

# Statement on the death Dr. Bent Sørensen, Copenhagen, pioneer of torture rehabilitation

*One of the pioneers and elders of the torture rehabilitation movement, Professor Bent Sørensen MD, DMSc, passed away 30 July 2017 in Copenhagen, Denmark, age 93*

COPENHAGEN, CAPITAL, DENMARK, August 1, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims](#), Copenhagen, Denmark, today issued the following statement:



One of the pioneers and elders of the torture rehabilitation movement, Professor Bent Sørensen MD, DMSc, passed away 30 July 2017 in Copenhagen, age 93.

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With his loss, the torture rehabilitation movement has lost one of its giants. In these turbulent times, we will honour his memory by redoubling our efforts to Support Life After Torture.”

*International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims*

Professor Sørensen, a world renowned expert in burns and plastic surgery, dedicated the last four decades of his life to furthering the rights of torture victims around the world and in Denmark. He will be remembered for his ability to put medical expertise to use in principled and unwavering support of those who suffered the most horrific attacks on human dignity, and for his kind and constructive approach to everyone he met.

Following his appointment as professor of surgery at the University of Copenhagen in 1976, he became increasingly engaged in the work at the Rehabilitation and Research Center for Torture Victims (RCT, which later became the Danish Institute Against Torture, Dignity). There, support was

provided to victims -primarily from Latin American dictatorships- to rebuild their lives after severe physical and psychological torture. In 1984, he was elected President of RCT and, along with his wife Dr Inge Genefke, became a leading figure in the global community that today forms the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), a network of over 150 centres that every year provide rehabilitation to more than 100.000 torture victims in 75 countries.

In addition to his activism, Professor Sørensen actively contributed to the building of regional and global structures to eradicate torture and ensure rehabilitation for its victims. In 1987, he was elected Member of the [United Nations Committee against Torture](#) and in 1989 of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. In both bodies, he formed part of the initial membership and through more than a decade of tireless work helped shape them into strong global champions for torture victims. In the UN Committee against Torture, Professor Sørensen is recognized for always focusing on the needs of victims, and he would consistently question States on what they were doing to ensure

rehabilitation support for them.

He was known for his firm and disarming approach to any challenge. About his role in the UN Committee dominated by lawyers, he once observed: "Our first meeting took place in April 1988. The CAT members mostly consisted of lawyers, but also of one minister, one journalist, and of me, the only medical doctor. I remember the dinner offered by the UN on the eve of the meeting. The other nine members looked at me and said: "What are you doing here? We are dealing with torture". I answered briefly in the same way: "What are you doing here? We are dealing with torture". In this manner, Professor Sørensen always underlined the indispensable contribution that the medical discipline makes to the global struggle against torture due to its deep understanding of the devastating effects of torture on the body and the mind of the victim, and their families and communities. In this way he helped keep alive the spirit of the [Amnesty International](#) medical groups that first started supporting torture victims in the early 1970s.

Drs Sørensen and Genefke continued to implement this approach in their work of the Anti-Torture Support Foundation, which they founded after retiring from the IRCT and from where they continued to support the fight against torture and around the world.

As much as he was a globalist, his attention never left his native country, Denmark. Until his death, he continued to insist that global principles must be upheld anywhere in any circumstance. He continuously criticized the Danish Government for its engagement in the war in Iraq, he filed complaints to the UN Committee against Torture against the treatment of Iraqi torture victims seeking asylum in Denmark and supported victims of torture by Danish soldiers in Iraq to seek reparations in the Danish courts. Less than one month before his death, Professor Sørensen co-wrote an op-ed accusing the Danish Government of inaction on recent discoveries of torture against Iraqi detainees.

Professor Sørensen is survived by his wife, Dr Inge Genefke.

With his loss, the torture rehabilitation movement has lost one of its giants. In these turbulent times, we will honour his memory by redoubling our efforts to Support Life After Torture.

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