



## Caring for Traumatized Children and Young People in Gaza – We Stand With Them

Palestinian children and young people face long-standing, continuous traumatic stress, which has worsened over the past two years, and which leads to transgenerational burden on their families and communities. The vast majority of them live in contexts shaped by prolonged insecurity, repeated exposure to war-related violence, and the witnessed loss of family members or caregivers. Everyday life is marked by uncertainty, safety at risk, and restricted access to basic services such as food, education, healthcare, adequate housing or shelters.

Children and adolescents face challenges that most children in other parts of the world do not experience. Chronic fear and helplessness as well as social

pain and limited resources create a multidimensional burden that affects nearly all areas of their lives. These conditions have a significant negative impact on children's physical health, emotional well-being, learning opportunities, and overall development, with long-term consequences on individual and community levels.

Decades of political instability and recurring hostilities have resulted in persistent insecurity for children in Gaza and the West Bank. According to UNICEF, a large proportion of children in Gaza live now below the poverty line. In the Westbank, restrictions on movement, including checkpoints and barriers, combined with repeated episodes of violence, contribute to high levels of

stress, fear, and psychosocial distress among children and young people.

Despite these difficult circumstances, dedicated professionals and community members listen to children, acknowledge their experiences, and respond to their needs. They provide support, protection, and opportunities for healing, aiming to strengthen resilience and promote children's rights, dignity, and well-being. From this commitment, NET Palestine – *NETPAL* was born.

### About Us – Who Stands Behind NETPAL

*NETPAL* is a joint project carried out by Palestinian professionals together with a team from vivo international, in close-cooperation with local communities.

## Members of vivo international in NETPAL

... are working together to develop a curriculum adapted to the local context for Palestinian professionals, in order to make stepped-mental health care and trauma-focused counseling and therapy widely accessible in Gaza, the West Bank, and among displaced communities in Egypt in collaboration with local partner organizations and NGOs dedicated to medical, psychosocial, and humanitarian support for Palestinian children.



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Child and Adoles-  
cent Psychiatrist &  
Psychotherapist, HEAL  
Palestine Mental  
Health Advisory Board

## Together, we rebuild what was broken!

In close collaboration with Palestinian communities, we support processes of trauma rehabilitation, grounded in the connection, hope, and solidarity we share.

**We identify** community members who can take part in NETPAL and continue

the work locally. These local professionals are trained by us in a child-appropriate form of trauma therapy KIDNET (Narrative Exposure Therapy for children and adolescents) and are continuously supported by experienced therapists throughout the project.

**NETPAL is committed to breaking the cycle of trauma and violence.** Through urgently needed Narrative Trauma

Work, which includes a testimonial component, we empower Palestinian children to break the silence, find their voice and be heard for a future in freedom and dignity. ■

Further information and  
donations:  
[www.netpalestine.org](http://www.netpalestine.org)



معاً، سنعيد بناء ما تم تدميره!  
من خلال العمل عن كثب مع المجتمعات الفلسطينية، ندعم عمليات التعافي  
من الصدمات، مدعومين بعلاقاتنا المشتركة وأملنا وتضامننا

## About the Photographer

Salama Younis is a 26-year-old journalist and photographer from Gaza City. He has been deeply affected by the war himself. Despite the danger to his own life and the lives of his loved ones, he continues to work throughout the war to document and share the reality on the ground in Gaza.



# vivo Teams Share How They Bring the vivo Mission and Vision to Life in 2025

At the end of 2025, several members of vivo's global team shared stories about how they turned the NGO's mission and vision into action. Across countries and communities, members reflected on moments when they supported people affected by trauma, strengthened local resources, and promoted human rights and dignity. These reflections capture

the dedication, creativity, and compassion of vivo's team as they bring healing and hope to individuals, families, and communities worldwide.

Team members contributed short descriptions showing how they embody vivo's mission in their daily work. Through these shared experiences, the collective impact of vivo's work

becomes visible: preventing and overcoming traumatic stress, empowering communities, and fostering peaceful, human-rights-based ways of living.

vivo's vision continues to guide and inspire the team:

**'For a world  
without violence.'**



Dr. Jessica Sommer

Germany/Berlin

## STEPS - Strong Together Psychologically

Working as a supervisor for the project "Steps" (Strong Together Psychologically) at the Berlin Psychological University, **Dr. Jessica Sommer** works to bring vivo's mission and vision to life by supervising trainee psychological psychotherapists who provide support to refugees in Berlin. ■



Dr. Katalin Dohrmann

Germany/Konstanz

## Project Fearless ('Furchtlos')

Led by Katalin Dohrmann and guided by the shared vision of all three—Maggie Schauer, **Dr. Katalin Dohrmann**, and Thomas Elbert—the Furchtlos project prepares psychotherapists in training to provide trauma-focused care for refugees—already during their education. Early exposure helps future therapists gain experience working with people from diverse cultures, understand complex trauma, and build confidence in delivering interpreter-supported therapy. Since 2020, hundreds of refugees have benefited from this closely supervised support, while over 500 the-



Dr. Flurina Potter

rapists have been trained in Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET). The project also raises awareness about trauma, refugees, and mental health through media, conferences, and publications, with **Dr. Flurina Potter** playing a particularly active role. Targeted and effective professional training ensures that refugees receive the specialized care they need, while also preparing the next generation of therapists to address this critical challenge—one that has a significant impact on the host society. An individual's ability to integrate and lead a fulfilling life depends fundamentally on their mental health and overall functioning and quality of life. ■





Iván Arango, MD, MSc

Mexico

## Visibilizing Suffering, Restoring Dignity

vivo's vision deserves attention and commitment in every community. Latin American countries such as Mexico suffer from various forms of violence that severely impact the mental health of the population. The introduction of NET, through **Iván Arango, MD, MSc** and in vivo's spirit, at the National Institute of Psychiatry – visibilizes the need for screening and treating trauma-related disorders. It offers not only the possi-



Nathalie Görtz, B.Sc.

bility of decreasing the burden of suffering, but also of raising our voices to speak about caring for human dignity.

**Nathalie Görtz, B.Sc.**, newly elected to the vivo board as treasurer, joined Iván in Mexico City for a clinical internship under his supervision, during which she conducted a case series on NET cases treated at the institute. The forthcoming case series highlights the cultural adaptation and feasibility of NET in Mexico, and the difficulties encountered in implementing the therapy. ■



Amani Chibashimba, LL.M

Djibouti & DR Congo

## Community based trauma-intervention system

**Amani Chibashimba, LL.M** is spearheading a project in Djibouti that highlights the urgent need for both individual therapy (NET) and NETfacts at a community level. He provides NET trainings and guidance on supporting traumatized individuals, while also training community sensitizers and supporting them as they bring these skills into the field. The project has strengthened local capacity through a training-of-trainers program, addressing the high levels of violence and harsh conditions faced by women and children in the community. ■

Germany/Bielefeld

## Interventions Targeting Trauma-Induced Social Pain and Devaluation

**Prof. Dr. Frank Neuner**'s current work focuses on groups whose trauma has long been overlooked, including people affected by emotional abuse, bullying, discrimination, and structural vulnerability. He aims to understand how these forms of social devaluation shape mental health and to develop interventions that foster agency, dignity, and lasting psychological health. Drawing on both research and clinical practice,



Prof. Dr. Frank Neuner

he is committed to trauma-focused interventions that remain effective even when safety and justice cannot be assumed. His mission is to ensure that marginalized voices are heard and that autobiographical memory can be rebuilt with respect and clarity. ■



Confident women, having completed the trainer program, are ready to go into the field and support their communities.



Dr. Anke Köbach

Germany & Switzerland & Brazil

## From Global Projects to Forensic Practice

Her engagement with *vivo* informs **Dr. Anke Köbach**'s everyday activities as a researcher and psychologist. In recent years, she has participated in several *vivo* projects, including NETfacts in Democratic Republic of the Congo, in NETBrasil and the peer counselling project 'BW schützt!' in Germany. A highlight this year has been witnessing multidisciplinary expert teams emerge within these projects, carrying the knowledge forward and contributing to broader societal recognition of *vivo*'s mission. Anke is particularly committed to making digital solutions accessible for trauma practitioners, enabling them to work more efficiently and implement NET family interventions with greater ease. The experience and knowledge she has gained through *vivo* have become central for Anke in forensic settings, where trauma-related symptoms often receive little attention. Time and again, she observes that trauma-focused interventions (FORNET for perpetrators) create effective and powerful pathways in forensic psychiatry by acknowledging an individual's life story and directly addressing traumatic experiences. Her scientific highlight of the year can be read here: [www.scielo.org/article/csp/2025.v41n9/e00199124/](https://www.scielo.org/article/csp/2025.v41n9/e00199124/)

Malaysia & USA

## Building Trauma Therapy Capacity in Malaysia

Together with colleagues in Minnesota, United States, **Christopher Mehus, PhD** has been providing trauma treatment training to mental health clinicians in Malaysia. A 30-hour online training has been delivered to two groups of professionals, with a third training class scheduled for 2026. The training covered Narrative Exposure Therapy as well as topics like the emotional impact of working with trauma survivors, how to evaluate patients, dealing with ethical stress in challenging situations, and



Christopher Mehus, PhD

pharmacology. Ongoing consultation and case reviews support clinicians in applying their new skills. In August 2025, a week-long advanced training was conducted in Malaysia for clinicians from the first two training rounds who demonstrated proficiency in trauma therapy. A select group of trainees will co-facilitate the upcoming learning cohort to build sustainable in-country capacity.

Germany/Konstanz

## Nurturing Paths to Recovery through Narrative Trauma-Work (NAT)

**Dr. Johanna Sill**, a central clinical figure in the "BW schützt!" project at the University of Konstanz, is dedicated to helping people regain hope and strength after life's challenges—through empathy, community, and stepped-care approaches that honor each person's unique path. *Together, we cultivate spaces where healing, dignity, and belonging can flourish.*

### Leadership in Trauma Support

With her extensive clinical knowledge, **Prof. Dr. Brigitte Rockstroh** provides mentorship for peer counselors in trauma support and plays a leading role in the 'BW schützt!' project ('Baden-



Dr. Johanna Sill

Württemberg protects!'), helping to implement and carry out Narrative Trauma Work (NAT). The project focuses on the early and precise identification of psychological distress, provides stepped support tailored to the intensity of refugees' suffering, and offers counselling delivered by peers with a migration background.

[www.polver.uni-konstanz.de/en/hoeffler/research-projects-2/translate-to-englisch-bw-schuetzt/](https://www.polver.uni-konstanz.de/en/hoeffler/research-projects-2/translate-to-englisch-bw-schuetzt/)



Dr. Fernanda Serpeloni

Brazil

## FORNET & Restorative Justice for Women in a Brazilian Prison

The Women Deprived of Their Liberty project coordinated by Fernanda Serpeloni in Curitiba, Brazil, supports the mental health of women in closed-regime prisons who have experienced high levels of trauma and violence. Using FORTNET (Forensic Offender Rehabilitation Narrative Exposure Therapy), the initiative helps women process traumatic experiences and rebuild their personal narratives. The project combines individual therapy with group peacebuilding circles led by trained incarcerated women, supported by therapists specialized in FORTNET, restorative justice, and human rights. Developed in collaboration with the Restorative Justice Program, it focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration, aiming to reduce recidivism and promote safer, more humane communities. Participants' anonymized stories have inspired a short film combining music, dance, and testimonies to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and foster acceptance for women reentering society. ■

[www.netbrasil.org](http://www.netbrasil.org)



Dr. Danie Meyer

Germany/Cologne & USA

## A Network for Trauma Practitioners – NETCollect

NETCollect was co-founded by vivo members **Dr. Danie Meyer** and **Jonathan Orr, PhD** in 2022 as a grassroots, intervisionary space for trauma practitioners worldwide. Research projects



Jonathan Orr, PhD

address transgenerational trauma in the Yurok tribe, perinatal populations in the U.S. (PNET) and adolescent experiences of bullying in Romania (TNET: theatre + NET). NETCollect is currently collaborating with Village Al Najat to establish a school for Psychotraumatology in Lebanon. ■

[www.netcollect.org](http://www.netcollect.org)



## Reflections on Trauma Work and Personal Practice

During her scientific work with vivo, **Dr. Maria Roth** met people affected by atrocities and war, experiences that shaped her deeply. She was inspired by their courage in therapy and strength in looking toward the future. Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), a core element of vivo, motivated her from

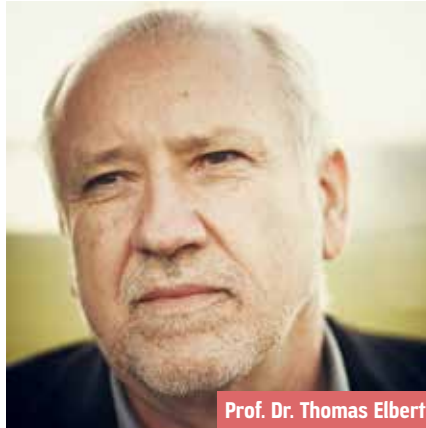
the start; its mission to generate knowledge that helps people worldwide continues to drive her interest. NET can be successfully applied even by non-psychologists and also serves to document human rights violations. Art has allowed Maria to express her knowledge and inner world. She adapted an article on 'appetitive aggression' into a stop-motion film and presented NET on stage in a theater production, while her paintings and drawings bring the personalities of those she has met to life. She has also learned the importance of self-care in psychology. ■



Italy

## Unraveling the Causes of Human Violence Through Trauma Work

Working with survivors of interpersonal and organized violence, **Prof. Dr. Thomas Elbert** found that such encounters shake the very assumptions we hold about the world. They force us to confront a difficult question: what drives people – especially men – to commit such unimaginable acts of aggression and violence? Thomas is convinced that through rigorous research and clinical



Prof. Dr. Thomas Elbert

practice, we can gradually deepen our understanding of these underlying forces, and that this etiological knowledge is already helping us advance both prevention and treatment. ■



Susanne Axelsson, MA

Sweden

## Barrikad – Theatre, Storytelling, and Healing

In collaboration with the Swedish foundation Vårsta Diakoni, vivo member and current president of our NGO,

**Susanne Axelsson, MA** organized the play Barrikad in Umeå. Using NETfacts, the performance tells the stories of young women living in Sweden who have both—experienced and used—violence.

The play explores healing and collective reckoning—pain, anger, connection, causing harm, and mourning. Here, “I” becomes “We,” turning individual experiences into a shared human story. The manuscript was published, and the play reached a wider audience through a fundraising event in Sweden as well as online. ■



**NETfacts** is a trauma-memory-informed health system combining individual Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) with community interventions to address mental and social wounds of violence. Individuals narrate their life story chronologically with a therapist, focusing on the most significant emotional events. These testimonies help the community acknowledge a shared history, reduce stigma and avoidance, and foster understanding, empathy, and the interruption of cycles of violence.



Kathleen McBride, MSW

Australia

## Embedding NET in Australian Trauma Services

When survivors of torture and trauma reach the relative safety of Australia many can experience even more strongly the terror of the past. Likewise, many people in the wider Australian community remain haunted by childhood trauma, family violence, sexual abuse and discrimination.

**Kathleen McBride, MSW** is a NET therapist and trainer with a private practice based in Melbourne and work remotely for QPASTT (Qld Programme of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma) in Brisbane. Counselling clients have often disclosed they have never told anyone what they have experienced and carried a deep sense of shame and guilt. She keeps being inspired by the real healing NET offers so people truly recover, grow and flourish.

Since 2016 Kathleen has been committed to making NET accessible to the Australian community through staff training and supervision with Australia wide mainstream and refugee specific organisations. In 2026 she will be presenting at the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma “Embedding NET in a FASSTT agency context – a peer led model.” ■

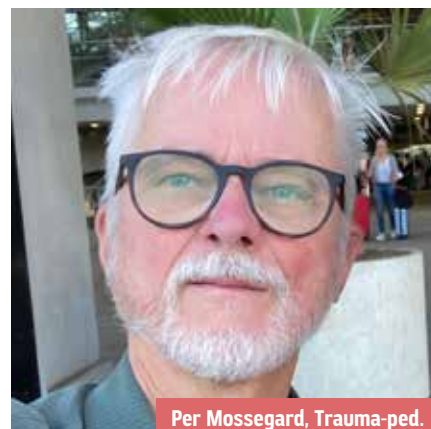
Sweden

## Bringing Science and experiences into training

Healing and preventing trauma has always been a driving force for **Per Mossegard, Trauma-ped**. First as an Intensive Care nurse, later working at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency with Catastrophe Medicine and Peer Support, at the Church of Sweden National Crisis Center with education and training of personnel, also abroad, and in the building of the trauma clinic at the founda-

tion Vårsta Diaconal Centre. Interested in brain and memory science, Per was very pleased to find the NET family and method and to finally see that research and knowledge made the map clear and coherent. As he had been working with education and training of paramedics and firefighters for 35 years, it was a pure pleasure to bring science into the method.

Together with colleagues, Per built a training model for therapists and others in the NET method. A collaboration was established with psychiatric care, along-



Per Mossegard, Trauma-ped.

side regional and national organizations, to support people traumatized by domestic violence and refugees during the asylum process. ■

Finland

## At the Frontlines of Humanity and Justice

Collaboration—both nationally and internationally—is essential for addressing the complex challenges that affect people's lives around the world. Throughout his work with the Red Cross Movement, and in his roles as a clinician and researcher, **Ferdinand Garoff, PhD** has dedicated himself to alleviating suffering caused by crisis and trauma. Ferdinand is the past President of 'Finn-

ish Psychologists for Social Responsibility' and member of the board of the 'Finnish Psychotrauma Association'. He has served as a psychosocial expert for both the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Psychosocial Centre. His career has given him the privilege of working with people at their most vulnerable and of collaborating with colleagues who share a commitment to social justice and human dignity. Ferdinand helped introduce Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) to Finland together with



Ferdinand Garoff, PhD

Kirsi Peltonen and has been actively involved in advancing research in the field of trauma and psychosocial support. ■

Northern Uganda

## Strengthening Local Therapeutic Capacity

Drawing on more than two decades of experience and shared learning, the trauma counselors at vivo's 'outpatient clinic for survivors of violence and trauma' in Gulu, Uganda, have become leading voices in identifying gaps in mental health services within their communities. They know precisely which additional skills they need—both to support individual healing and to help prevent violence, particularly

intimate partner and gender-based violence. Based on the counselors' own assessments, **Dr. Verena Ertl** together with vivo colleagues **Anett Pfeiffer Tumusiime, MA** and **Dr. Ulrike Amann**, regularly lead intervention trainings aimed at adapting evidence-based approaches to the community's needs in close collaboration with the counseling team. The counselors now not only deliver NET and FORNET, but also offer anger-management training, run group-based interventions to reduce alcohol consumption, and support



Dr. Verena Ertl

individuals experiencing symptoms of prolonged grief. Any new intervention is carefully monitored for feasibility and safety and is evaluated scientifically. ■



# Pathways to healing: When you truly listen to me, I come into being

For decades, Dr. Elisabeth Kaiser has been committed to the recovery of the most vulnerable – including refugees, former child soldiers, survivors of violence, neglect and torture.

Under her guidance, Narrative Trauma Work (NAT) has been developed and manualized\* into a practice-oriented approach that supports trauma-focused counseling for social-cultural peers as well as professionals working across diverse social and health sectors. Her work has contributed to shaping NAT into an accessible framework that helps practitioners address the needs of individuals whose traumatic experiences are often overlooked. A good reason to speak to Elisabeth Kaiser:

**DANA:** Elisabeth, why Narrative Trauma Work?

**ELISABETH:** To break the cycle of violence within families and society, it takes all of us. The need for assistance is so vast worldwide that we can no longer rely on experts alone. NAT aims to translate the psychotherapeutic method ‘Narrative Exposure Therapy’ (NET) into small, practice-oriented steps, so that it can serve as a tool for prevention and empowerment. NAT helps people recognize the consequences of life-threatening experiences, strengthens their mental health, and prevents the development and manifestation of

psychological and physical disorders. My approach: to teach an effective health tool, in a clear, step-by-step methodology, so that people can start to support each other.

The NAT manual is tailored for a diverse community of professionally trained lay-counselors: for example social workers, teachers, nurses, and above all social-cultural peers – for instance, migrants who support asylum seekers or former inmates who counsel those still incarcerated. The handbook is simple and clearly structured, with vivid metaphors and graphics, and can be applied and taught directly. An initial health screening, using a traffic-light system, helps direct clients to the appropriate level of care: ‘yellow’ indicates NAT intervention, while ‘red’ calls for referral to psychotherapists qualified to provide NET.

**DANA:** What distinguishes NAT from NET?

**ELISABETH:** NET clinically treats already manifest trauma-related disorders; NAT is preventive and targets severely burdened individuals. NAT’s narrative biography work both processes and releases traumatic experiences (‘stones’) while at the same time strengthening resilience by accessing positive events (‘flowers’). The goal is to restore everyday functioning, activate resources, and improve quality of life –



Dr. Elisabeth Kaiser

to ,unpack‘ the heavy backpack.

**DANA:** How does the exploration of life events unfold?

**ELISABETH:** From the fourth session onward, the so-called ,Narrative Exploration sessions‘ begin: stressful life experiences are talked through step by step, documented, and reflected upon. The NAT counsellor has a practical toolkit at hand, such as the ‘Wheel of Narration’, the ‘Funnel of Time’, ‘Little Peter’. Through storytelling – a universal human practice - the affected person experiences empathic, non-avoidant acceptance by a human fellow being.

**DANA:** What impact does this intervention have?

**ELISABETH:** NAT acts as a preventive measure against the breakdown of resilience, thereby helping to reduce the risk of psychological disorders. Even a few processed life events can bring noticeable relief. Individuals understand their burdens better, gain a sense of agency, and experience lasting functionality. NAT also reduces stigma around mental health issues by demonstrating that psychological distress is an expected reaction to stressful experiences.

**DANA:** And what about costs?

**ELISABETH:** The program is low-threshold and tiered. Ideally NAT counsellors are members of the same community as their clients. NAT can relieve social systems because it enables individuals to reclaim opportunities in work and education. This has been especially evident in integration processes: emotionally supportive Narrative Exploration sessions facilitate social participation and accelerate inclusion – a lifelong benefit for the survivor and a substantial reduction in resource burden on health and social service systems. ■



Dr. Elisabeth Kaiser spending her lunch break with local children during project work in Kabul, Afghanistan, nearly 20 years ago, while supporting the establishment of 15 counselling centres with vivo international.

**About the interviewer:** Dr Dana Bichescu-Burian is a licensed psychotherapist, clinical consultant, lecturer, and supervisor. With many years of experience in psychotherapeutic and psychiatric practice, she supports people in challenging life situations and is also engaged in research aimed at creating a fairer and more accessible healthcare system.

\* Kaiser E., Dohrmann K., Rockstroh B., Schauer M., Elbert T. (2026): **Praxishandbuch Narrative Trauma-Arbeit (NAT). Selbstwirksamkeit durch Biographiearbeit.** Currently being translated into English and Arabic language

## Academic life of Elisabeth Kaiser

Dr. Elisabeth Kaiser, M.A./MPH studied education and psychology at LMU Munich Germany. An academic scholarship allowed her to subsequently complete a Master's in Global Health with distinction at Yale University School of Medicine. She then worked with UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNAIDS, and WHO in projects focused on eliminating violence against women and children,

children in war, and human-rights-based development work across many African and Asian countries. Since 2001 she has been actively involved with vivo international as a founding and project team member. In 2008 she earned a PhD in Clinical Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience from the University of Konstanz. Elisabeth is a lecturer at the University of Konstanz, works at various

psychotherapy training institutes in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and is internationally active as a project specialist, psychotherapist, trainer and supervisor for NET, FORNET, KIDNET, NETfacts, MedNET and originator of NAT (Narrative Trauma Work). She is a co-founder of NET Institute. ■

[www.net-institute.org](http://www.net-institute.org)

[www.vivo.org](http://www.vivo.org)



**vivo international e.V.** is a non-profit organization committed to supporting victims of traumatic life experiences in civil society as well as in the context of war, flight, torture and human rights violations.

**Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)** was developed by vivo founding members Frank Neuner, Maggie Schauer and Thomas Elbert. NET is used worldwide for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress.



Donations



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