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<Sample County>
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<Appeal code/
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“Today, we all need to take a stand for the humanitarian values we grew up with. Kindness. Justice. Tolerance.”

<Date 2026>

Dear <Salutation>,

My name is Sabine Nierhoff and for nearly 20 years I've been working for Freedom from Torture – the only organisation in the UK dedicated solely to the rehabilitation of survivors of torture.

As a cause, this charity means a great deal to me, as I know it means to you. Everything you do to help traumatised people recover and build new lives in the UK is profoundly appreciated, especially at this time of rising hatred against refugees.

Today, I'd like you to consider taking the next step in your support by remembering survivors in your Will, after you've looked after your loved ones. You can help to keep values like kindness and tolerance alive for future generations – values that may go all the way back to your childhood, as they do for me.

Growing up in the shadow of the Second World War

Having grown up in West Germany in the 1980s, the horrific reality of Nazi Germany was taught to me from an early age. Even in primary school, I was shown grainy black and white films about concentration camps, which I've never forgotten.

We were taught 'NIE WIEDER', meaning 'NEVER AGAIN.' This was a commitment to remember the Holocaust and to always combat antisemitism and racism in our society. For many Germans of my generation, this phrase and the ongoing need to stand up to hate go very deep. It's who we are.

This was the time of Checkpoint Charlie and the division of Germany into East and West, before the Berlin Wall



Checkpoint Charlie – the name of the best-known crossing point between East Berlin and West Berlin. During the Cold War, people trying to flee East Germany were often shot and killed.

Continued overleaf...

came down in 1989. Do you remember where you were when it happened? I was 14. Huddled around the radio at school, listening to the news with my classmates. We were then all sent home, and saw history being made on TV. This was a time of great hope and a belief in a better future, after so many years of living in the shadow of authoritarianism.

But there's a part of the story you may not know. Just a couple of years later, there were a number of serious attacks on asylum seekers in Rostock and other places in the former East Germany. I don't know if this made the news in the UK. But it was really huge. Suddenly, asylum seekers and the places where they were staying were attacked. It was awful.

For me, the parallels with what's happening today in the UK are striking. I switch on the news and I see people outside so-called asylum seeker hotels, chanting and shouting abuse. And, just like the early 90s, we all have to do something, like taking a stand for kindness and humanity.

Back then, I remember joining a huge protest against this kind of anti-immigrant hate and demanding a greater welcome for refugees. Perhaps you, too, remember the first demonstrations that you went on? Perhaps against war or injustice? There's something about marching together that's incredibly powerful. Ordinary people showing the courage to demand change.

Coming to London to study

I then came to London to do my Master's degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). SOAS was such a great place. Very diverse. People were very politically active. And obviously, I studied human rights!

Even before I finished my Master's. I took a job at the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex, which was at the time chaired by Sir Nigel Rodley, who was then the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. He was also a trustee of the Medical Foundation, which became Freedom from Torture. We worked on a joint project, which was a handbook for health professionals based on the Istanbul Protocol, which had been adopted a few years earlier.

Created in 1999, the Istanbul Protocol was the first set of international guidelines for the medical documentation of torture and its consequences. This was a major victory within human rights – empowering doctors to evaluate and testify on behalf of alleged victims of torture.

But then came 9/11 and the so-called 'War on Terror'. This was the time of Guantanamo Bay and all the abuses there. Looking back, I think this was a terrible turning point – just as we seemed to be going forward, we found ourselves going backwards.

Driven by the fear of terrorism, the US and the UK began to promote the idea that somehow torture works and it's sometimes necessary. As a society we began to lose that crucial moral conviction that torture is always wrong – **another reminder that we must stand up for our values if we want them to survive.**

Working for Freedom from Torture

In my life, I've travelled a great deal working to protect human rights. I've been to Chile and Peru, as well as India. I'll never forget arriving in Chile, where I was working for a



A piece of history – a chunk of the Berlin Wall. Do you remember where you were when it came down?



Inauguration of Ricardo Lagos, 2000 - the first Socialist president of Chile since Salvador Allende. A time of great hope in Chile as the country tried to move beyond the Pinochet regime.



Training session India, 2005 – I worked in the field for one of India's leading human rights organisations and we had a big anti-torture project. We gave talks on the Istanbul Protocol and the UN Convention against Torture.

German development charity, and finding myself swept up into a huge crowd. This was in 2000. Everyone was out in the streets celebrating the first socialist president elected since the end of Pinochet's military dictatorship in 1990.

This was a time of political upheaval and the transition to democracy. It was thrilling to feel that change in the air, just like it felt after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

When I started to work for Freedom from Torture, I was immediately impressed by the incredible commitment of the clinical staff to make torture survivors' lives better. And that's what has inspired me to stay for more than 20 years.

Every day, with my own eyes, I see the direct impact your gifts to Freedom from Torture make on people's lives. I

really can see that tangible human difference you're supporting.

Because of you, survivors change from being withdrawn, almost broken, to becoming more confident, making eye contact with others, smiling, talking, and drawing strength from other survivors. Their slow recovery is the result of you helping to fund a whole network of skilled clinicians, offering physical and psychological therapy, as well as people teaching activities such as gardening, writing and baking, helping survivors heal from the terrible horrors they've endured.

So once you've provided for any family or loved ones in your Will, leaving even a small percentage to Freedom from Torture could make a direct human difference, not just to one survivor but many.

What values will you choose to hand on?

Twenty years on from the so-called 'War on Terror', I really believe that many of the values that our generation took for granted – growing up after the Second World War – are now under threat.

Today, I feel like I can see the beginnings of authoritarianism, both here and across Europe. I see kindness becoming cruelty or indifference. Belief in universal human rights becoming a narrow form of nationalism. Tolerance becoming fear of outsiders.

Perhaps what worries me most of all is the lack of optimism. I see that in my three children, who seem much less optimistic about the future than I was at their age. They've never experienced such a breakthrough moment as the Berlin Wall coming down – when history changes overnight – so they don't necessarily believe the future will be better, or fairer, or kinder. I'm honestly scared about their future.

What society do we want to build? If we want to see a strong, proudly diverse culture that stands up for human rights and against torture, it won't happen automatically. We have to create it. We have to pass on our humanitarian values to future generations. That's why I'd like you to consider leaving a gift in your Will to Freedom from Torture today.

Your values have the power to impact the lives of others, long into the future – people like Mirella whose story you can read overleaf. And please update us with your wishes using the form enclosed, so we can show our sincere appreciation for you standing up for torture survivors.

If you would like to consider this next step in your support or have any other questions, I would love to hear from you. Just email me at SNierhoff@freedomfromtorture.org or call me on 020 7697 7788.

With my best wishes,

Sabine Nierhoff
Legacy Engagement Manager
Freedom from Torture

P.S. Your legacy could change the lives of torture survivors for years to come.

Mirella's story moves me because my best friend at school was Bosnian, and I remember how she welcomed refugees to her home. Together, with my school, we sent aid to people caught-up in that terrible war.

"I have gone through hell and back in the most horrible ways you could ever imagine. Extreme torture and abuse."

Mirella

During the Bosnian war in the 1990s, Mirella was held captive in a concentration camp with her family. She experienced horror every single day, until she was rescued by the UN. The first city she arrived in was bombarded that same night, so she had to be moved to another city before boarding a plane to the UK.

Mirella arrived in a reception centre in Scotland alongside people she recognised from the concentration camp.

"It was a very strange time", she recalls. "Initially you feel very joyous because you've been saved. You see that those who struggled alongside you in those camps are alive. But then joy came with fear. Fear was like a shadow that was following us wherever we went."

When Mirella's husband sadly passed away, she knew it was time to look after herself. "I lost my role in the family as a wife and as a carer. I had that feeling that something wasn't right with me, that I ought to seek help."



That realisation led Mirella to Freedom from Torture. Opening up in therapy about her trauma seemed impossible: "I have gone through hell and back in the most horrible ways you could ever imagine. Extreme torture and abuse. Women like me are scarred for life. We shrink ourselves and we are holding fear because of what happened."

Thankfully, Mirella managed to overcome this feeling because she felt safe with her therapist and her interpreter. "I was in a very dark tunnel. Thanks to them, I could see a light. I knew there was an exit out of the tunnel."

Thanks to gifts in Wills, more people like Mirella will be able to access life-changing therapy. More people will be able to heal.

Are you considering leaving a gift in your Will? Please let us know your intentions by using the form enclosed. Thank you.