



UNIVERSITY
of York

CAHRnews

The Centre for Applied Human Rights Newsletter

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Paul Gready, Jestina Mukoko and Michel Forst speak at the 10th anniversary celebration talk.

Dear Friends,

2018 has been a busy year so far here at the Centre for Applied Human Rights! In January, the Centre celebrated its 10th Anniversary with a week of events and activities to mark this milestone. In a public event on 24th January, Michel Forst, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and Jestina Mukoko, prominent human rights defender, director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project and former fellow at CAHR spoke about the current challenges faced by human rights defenders and the significance of CAHR's activities in this context.

This newsletter provides information about the exciting events organised to celebrate CAHR's 10th Anniversary, the experiences of the human rights defenders who participated in our Protective Fellowship Scheme in 2017/18, activities organised in the context of the Human Rights Defender Hub, York: Human Rights City, and updates about other current research projects.

As always, we should like to express our deepest gratitude for all your support!

The CAHR Team

CAHR 10th Anniversary

Celebrating 10 years of human rights work at York

Many of the staff who have worked at the Centre for Applied Human Rights over the past 10 years were attracted by the probably once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create something new. While many other human rights centres exist in the UK and beyond, we had something different to work with – a Protective Fellowship Scheme for human rights defenders at risk. Our Fellowship Scheme is one of the largest in Europe, hosting up to 10 Fellows a year, and is also one of the few that is open to anyone working on any human rights issue from anywhere.

At the start we were making things up as we went along – there was no template to follow and no tool kit for reassurance. Universities hosted academics at risk; NGOs usually supported frontline activists. We broke the mould. Staff at the Centre have adapted and refined what we offer, relentlessly seeking improvements. Our scheme is now regularly consulted by others interested in setting up similar programmes. I am immensely proud of this achievement, and commend our staff and wider support systems, such as the Friends of the Defenders within the city of York and beyond.

In 2016 we launched the Human Rights Defender Hub integrating the Fellowship Scheme and our research and training with human rights defenders. The Open Society Foundations supports this initiative, recognising the Centre as a ‘thought leader’ on the issue of protection. In 2016 we also secured three of the University’s first research grants under a new interdisciplinary Global Challenges Research Fund, on issues as diverse as the law of asylum, development alternatives and legal empowerment. The Centre played a leadership role in a five-year campaign which led to York declaring itself the UK’s first Human Rights City in April 2017, a declaration which had cross-party support in the city and widespread backing from civil society.

We live in challenging times. A perfect storm of austerity, rising inequality, populism and nativism, and security concerns have rendered attacks on civil society the ‘new normal’ in many parts of the world. What our Centre offers has never been in higher demand, or more needed. As part of a University, we bring distinctive assets to efforts to create a different kind of world, including a space that is often more protected than NGO spaces and an ability to facilitate networks and collaborations across disciplines, sectors and countries. But universities are themselves too often

governed by not unrelated pressures, such as league tables and profit margins.

Our Centre is a reminder of the role universities need to play in the public sphere, as values-based institutions which can help to set rather than simply follow prevailing political agendas.

Professor Paul Gready

Director, Centre for Applied Human Rights

*This letter is taken from 'In Small Places Close to Home', a booklet marking CAHR's 10 years anniversary. You can read the [booklet here](#).



Alumni, former Fellows and CAHR staff gather together at the CAHR Alumni Day.

CAHR Alumni Day

CAHR hosted its first Alumni day on Saturday 27th January 2018 as part of the Centre's 10th Anniversary celebrations. The day was jointly organised by staff and alumni and attended by 41 student alumni, 11 current students, 14 current or former fellows of CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme for human rights defenders, and 9 members of staff.

Paul Gready's welcome was followed by a discussion on current challenges faced by HRDs. Former fellows, Dina Meza (Honduras), Min Min (Burma) and Jestina Mukoko (Zimbabwe) joined us in person and Diana Murcia via Skype from Colombia. The second session looked at the global and the local in human rights and included a discussion of the role and impact of human rights cities. York was declared the UK's first Human Rights City in April 2017 and some of the Centre staff involved in this initiative shared their experience. In a third session, several alumni shared the work they had done using art as a form of human rights activism. Emily Graham spoke about her activism at last year's Arms Fair, Shazeera Zawawi explained how she was using cartoons to conduct advocacy and to reach new audiences, and Emilie Flower shared her work on using film and storytelling in human rights research and dissemination. The final session was focussed on careers in human rights and a proposal to create a CAHR alumni association to include both students and human rights defenders. We hope to have the association up and running in the coming months and will let you know as soon as it is. A dinner was held at the very grand Merchant Taylor's hall for students, staff, defenders and friends. A lovely way to end a very special day.

Graduation Prizes

CAHR prides itself on having an engaged and inspirational student body on our two programmes, the MA in Applied Human Rights and the LLM in International Human Rights Law and Practice.

The Centre wishes to recognise the hard work and to celebrate the academic achievements of our students and will offer a Best Written Dissertation and Best Overall Student prize for each programme.

Protective Fellowship Scheme for Human Rights Defenders



Defenders with the Rt Hon Lord Mayor of

Fellows and Patricia Bartley at Amnesty International HQ.

Annual advocacy trip to London March 2018

Eight human rights defenders fellows from CAHR accompanied by staff member Patricia Bartley, spent 3 days in London on an advocacy and networking trip in March 2018.

The first day began with a guided tour of Westminster arranged by Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, and continued with meetings at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Human Rights section and with the Co-ordinator and Legal Advisor of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Human Right Group.

During the following days the defenders met with organisations working on similar issues to themselves as well as funders of human rights projects.

This was a great opportunity for those on CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme to make contact with UK and international organisations, to raise their concerns at the highest level and to explore future collaboration.

York, Sheriff of York and Margot Brown.

Human Rights Defenders meet the Mayor and Sheriff of York

On 26th February 2018, the Centre's human rights defenders met with Barbara Boyce, the Right Honourable Lord Mayor of York and Gill Brian, the Sheriff of York. They were also joined by Margot Brown who is a member of CAHR's advisory board and coordinator of the Friends of Defenders scheme. The defenders talked about their work and the human rights situation in their country and answered questions posed by the civic party.

All of the defenders stressed how much they were benefiting from their stay in York and expressed their appreciation for the warm welcome that they had received from residents in the city.



Breakout Brass performing and fellows participating in the performance.

Women on the front line: creative resistance

CAHR human rights defenders displayed their creative sides at an event during women's week. On the afternoon of 10th March they delivered a show of music and visual arts exploring what activism means for women human rights defenders. They were mentored and directed by Hannabiell Sanders and Yilis del Carmen Suriel from the Newcastle based Afro-Latin percussion & brass duet 'Ladies of Midnight Blue'. There were also performances from Kenyan multi-instrumentalist Rapasa and the all female Breakout Brass Band.

Human Rights Defender Hub



Clockwise from top-left: Emilie Flower introducing the exhibition; Ladies of Midnight Blue & Rapasa performing; the use of imagination; and the use of reflection and debate (artist Shazeera Zawawi).

Art, Activism and Research Workshop

In January, the Human Rights Defender Hub at CAHR hosted a two-day workshop on the intersections between arts, activism and research in human rights work, held at King's Manor in York. The workshop brought together artists, musicians, activists and scholars to share their work and reflect on the role of arts and creative approaches in their respective fields. In parallel, a multi-media exhibition hosted across three venues showcased artwork created in response to human rights research and activism.

The first day of the workshop opened with a welcome from CAHR's Director Paul Gready, before moving on to explore the transformative power of arts and arts-based approaches in human rights research methodologies - looking at the use of walking in challenging traditional power relations between researcher and participant, and in facilitating the telling of different stories.

The morning concluded with an exploration of the work of [Artist Safety Net](#), an organisation which coordinates temporary relocation and respite programmes for artists living at risk because of the nature of their work. After lunch, participants were invited to join curator Emilie Flower on a guided tour of the exhibition. This was followed in the afternoon with reflection and debate, considering the role of performance and storytelling, and artistic freedom of expression. Later, participants enjoyed an evening of music, featuring performances by Kenyan multi-instrumentalist [John Otieno Rapasa](#) and the UK-based [Ladies of Midnight Blue](#) who served up Afro-Latin beats.

The second day of the workshop consisted of parallel sessions following the four guiding themes of the workshop: emotion, imagination, heroes and the hidden. Here you can read about the various activities which addressed each theme. The workshop closed with a reflective session on artistic interventions as activism. Participants later came together again for a film screening and an evening of conversation on creative alternatives and the political imagination.

The first theme, emotion, considered questions of how artists can support human rights defenders, how artistic practices can open up a path towards collective healing for communities affected by abuses, and how art can provide new ways to speak about our experiences, emotions and work within human rights activism. In particular, the session highlighted the work of [Embroidery for Peace](#), which works in Puebla, Mexico, and engages the families of femicide victims and the disappeared, to commemorate their loved ones through collective embroidery workshops. In doing so, the workshops open up space for the shared expression of grief, healing and

resistance.

The second theme, heroes, was showcased by a [photographic](#) tribute project to Thai human rights defenders killed because of their work. This created room to discuss the problematic nature of the prevailing focus on individual human rights defenders as 'heroes', over the broader movements they so often come to represent.

Within the third theme, imagination, two research projects were presented which drew upon performance and collaborative creative engagement in their methodologies, including CAHR's [Development Alternatives](#) project. These projects highlighted how researchers can employ innovative methodologies incorporating arts practices, and drew out the benefits and challenges of such approaches.

Finally, the fourth theme, the hidden, focused on how art can facilitate the expression and understanding of ideas and experiences that either cannot be spoken aloud due to the political climate, or cannot be adequately articulated in words alone. The session considered the role of symbolic reparations in gender justice, as well as how street art can tell a hidden story of conflict.



The group working on their embroidery and a finished handkerchief.

Embroidery for Peace

Rosa Borrás founded the group [Bordando por la paz](#) (Embroidery for Peace) in Puebla, Mexico, in 2011 to remember the names of those missing or killed as a result of the government's war against organised crime. The group embroiders one handkerchief for each victim as a way to express anger against the impunity that surrounds these attacks but also as an homage to those absent and to express solidarity with the families of the victims.

Rosa was one of the artists from around the world who was invited to produce a creative response to the research findings of the [Security of Defenders](#) project. The quilt she made was displayed as part of the Arts + Activism exhibition and Rosa also gave a presentation at our Arts, Activism and Research workshop in January 2018. Whilst in York, Rosa ran an Embroidery for Peace workshop and we have now

made this a regular event, meeting each month at King's Manor in York. To join the group email pippa.cooper@york.ac.uk.



Navigating Risks project artwork on display.

The Wellbeing of Human Rights Defenders at Risk

On 3rd May 2018, Dr Alice Nah presented research findings from her [Navigating Risks research project](#) on the wellbeing of human rights defenders at risk at the [ICORN General Assembly in Malmo, Sweden](#).

The talk began with a [screening of Vis-à-vis](#), a dance film created by filmmaker Simona Manni and dancer Christie Barnes. Dr Nah discussed the difficulties of engaging with defenders about their wellbeing, and how this was an important but neglected issue in the human rights movement. She noted how everyone has different paths to wellbeing and also emphasised the need to strengthen both individual and collective care practices.

Dr Nah also spoke at a panel focused on how people on temporary international relocation initiatives (TIRIs) can help defenders build safety networks in their countries of refuge and at home.

The panel of speakers and the audience discussed how TIRIs could be used to support human rights defenders and artists working in difficult locations around the world, for example, by building awareness amongst the public and parliamentarians in Europe about human rights situations elsewhere.

At this event, CAHR displayed some artistic work from the Navigating Risks project, in particular, the textile work 'A Blanket for Human Rights Defenders' by Rosa Borrás from Mexico, illustrations on 'What factors make you feel insecure / secure?' by Deena Mohamed from Egypt, and verbatim poetry by Juliana Mensah from the United Kingdom. These artistic works [can be viewed on the project website](#).

HRD Hub: New policy brief and working papers released

Policy Briefs

[Families and Loved Ones in the Security and Protection of Defenders at Risk](#)

Families and loved ones are central to the lives of human rights defenders. Drawing upon discussions with defenders from Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya and Indonesia, this brief discusses the complex ways in which families and loved ones are implicated in the security and protection of defenders at risk. The policy brief draws on research findings from the project "Navigating Risk", lead by Alice Nah.

Working Papers

[Defenders across borders: Congolese human rights defenders in Uganda's refugee regime](#), Katie McQuaid, University of Leeds.

This paper looks at the experiences and protection needs of HRDs active within refugee populations. It challenges the pervasive invisibility and marginalisation of refugee defenders through foregrounding the voice of one of a number of HRDs forced to flee persecution for their human rights work in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and seek protection under Uganda's refugee regime.

[Exploring the term 'human rights defender' through the lens of professionalisation in human rights practice: A case-study of Russia](#), Polina Malkova, Chinese University of Hong Kong.

This paper considers the concept of the 'human rights defender' (HRD), and how protection organisations, donors, beneficiaries, researchers and HRDs themselves may often lack clarity in their understanding of this broad term when it comes to establishing HRD status in practice. Aiming to advance the understanding of the term 'HRD', the paper discusses the criterion of professionalisation within human rights practice.

[Integrating a psychosocial perspective into human rights and protection practices: A case study of Peace Brigades International \(PBI\) Mexico](#), Maik Müller and Clemencia Correa.

Recently there has been increasing interest in the psychosocial aspects of the work of human rights defenders in repressive contexts. This working paper presents some of the findings of a case study on the benefits of integrating a psychosocial perspective in human rights and protection work.

Martin Jones has been seconded for six months to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to work closely with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. He leads the research and writes publications commemorating the upcoming 20th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. This will include the UN Special Rapporteur's report to the UN General Assembly, a global survey of the situation of human rights defenders, and a practitioner handbook of good practices. Although seconded, he will continue his work on the Law of Asylum project and his academic supervision of current students.

CAHR Research



Martin Jones speaking at the workshop

Law of Asylum project hosts regional workshop in Hong Kong

The Law of Asylum project held a regional workshop in Hong Kong in late January and early February. The workshop brought together legal aid practitioners, project partners and academic collaborators to discuss the findings of the project so far.

The Law of Asylum project is a two year ESRC funded research project examining how lawyers working at the 'frontier' of the international refugee regime - in jurisdictions to which the Refugee Convention does not apply and/or do not have national refugee legal frameworks - can creatively use the law and legal arguments to offer protection to refugees.

The project documents the successes of pioneering lawyers in Egypt, India, Hong Kong, and Malaysia and has supported a wide range of interventions including the ongoing litigation in the Indian Supreme Court on the non-refoulement of the Rohingya.

Students of the Centre have been involved in data collection for the project in Malaysia and will be pursuing research of additional case studies for the project in Indonesia and Thailand over the summer. In June, the project team will meet with a larger group of lawyers, NGOs and UNHCR in Geneva to pursue changes in policy and practice in keeping with the project's findings.

Noma, A Neglected Disease in the Digital Age – Old Difficulties, New Tools?

On 11 April 2018, Dr Ioana Cismas chaired the public event “Noma, A Neglected Disease in the Digital Age – Old Difficulties, New Tools?” organised within the framework of the Geneva Health Forum 2018. Noma is a non-contagious disease that occurs predominantly in malnourished children aged 2-7 years, living in conditions of extreme poverty. This gangrenous disease starts in the mouth and spreads rapidly destroying the muscles and the bones of the face. If diagnosed at the earliest stages, noma can be easily treated with rehydration, nutritional intervention, antibiotics and mouth rinses. Yearly, 140,000 children in Africa, Asia and Latin America are affected by noma. The disease has a mortality rate of 90%.

The conference presented the conclusions of a six month workshop that brought together an interdisciplinary group of practitioners and scholars to tackle the difficulties of gathering data on noma by identifying existing and new tools, including digital tools. Together with representatives of Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the Geneva University Hospital, and the Sentinelles Foundation, as well as medical doctors from Laos and Niger and a member of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, Ioana reinforced the workshop’s findings: noma is not a rare disease confined to the past or limited in scope to one sub-continent. Today, noma affects children in many countries, has a staggering high mortality rate and DALYs surpassing many other neglected diseases – yet, it remains largely neglected. [The findings of the workshop](#), the participants hope will allow the development of human rights and global health approaches for a better prevention and treatment of noma.

More information on Ioana’s work on noma [can be found here](#) (righttofood.org), [here](#) (York Research Database) [and here](#) (CAHR research webpage).

York: Human Rights City

York: Human Rights City has a number of simultaneous projects underway. The

current focus of the team's work is to engage with, and to involve everyone in the city so that the ownership of rights becomes universal, not just a niche of civil society or academia in York.

As in previous years, the **Indicator Report** will provide updated statistics on all of our indicators. This year's report will also be focusing on one of York's five priority rights – housing – to provide in depth case studies and qualitative data. The report will be launched at a public meeting on 10th December – please save the date.

This year's **Human Rights Film Festival (PLUS)** will take place on 15-18th November. The varied programme of events is set to include highlights such as a radio show on human rights, and a critically acclaimed film followed by a Q&A with the director. Full details will be provided in the next newsletter, but for now please save the dates for what will be an excellent showcase of the exploration of human rights through film.

Community Voices is a project which York: Human Rights City has recently taken over from York CVS. The project aims to engage with hard-to-reach communities and individuals, those who might otherwise not participate in wider community initiatives or be included in wider community dialogue. Initially, we will be working in one of the York wards and with those who are rough sleeping, and holding quarterly meetings to encourage generation of ideas.

The City of York Council's new **Human Rights and Equalities Board** has held its first meetings. York: Human Rights City is helping the new board to understand and apply a right-based approach to the agreed initial focus of the board: the number of young people in the city who are not in education, employment or training.

Opionate, our annual workshops with secondary school pupils from across York took place in June. The workshops have been delivered by student volunteers to pupils in years 7-9. Previous outputs from these events include the creation of a Human Rights Council at Manor School. We are immensely pleased with this year's feedback:

"My 12 year old daughter attended [Opionate in 2018]... The sessions have absolutely inspired her. She is a very emotionally intelligent girl and hasn't stopped talking about the issues since! It was the first time she has really understood Human Rights, been introduced to things like the gender pay gap, and explored mental health issues in young people. [...] As a parent I am very pleased that she has been introduced to these difficult issues in a supportive, interesting and inspiring way! In addition - her enthusiasm has made me further explore my passion for Human Rights!

Save the date!

15-18th November: Film Festival (PLUS) – venue and programme TBC.

10th December: Indicator report launch, along with wider celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11th December: York Minster evensong to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As ever, the York: Human Rights City [webpage](#) has details of what we are doing and you can also [sign-up](#) to receive regular updates about human rights and social justice events in York.

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CAHR in the News



Patricia Bartley and Margot Brown with portrait of Azza Soliman. Photo by Frank Dwyer for the York Press.

Azza Soliman featured in special Books for Amnesty display.

On 8th March, CAHR was featured in the local news when York Press showcased the Books for Amnesty special window display to celebrate International Women's day. The windows showed a portrait of Azza Soliman, who participated in CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme in 2015.

Below is an extract from the article:

"FRIENDS of an internationally-renowned human rights lawyer have paid tribute to her in York to mark International Women's Day. A special window display including a portrait of Azza was put up at the Books for Amnesty shop the York International

Women's Festival, where Amnesty International Newsletters were handed out containing articles about Azza, and details of a petition to request her human rights are respected. Sue Cooke, former Sheriff of York, said: 'I was inspired by my meetings with Azza, she is a brave woman doing vital work for and with her country women, she deserves our help to continue this important work.' Azza now works to defend victims of torture, arbitrary detention, domestic violence and rape in Egypt, but her actions have led her to be labelled a threat to the country's national security. Her assets have been frozen, and she is banned from travelling."

The full article by Dan Willers can be found on the [York Press Website](#). You can also read about [Azza](#), and other alumni of the Protective Fellowship Scheme on our [website](#).



Dina Meza photographed by David Levene for the Guardian 2018.

[Dina Meza featured by the Guardian in article celebrating 'five trailblazing women you've never heard of' for International Women's Day](#)

Dina Meza, former participant of CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme in 2013, was featured in the national press in celebration of International Women's Day 2018. The article in the Guardian shared the work of five women "who have challenged stereotypes and refused to give in to fear or discrimination tell their stories." Below is an excerpt of the full article by [Lucy Lambale and others in The Guardian, 8th March](#):

"A farmer's daughter from Cofradía, in north-west [Honduras](#), Dina Meza took up journalism thinking that it might cure her crippling shyness. Two years into her studies, her brother Victor, a social activist, was kidnapped by the military, tortured and thrown in prison. She found her voice. But in Honduras, [one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists](#), Meza's work has made her a target for harassment, intimidation and death threats. In 2013, Meza, 55, was forced into exile

in the UK, and was accepted on the University of York's [protective fellowship scheme for human rights defenders](#). The scheme, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, provides temporary respite. Her fellowship, and the support of the Fund for Global Human Rights and the Sigrid Rausing Trust, enabled her to set up an online magazine, Pasos de Animal Grande– ‘steps of a big animal’ – to allow her to write freely. ‘There is a saying in Honduras,’ says Meza. ‘When you say you can feel the steps of a big animal, it means you can feel there’s going to be radical change.’”



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