

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate IRCT on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. In these past 25 years, IRCT has demonstrated a relentless pursuit of its goals: the elimination of torture and attendance to the needs of its victims and their families. It does not seem so long ago when we started with a handful of individuals and organizations who felt the urgent need to engage in the work against torture through various means and methodologies without benefit of external support. IRCT can now boast of 146 members and programs across no less than 70 countries composing a formidable network that has systematized and enhanced sustainability for the work.

I consider myself very privileged in being part of this process of organizational growth. As a founding council member, as a regional vice-president and then during my short stint as head of the Research and Medical Unit I was given the opportunity to initiate programs and establish centers in many cutting edge areas of the world where human rights was nearly unheard of. As regional vice president I had the honor of coordinating training activities in Malaysia, Indonesia, China, India, Nepal, and even Burma. In all these, I felt the support of the IRCT leadership. I remain forever grateful for the experiences these afforded me.

As a newly trained psychiatrist during the Martial Law years in my country I joined a group of 15 health professionals and together we formed the Medical Action Group. We were organized by human rights lawyers who saw the indispensable role of health professionals in their courageous battle against human rights abuses during the Marcos regime. One memorable experience of the group was coordinating the clandestine showing of the film, *Your Neighbor's Son*, a documentary on the nature of torture and the making of a torturer. The film was brought in by Dr. Gorm Wagner and his wife, Helle, notwithstanding the danger they were putting themselves in. Another experience was running a seminar workshop on torture for lawyers and health professionals, again under a clandestine setting within our University campus with Dr. Inge Genefke and her staff psychologist bravely conducting the event in the middle of student barricades and threats of a military raid. These experiences opened our eyes to the global nature of torture and the urgent need to join the movement against impunity. It inspired us to place greater focus and priority to anti-torture work leading to the creation of the Philippine Action Against Torture or PACT in 1985.

With the establishment of IRCT our efforts were given not only logistical

support but most importantly, the protection we badly needed. Soon the Medical Action Group and PACT were able to move from being a low key clandestine operation to an internationally recognized NGO with global connections and legitimization. In their passion and fearlessness, Dr. Inge Genefke and IRCT colleagues were certainly contagious.

I also thank IRCT for its valuable contribution to my professional growth as a mental health professional with an expertise in the area of trauma therapy. This is now my unique identity as a practicing psychiatrist which has allowed me to extend my services involving various other forms of trauma such as rape, domestic violence, massacres, armed conflict and even natural disasters.

Unforgettable are the many interesting and heartening lessons learned though my participation in IRCT global activities. One single experience stands out and that is our five year engagement in research and rehabilitation work in East Timor under the tutelage and supervision of then Secretary General Jens Modvig.

Through all these experiences there were certainly moments of excitement and satisfaction, bravery and fear as well as frustration and disappointment. Together, all these, has provided me a rich and meaningful life.

The fight is far from over for most of us. In the Philippines, impunity continues to reign. Two hundred twenty seven cases of torture have been documented for this year alone. Sixteen of them were tortured under the current government which assumed power only June of this year. Forty – three health workers continue to languish in a military detention camp in spite of clear evidence of illegal arrest and torture. According to Amnesty International the Philippine military and police boasts that almost their entire forces have undergone human rights education. However, this claim seem lost in practice. In spite of an Anti-Torture Law being passed in 2009 government has yet to prosecute anyone under the law.

I pray for more power, more resources and success for IRCT endeavors under the leadership of President Muhamid Sheik Nurein Said, Secretary General Brita Sydhoff and the current Council.

Thank you so much for this entirely unexpected award. I receive it with pride as well as humility for it was not for any bravery nor heroism that we had done the work. It was to have mastery over our sense of alienation, powerlessness and disgust over the prevailing situation. In other words, we did the work in order to save our sanity.

I also ask for your prayers and positive energy as I continue to wage another battle, this time, for my health.

Thank you and God bless!

