

## THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF TORTURE SURVIVORS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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**Introduction:** Studies point to an adverse effect of detention on the mental health of asylum seekers, yet the use of detention has been rising in several recipient countries. In general, many asylum seekers suffer from psychological disorders and symptoms, and a large percentage has been subjected to torture. The UNHCR recommends that torture survivors generally should not be detained. Due to a lack of systematic screening it is often unknown whether the asylum seeker is a torture survivor. This causes several hindrances for the protection of this vulnerable group from potentially harmful factors such as deprivation of liberty.

**Objectives:** To examine the impact of detention on the mental health of adult torture survivors.

**Aims:** To produce a comprehensive review of the literature and bring attention to a potentially harmful praxis.

**Methods:** The systematic review follows the PRISMA guidelines. The search was made in PubMed (Medline), PsychINFO, PILOTS and IBSS. A screening of reference lists identified additional studies. The search was broadened to 'asylum seekers' as very few studies were found on torture survivors specifically.

**Results:** Presently (Oct. 2012) the review is in the stage of analyzing, thus results are preliminary. Currently the identified studies amount to 26. All studies report mental health problems among the asylum seekers and some identify detention itself as a contributing factor to these problems.

**Conclusions:** Detention does pose a risk factor in regard to deteriorating the mental health of asylum seekers. Although torture survivors might be an especially vulnerable group, research is almost non-existent.

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