

*A crime scene management training course conducted by PHR expert Georges Kuzma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

## “Perpetrators see that they will be prosecuted and convicted.”

Over the past four years, Georges Kuzma, police and justice expert consultant with Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and a former investigator for the French and European Police, has trained thousands of doctors, nurses, police officers, lawyers, and judges in East and Central Africa on how to collect and protect forensic evidence of crimes such as rape. But in such resource-constrained areas, the training doesn't center on high-tech equipment. The key to successfully investigating sexual violence cases, says Kuzma, is something much simpler: teaching respect for the survivor.

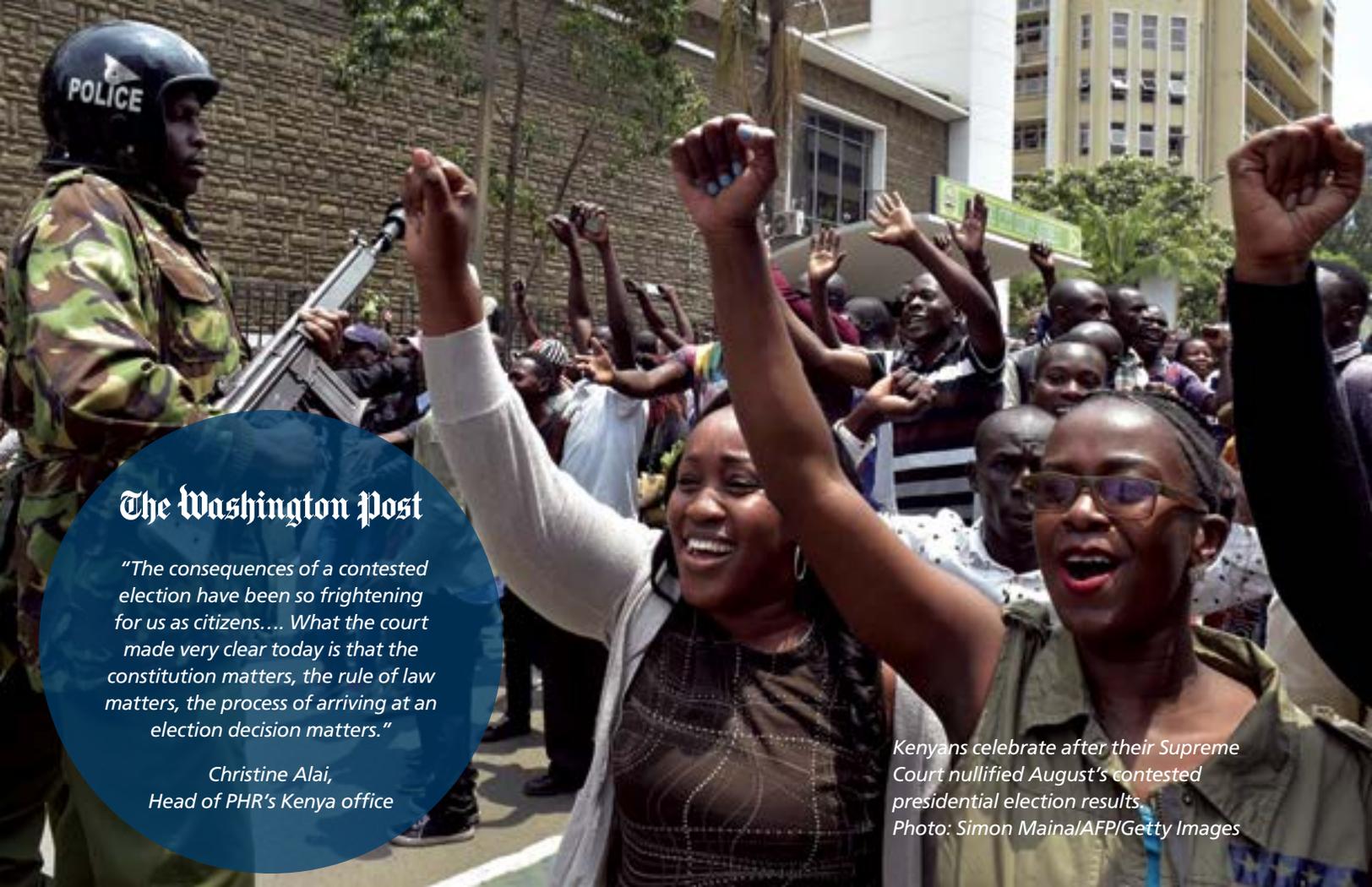
“I found Adela\* lying in the road, severely injured and near death. She had been captured by an armed group when she was only nine or ten, and enslaved, raped, and physically attacked over the course of ten years. She was so traumatized that she was unable to speak.

Before, someone like Adela would have been brought into the police station for a very short interview – a half hour of direct questions. That's all. But many sexual violence cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were being thrown out, because many survivors couldn't give evidence in those circumstances.

PHR trains responders on how to interact with survivors, how to listen to them and gain their trust. I worked on the case of Adela for many months with Gloire Bamporiki and Honorata Uvoya, two investigators we trained from the sexual violence unit of the police force in South Kivu, DRC. At first, Adela couldn't talk to the investigators. But Gloire and Honorata visited her every single week in the hospital. They took the time, they were patient, they listened to her when she was ready to speak. And finally she did.

*continued*

*\*not her real name*



## The Washington Post

*"The consequences of a contested election have been so frightening for us as citizens.... What the court made very clear today is that the constitution matters, the rule of law matters, the process of arriving at an election decision matters."*

*Christine Alai,  
Head of PHR's Kenya office*

*Kenyans celebrate after their Supreme Court nullified August's contested presidential election results.  
Photo: Simon Maina/AFP/Getty Images*

# You Are Empowering the Truth-Tellers

In these trying times, when facts and scientific evidence are under daily assault, PHR's staff and partners are fighting for the truth and wielding the power of medicine and science to defend human rights around the world – thanks to your support.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of seeing our team in action in Kenya, where Christine Alai is leading our work with Kenyan partners to dramatically improve their ability to prosecute sexual violence crimes. A decision is expected shortly in a groundbreaking court case, spearheaded by PHR, local NGOs, and eight survivors, to hold the Kenyan government accountable for widespread sexual violence that followed the 2007 elections.

We know the key to ensuring justice is the robust collection of evidence. Our Kenya team works with hundreds of health, police, legal, and judicial professionals to ensure that, when such violence occurs,

evidence is properly collected, documented, and preserved for use in court.

As we go to press, our colleagues in Kenya are closely watching the aftermath of the landmark decision by Kenya's Supreme Court to nullify the country's contested August presidential elections – a first for Africa and a triumph for truth and the rule of law. But with new elections looming, the potential for human rights violations remains. PHR and our partners are ready.

"We have confidence that with the health professionals and others we've trained, we can gather strong evidence. We know our network can help ensure that if there is violence, the perpetrators will be held accountable," Alai says.

In these pages, we bring you voices, like Alai's, from PHR staff and partners in Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East who are fighting for justice. With your help,



*PHR's Christine Alai and Donna McKay (left and right) with Chief Inspector Mathew Ndogo and Corporal Charles Kilonzo of the Dandora, Kenya police force.*

we are keeping the spotlight on the truth and ensuring that human rights – everywhere – are protected by facts and hard evidence.

Donna McKay  
PHR Executive Director

## “Perpetrators see that they will be prosecuted and convicted.”

continued from cover

I see this kind of big change among the people that we’ve trained, how they interact with and relate to survivors. Now they’re able to be more patient in their investigation. I’ve also had good feedback from prosecutors, who are using the same methods to interview survivors. They’re better able to understand the psychology of survivors, to communicate with them, and to listen to them – and, as a result, they’re better able to protect the survivor once the case gets to court. They can explain why a survivor might not be able to speak, why she might not be able to identify a perpetrator, why she might have taken six months to come forward – and all this helps the case and improves a survivor’s chance of securing justice.

Today, the justice system in South Kivu is much more operational than it was before. We’ve done a lot of education. And perpetrators see that they will be prosecuted and convicted – that they can’t rape with impunity.”



Above: PHR’s Georges Kuzma speaking with members of the South Kivu, DRC police force.

Below: Police investigators and PHR partners Gloire Bamporiki and Honorata Uvoya (left and center) interview a survivor of sexual violence in South Kivu, DRC.

“The key to successfully investigating sexual violence cases is teaching respect for the survivor.”

Georges Kuzma,  
PHR police and justice expert





- Key**
- Central African Republic
  - Democratic Republic of the Congo
  - Kenya

## Empowering African Partners

PHR trainers and our partners in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kenya have empowered nearly 3,000 doctors, lawyers, police, judges, government officials, and community members with the skills and knowledge to combat sexual violence.



## 3,400 Missing

Nearly 3,400 members of Iraq's Yazidi ethnic minority who were abducted in the 2014 genocide perpetrated by ISIS are still missing. Most are women and young girls living in sexual slavery. PHR is bolstering local efforts to document these crimes.

Source: Office of Kidnapped and Rescued Affairs, Kurdistan Region of Iraq

*Above: A 36-year-old Yazidi woman who was abducted and held as a sex slave by ISIS.*

*Photo: Safin Hamed/AFP/Getty Images*



## 1997-2017

20 years ago this fall, Physicians for Human Rights proudly shared the Nobel Peace Prize as a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. More than 80 percent of the world's countries have joined the treaty to ban these weapons. But the work is not over: landmines still maim or kill thousands of people every year.

# “PHR’s Central Asia project is really changing attitudes and beliefs about torture.”

Dr. Rusudan Beriashvili is an expert in forensic medicine with more than 20 years of experience combating torture around the world. A longtime PHR partner, Dr. Beriashvili has trained thousands of people in the Istanbul Protocol, the internationally recognized UN standard for investigation and documentation of torture. She is leading PHR’s project to help governments and civil society across Central Asia implement these standards and create a culture that no longer tolerates torture.

“One of our biggest challenges is defining what torture is. People are just beginning to realize the role of governments in torture, to understand why it is perpetrated, and also the pain and suffering it inflicts. But many people still do not appreciate the psychological impact of torture – the fact that psychology is a powerful science and that psychologists can give effective input into the investigation of torture cases. In lots of cases, sometimes even judges and prosecutors do not have a clear understanding of this.

In Kazakhstan recently, we held a training for prosecutors. There were many young prosecutors, and they started with very skeptical questions and language. But after four days of long and tough discussions, a young prosecutor came to me and said:

‘You know, now I understand not only what you are teaching, I understand that I was working in absolutely the wrong way.’ It was the most important compliment for me. After finishing the training, he started conducting trainings for his own colleagues. He not only gained knowledge, he now delivers knowledge.

In Tajikistan, years ago, the deputy head of the forensic medical center attended our training. He was very negative at the outset. But now, he is writing books about the Istanbul Protocol – and he’s one of the few people in all of Tajikistan producing independent forensic documentation of torture, which helps survivors secure justice. And in Kyrgyzstan, a representative from the state ministry was very skeptical when she first came to our training. But after two or three trainings, her mentality and perspective absolutely changed. She is now leading the work of the ministry of health in implementing the Istanbul Protocol. She is the locomotive of this work, and has become a real agent of change.

The PHR project and the Istanbul Protocol are changing beliefs and changing systems – it’s very powerful. Five years ago, in many settings in Central Asia, it was impossible to utter the word ‘torture’ or to say out loud that torture exists. Now we have governments committing to



*Forensic medicine expert and PHR partner Dr. Rusudan Beriashvili leads a PHR training in Jordan of Syrian physicians.*

the Istanbul Protocol, we have standards for implementation, torture rehabilitation programs, documentation centers, lots of legislative changes, books being published, NGOs working on this area. The network of people who are now involved in documentation and investigation stretches across Central Asia. Just in Kyrgyzstan alone, thousands of people have been trained by PHR or our local trainers. Thanks to the Istanbul Protocol and PHR’s work, the situation in Central Asia regarding torture has completely changed.”



*Dr. Beriashvili meeting with Tajikistan health officials.*

# Breaking the Silence of Torture Survivors: A Psychologist's Critical Role

Across the planet – every day – men, women, and even children are subjected to the psychological and physical horrors of torture. Dr. Sana Hamzeh, an expert consultant on mental health for PHR, has documented more than 70 cases of torture and sexual violence and treated nearly 3,000 survivors through the Lebanon-based Restart Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture, which she co-founded with Executive Director Suzanne Jabbour. Dr. Hamzeh recently joined PHR's project on forensic documentation in Iraq, where she instructed health providers and legal experts on the psychological impact of sexual abuse and torture. Helping survivors talk about their experiences, she says, is critical.

"One torture survivor I worked with told me: 'I can't pray. After being tortured I can't pray.' You know how people kneel in prayer, bending on their knees? It reminded him of when they tortured him. They would force him to bend on the ground, naked. If he raised his head, they would smash it with a bottle.

Another survivor told me he couldn't use the bathroom because the smell of his urine reminded him of when his captors urinated on him in his prison cell.

Torture permanently affects you; it is not a temporary thing that survivors can just forget. It's like a black spot on a white paper, almost impossible not to notice and attend to. Yet, victims of torture are not encouraged to talk about it and they feel very isolated.



Mental health expert and PHR partner Dr. Sana Hamzeh and Dr. Homer Venters, PHR director of programs, at a PHR training in Erbil, Iraq.

*"Torture permanently affects you; it is not a temporary thing that survivors can just forget. It's like a black spot on a white paper. It's almost impossible not to notice and attend to."*

*Dr. Sana Hamzeh  
Mental health expert  
and PHR partner*

As psychotherapists, we need time to break that silence. I document psychological torture, and my role is to find the consistencies between the story of the violence and the results – to prove torture through the symptoms of a survivor. In the case of this man, when he prays, he remembers how he was tortured. He literally can't put his knees on the ground – so there's a high degree of consistency between what he says he experienced and what I document.

Mental health professionals play a key role in revealing this kind of medical and psychological evidence, and, ultimately, such evidence can bolster a legal case. We allow people who have suffered torture to take the first step in learning about their rights and to shift from being victims to being survivors.

My PHR colleagues are pioneers in the field of documentation and evidence-gathering, and working with PHR is a privilege. I feel rewarded documenting cases for survivors and helping them claim their compensation and their rights – it's the highlight of my profession.

Torture puts people in a state between being dead and alive. Transforming the individual's perception from 'broken' to 'beautiful' is what I seek to achieve; I strive to make the person *feel* alive, rather than a person trapped in their own body.

But after 30 years working in this field, I still sometimes pause to ask myself, 'Am I doing enough?'"



Physicians for  
Human Rights

For more than 30 years, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has used science and the uniquely credible voices of medical professionals to document and call attention to severe human rights violations around the world. PHR employs its investigations and expertise to advocate for persecuted health workers and facilities under attack, prevent torture, document mass atrocities, and hold those who violate human rights accountable.



Nobel Peace Prize  
Co-laureate

phr.org

