impact, particularly for torture relating to dissent (human rights defenders, journalists, activists) and discrimination (LGBTIQ+ persons, women, ethnic minorities, migrants). We also support and strengthen the anti-torture movement through our solidarity programme.

This report describes some of the ways in which REDRESS has delivered impact over the last 30 years, and provides some illustrations of what has been achieved through criminal cases, human rights cases, law reform, establishing the right to reparation, ground-breaking research reports, giving survivors a voice, and by supporting the anti-torture movement.
For 30 years REDRESS has worked to deliver justice and reparation for survivors of torture. Our litigation has led to positive change, including material impact for the individual victims concerned and the broader communities behind them, legal and institutional change through the laws and policies that have been reformed, and by galvanising the movement and inspiring partners to join the campaign. Our cases have produced judgments from human rights courts in Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the United Nations.

Our work has an impact on key issues relating to justice and reparation for torture. We have focused the attention of the international community on sexual violence in conflict through legal reforms, standard setting, and ground-breaking cases. We have instigated prosecutions under universal jurisdiction, making the promise of international justice a reality. We brought the first case on LGBTIQ+ torture before a human rights court, compelling a response to discriminatory torture in the Americas. We have
challenged immunities promised to Pinochet and Gaddafi, and in Sierra Leone, Sudan, and the UK. We have brought cases against democracies for their abuses in the ‘war on terror’. Our campaigns on behalf of UK citizens and residents have instigated changes in the way the UK government responds to torture, both at a policy level and for individual cases.

REDRESS has played a leading role to strengthen international standards and procedures on reparation and on victims’ rights. We led a civil society campaign to include a strong victims’ framework at the International Criminal Court (ICC). We advocated for the adoption of influential international standards, such as the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, and the UN Committee against Torture’s General Comment on the right to redress. We campaigned for the creation of a secretariat for the EU Genocide Network, allowing for the co-ordination across Europe of universal jurisdiction prosecutions.

10 IMPACTS FOR STRATEGIC LITIGATION AGAINST TORTURE

REDRESS has developed a framework to better understand the impact that strategic litigation can achieve to better design our campaigns:

- **JUSTICE** Obtaining satisfaction for survivors of torture.
- **TRUTH** Exposing what happened and who was responsible.
- **MATERIAL** Improving the lives of survivors through specific remedies.
- **COMMUNITIES** Impacting others from survivor communities.
- **MOVEMENT** Galvanising the anti-torture movement to further action.
- **ATTITUDES** Changing the way that key people respond to torture.
- **LEGAL** Amending the law through legal precedent and new legislation.
- **POLICY** Getting governments to commit to reforms that work.
- **GOVERNANCE** Putting in place changes to reduce torture and increase accountability.
- **SOCIETY** Making torture unacceptable in all circumstances.
HOLDING PERPETRATORS TO ACCOUNT
REDRESS acts to instigate prosecutions for torture, by working with survivors, experts, and the police in the UK and elsewhere to bring perpetrators of torture before the criminal courts under the principle of Universal Jurisdiction.

Prosecuting torture in the UK. Mohammed Mahboub, a Sudanese doctor working for the NHS who was alleged to have withheld medical care from tortured prisoners in Sudan was charged in Scotland after REDRESS approached the Scottish Crown Office with evidence on behalf of a Sudanese torture survivor. The doctor is believed to be the first person charged under the 1988 Criminal Justice Act that allows courts to hear cases of alleged torture committed abroad. Proceedings were discontinued in 1999.

Prosecuting Pinochet. In October 1998, General Augusto Pinochet was arrested in London. In March 1999, he lost his appeal for immunity from prosecution in a historic ruling by the UK’s House of Lords, and in October the courts decided that he could be extradited to Spain to stand trial for torture. But in January 2000, based on medical reports, the UK Home Secretary Jack Straw declined to order his extradition. Pinochet was freed in March 2000 and returned to Chile. REDRESS was one of four organisations who intervened throughout the legal proceedings in the UK to try to stop Pinochet from leaving the UK and to bring him to justice.

Prosecuting a genocidaire. In 2000, Lt. Col. Tharcisse Muvunyi, a Rwandan living in the UK who was suspected of genocide, other war crimes and torture was arrested, after REDRESS requested the Metropolitan Police to investigate him. He was transferred to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, in Tanzania, and was eventually convicted of public incitement to commit genocide, and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

The Trial of Joseph Mpambara. REDRESS supported three torture victims to present evidence against Joseph Mpambara, a member of the interahamwe militia during the Rwanda Genocide, in his trial in the Netherlands. He was found guilty of torture as a war crime, and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The ICC. REDRESS has intervened in cases before the International Criminal Court on behalf of victims of torture, including in the Gbabgo case on the collective approach to victims’ applications for participation and in the Bemba and Katanga cases on victims’ rights to reparations, where the Court accepted many of our recommendations. We have also intervened in the Gaddafi case, where the Court agreed with the submissions of REDRESS and Lawyers for Justice in Libya that amnesties and pardons for international crimes are incompatible with the rights of victims to truth, justice, and reparation.
OBTAINING JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS
REDRESS acts on behalf of survivors of torture to bring cases against governments to international courts and tribunals, obtaining justice and reparation for individual survivors, while using the case to demonstrate the need for broader reforms. Through this strategic litigation we can have an impact far beyond the individual survivor.

**GBTIQ+ torture.** In 2012, the European Court of Human Rights found that Necati Zontul had been tortured by Greek coastguard officials in a homophobic attack, and ordered Greece to pay him €50,000 in compensation. The ruling affirmed that the rape of a detainee by a State official is an especially grave and abhorrent form of ill-treatment amounting to torture. In 2020 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a landmark judgment in the case of Azul Rojas Marín, finding that Azul had been tortured by the police when they detained her at a police station where she was stripped naked, beaten, and raped, for no reason other than her sexual orientation. The court found Peru responsible for the torture, and ordered Peru to make a public apology, adopt measures to tackle structural discrimination, and to protect other members of the LGBTIQ+ community from torture.

**Torture and dissent.** In 2013, the Inter-American Court found that Leopoldo García Lucero was tortured in Chile as an opponent of the Pinochet regime. In February 2014 the State offered a formal apology at the Chilean Embassy in London: “Saying sorry does not erase physical or psychological pain; neither does it relieve the suffering of relatives and loved ones. However, it is an act of contrition. It makes us confront our shameful past acts, come to repent them, and ensure that they are never repeated”.

**Sexual and gender-based torture.** In Nepal, REDRESS obtained a landmark decision from the United Nations in the case of Purna Maya, the first case to highlight the significant problem of sexual violence during the conflict in Nepal. It urged Nepal to provide reparations to the survivor and to amend its laws. More recently, REDRESS brought the case of Mariam Ibraheem to the African Commission against Sudan. Mariam had been sentenced to death for apostasy and was subsequently released, drawing attention to the problem of discriminatory laws that REDRESS had previously highlighted in a report, and which were subsequently reformed.

**Human rights defenders.** In 2021, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women found that Libyan women’s rights advocate Magdulein Abaida was arbitrarily detailed, ill-treated, and ultimately forced into exile as a result of her work as a human rights defender, in a case brought by REDRESS. In 2011, the UN Human Rights Committee found that Cameroon tortured activist Ebenezer Akwanga, during two years in pre-trial detention, where he was held incommunicado and severely tortured. In 2015 the UN Human Rights Committee urged Uzbekistan to investigate the torture of woman human rights defender and Nobel Prize nominee Mutabar Tadjibayeva, who was forcibly sterilised in prison.
CHANGING THE LAW

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As an NGO focused on bringing legal claims to challenge torture, one of the ways that REDRESS has impact is to change the law to encourage accountability and dissuade torture. REDRESS has done this through legal interventions in critical cases, and through legal reform campaigns.

**Challenging immunity.** In 2004, REDRESS intervened in support of the claims of four British victims of torture in Saudi Arabia before the House of Lords and the European Court of Human Rights. The cases of Jones v. UK and Mitchell and others v. UK provided the European Court with the opportunity to consider the immunity of foreign officials for acts of torture in civil litigation. In 2014 the Court concluded that while international law was developing towards recognizing an exception to the immunity of States from claims relating to torture, the approach of the UK courts had not been ‘manifestly erroneous’.

**No amnesties for torture.** In 2004, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found in the Kallon case that amnesties cannot bar prosecution of international crimes including torture. REDRESS made written and oral arguments that the blanket amnesty contained in the Lomé Peace Accord could not prevent the international prosecution of those responsible. The Court agreed.

**Evidence obtained by torture.** In December 2005, the UK Law Lords decided in the case of A and others v. Secretary of State for the Home Department that evidence obtained by torture is inadmissible in British courts. The Law Lords unanimously confirm the absolute nature of the rule prohibiting the use of torture evidence. They stated that this rule applies to all proceedings even when countering terrorism. REDRESS was one of the organisations which intervened in the case.

**Threats to torture.** In 2009, REDRESS intervened in the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Gafgen v. Germany, in which the court considered whether police officers can threaten a suspect with torture if they believed this may save the life of an innocent child. In its judgment the Grand Chamber, referring to REDRESS’ submission, concluded that the threat of torture could amount to torture, and concluded that “neither the protection of human life nor the securing of a criminal conviction may be obtained at the cost of compromising the protection of the absolute right not to be subjected to ill-treatment”.

**African Guidelines on Enforced Disappearance.** REDRESS and partners across Africa advocated to the African Commission to draw attention to the problem of enforced disappearance as a form of torture that is prevalent in Africa through a report The Forgotten Victims which set out recommendations for the necessary response from governments. In May 2022 the African Commission launched Guidelines intended to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearance on the continent.

**Istanbul Protocol.** REDRESS partnered with global experts worldwide to produce a revised version of the Istanbul Protocol which provides practical guidance on the effective documentation of torture. The revised version of the Protocol was launched by the United Nations in 2022, supporting accountability for torture worldwide.
ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT TO REPARATION FOR TORTURE
For 30 years REDRESS has worked to develop international standards on the right to reparation, and to push for the adoption of concrete measures to deliver reparation in practice.

Establishing the principle. In May 2003 REDRESS completed a Survey of the Law and Practice of Reparation for Torture in 30 countries. Theo van Boven, the then UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, drew the project to the attention of the UN General Assembly, sharing the conclusions of the report that the right to reparation for torture was clearly established in international law.

UN standards on reparation. REDRESS helped draft the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation that were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, and which set out the obligation on States to guarantee an effective remedy and reparations to victims of gross human rights violations under international law. REDRESS also provided substantive input to the UN Committee against Torture on General Comment No.3 on the Right to Redress which was adopted in 2012, and we continue to advocate for its implementation.

Reparation for sexual violence as torture. In 2007 REDRESS contributed to the development of the Nairobi Declaration on Women’s and Girls’ Right to a Remedy and Reparation. The text was adopted by women’s rights activists from around the world who came together in a meeting in Kenya. The Declaration, which has since been cited in numerous court decisions and policy documents, underscores the importance of ensuring that reparation measures transform women’s and girls’ lives.

Reparation at the International Criminal Court. In 2011 REDRESS published a report on the reparations mandate at the ICC with recommendations to ensure that victims of torture and other international crimes were able to obtain all forms of reparation. When the Court issued their first judgment on reparations in the Lubanga case in August 2012, they adopted many of the arguments made.

Reparations in Africa. In 2017 REDRESS worked with the Pan-African Reparation Initiative to support the African Commission to draft General Comment No.4 on the Rights to Redress, producing a report on reparation in the African Human Rights System, which analysed the practice of African institutions.

Special courts and reparations. REDRESS worked in Chad to promote the establishment of a trust fund for the victims of Hissène Habré, and to support local lawyers to make requests for reparations to the Extraordinary African Chambers, which in April 2018 issued a substantial reparations award, with a Trust Fund subsequently established by the African Union.

Reparation through judicial cooperation. In May 2023, REDRESS advocated for the adoption of the Ljubljana-Hague Convention on judicial cooperation between States in the context of the prosecution and investigation of core international crimes. We successfully pushed for the inclusion of strong provisions on victims rights, including the right to reparation, and the inclusion of a provision giving States the ability to cooperate with one another to seize assets for the purpose of reparations, regardless of whether these assets are the proceeds of a crime.
LEADING THE CONVERSATION

© UK Government. Freed Iranian hostages Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anousheh Ashoori.
REDRESS has researched and promoted ground-breaking reports on issues relating to torture, producing evidence on which to base legal policy advocacy through which we change law and practice to restrict the use of torture and encourage accountability.

Universal jurisdiction after Pinochet. In 1999, following the Pinochet affair in London, REDRESS published *Universal Jurisdiction in Europe*, setting out the law across Europe and the need for reform. Ever since, REDRESS has advocated for all States to enact universal jurisdiction legislation so governments ensure that their countries are not used as safe havens, and to ensure effective structures for the investigation of torture and other serious human rights violations committed anywhere in the world.

Reprisals against victims. In 2009, REDRESS published *Ending Threats and Reprisals Against Victims of Torture and Related International Crimes: A Call to Action*. The report highlighted the need to protect victims of torture and the widespread reprisals victims suffered when seeking remedies for torture and related abuses. The UN High Commissioner for Human rights subsequently incorporated many of the findings into the report *Right to the Truth*, which identified best practices for the effective implementation of this right.

Rape as torture. In October 2013 REDRESS published *Redress for Rape*, which reviewed the progress made over two decades by the international community to recognise rape as an instrument of torture and ill-treatment, and as a crime of the highest order, with obligations on States to prevent and respond to it. The report enabled those working on the issue to more effectively use the anti-torture framework.

Consular cases. In 2018 REDRESS published *Beyond Discretion*, which identified improvements needed to the way that the UK provides consular assistance for UK citizens detained abroad, and encouraged the use of diplomatic protection as a remedy for torture. Previous advocacy by REDRESS had led to changes such as the way consular staff deal with cases of sexual violence. In 2019 the UK Foreign Secretary provided diplomatic protection in the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, the first time that the UK had done this in a human rights case. REDRESS has also successfully challenged the failure of the UK Government to act appropriately in consular cases, in one case leading to a report from the UK Parliamentary Ombudsman that concluded: “This is a prime example of how one individual coming forward to complain can lead to significant changes. Having the courage and persistence to seek justice can have an impact, not just for the individual, but for other people who may need to complain in the future”. In 2023 the Foreign Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament published *Stolen Years: Combatting State Hostage Diplomacy*, which adopted many of our recommendations.
A core value of REDRESS is to promote a survivor-centred approach, and for 30 years we have sought to give survivors a voice through our reports, advocacy, and specific projects.
The Rome Conference. In 1997, REDRESS worked with other organisations to establish the Victims’ Rights Working Group (VRWG), under the auspices of the NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court. At the Rome Conference in 1998 the VRWG played an historic role to ensure that key provisions for victims were incorporated into the Statute of the ICC, such as their right to participate in proceedings and to be legally represented. Since then, the VRWG and its members around the world have worked to ensure that victims’ rights are protected and respected, and that their needs and concerns are met throughout the ICC’s judicial process.

Perceptions of reparations. In 2001, REDRESS published a seminal report Torture Survivors’ Perceptions of Reparations: A preliminary Survey, that set out the views of survivors of torture. In his preface, Nobel Laureate and REDRESS patron Dr Max Perutz, set out why this mattered:

"In Germany, the new generation who grew up after the Nazis put to shame their parents, whose silence, they thought, had made them accomplices to the Nazi crimes. If REDRESS could generate similar revulsion elsewhere, it might help stem the frightening tide of barbarism. I wish Keith Carmichael and his helpers all possible success."

Victims of the Khmer Rouge. REDRESS intervened before the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia to argue that international law required victims be allowed to participate in the investigation phase of the trial. The Court accepted the arguments, and held that victims should be full parties in the criminal proceedings. REDRESS continued to work with Cambodian civil society and the Court to develop effective measures for victim participation and reparation.

The Rwanda Genocide. In 2011, a Dutch appeals court sentenced Joseph Mpambara to life imprisonment on war crimes charges committed during the Rwanda Genocide. Three torture victims presented statements against Mpambara with REDRESS’ assistance. REDRESS made a film about the proceedings that was shown in Rwanda to victims of Mpambara’s crimes. For the first time, Rwandan survivors had sight of foreign criminal proceedings.

Uganda Victims’ Foundation. In 2007, REDRESS helped found the Uganda Victims’ Foundation by bringing representatives of the victims affected by the conflict in the North together, covering the 14 districts of Northern Uganda. In 2019, REDRESS and Emerging Solutions in Africa also helped set up the Uganda Victims and Survivors Network, to allow survivors to participate meaningfully in transitional justice processes.

Whose Justice? In 2023, REDRESS worked with survivors to publish a report setting out the different ways in which survivors of torture perceive the concept of justice, and making recommendations for legal reforms to enhance accountability, while adopting a survivor-centred approach. Following the report REDRESS has collaborated with survivors to co-develop a manifesto that sets out a number of changes needed in the United Kingdom to facilitate justice for torture. This work builds on the groundbreaking report on Torture Survivors Perceptions of Reparations from 2001.
SUPPORTING THE ANTI-TORTURE MOVEMENT

© David Rose/Panos Pictures. Protests in Sudan demanding a return to a civilian-led democratic transition.
REDRESS has built a reputation for working through collaborative partnerships with international NGOs and national partners around the world. Through our Solidarity programme we support and strengthen the anti-torture movement.

International NGOs against Torture. In 1999, REDRESS helped establish the Coalition of International NGOs against Torture (CINAT) which encouraged collaboration and joint actions on behalf of several leading anti-torture groups, creating opportunities for joint campaigns and actions.

The Victims’ Rights Working Group. In 1997, REDRESS worked with other organisations to establish the Victims’ Rights Working Group, under the auspices of the NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court. The VRWG played an historic role in ensuring that key provisions for victims were incorporated into the Rome Statute which established the Court. Since then, the VRWG has worked to ensure that victims’ rights are protected and respected, and that their needs and concerns are met throughout the Court’s judicial process.

Universal Jurisdiction Network. In December 2001, REDRESS and the Center for Justice and Accountability launched the Universal Jurisdiction Network (UJ-Info), an electronic mailing list for Universal Jurisdiction experts to share information and developments. REDRESS continues to co-ordinate civil society groups working on UJ in the UK and across Europe.

The EU Genocide Network. REDRESS worked with specialist war crimes prosecution units across Europe to encourage more collaboration to end safe havens for persons accused of torture, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In 2008 the Council of the European Union formed a permanent secretariat that has enabled this network to become an effective tool against international crimes.

PARI. As part of the campaign to create African standards for reparations, REDRESS helped create the Pan-African Reparations Initiative to bring together civil society groups on the continent to advocate for the effective delivery of reparations. PARI continues to advocate to the African Commission and other bodies to this day.

Solidarity partners. REDRESS works in collaborative partnership with more than 60 NGOs around the world on cases and projects to help deliver justice and reparation for survivors of torture. These solidarity partnerships enable us to share experiences and good practice around the world, and provide unprecedented expertise on nationals laws, policies, and contexts.

United Against Torture. In 2023 REDRESS joined the United Against Torture Consortium, bringing together six international anti-torture NGOs supported by the European Union to ensure a coordinated approach to anti-torture campaigns with a particular focus on policing and torture relating to dissent.