

CAHRnews

Centre for Applied Human Rights newsletter

Dear Friends,

The Centre for Applied Human Rights has exciting news to share;

- ◆ *In February CAHR launched the Human Rights Defender Hub with Special Rapporteur Michel Forst.*
- ◆ *Transitional Justice researchers publish reports on Tunisia and Nepal.*
- ◆ *Impact stories from former HRD fellows.*
- ◆ *York Human Rights City Network's (YHRCN) "spreading the word about human rights cities".*
- ◆ *YHRCN has a great new website with details of all up and coming events, which can be found here [www.http://yhr.cn.org/](http://yhr.cn.org/)*

Finally, we hope to see you at our Autumn public events kicking off in October!

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Research Launch of the Human Rights Defenders Hub



Prof Debbie Smith, opens the Hub launch event

On 18 February, a public launch of the hub took place at the Kings Manor, York. The event was attended by over 80 people, including key University of York staff, other academics, practitioners and funders.

Michel Forst, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders gave the keynote speech on the situation of human rights defenders and the context and scope of his work. Panelists included Andrew Anderson, the Deputy Director of Frontline Defenders, who spoke about the shrinking space for civil society and the role of academic research in the protection and promotion of human rights defenders worldwide.

Other key panelists included Alice Nah from the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR) and Azza Soliman, an Egyptian human rights defender fellow from CAHR. The panel was chaired by Julie Broome from the Sigrid Rausing Trust.



Special Rapporteur Michel Forst, with human rights defenders Azza and Gacheke

Research



[https://
www.actionaid.org.uk/](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/)

CAHR research partnership with Actionaid

CAHR is delighted to announce an exciting new initiative in its work on human rights and international development - a research partnership between CAHR and the International NGO ActionAid, focusing on rights-based development alternatives. Global poverty levels remain unacceptably high despite decades of aid. Recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) open space for alternatives to emerge to the mix of neoliberalism and charity that often characterises development policy. There are many examples of communities doing development in a way that puts more emphasis on the reali-

sation of rights than mainstream approaches; these 'rights-based alternatives' can and should inform the implementation of the SDGs. The documentation and promotion of such rights-based alternatives will constitute much of the work of ActionAid from 2017-22. An initial research project, led by a PhD student funded by an ESRC Collaborative Scholarship, will take a participatory approach to documenting examples of alternatives, testing whether storytelling/narrative can help communities to articulate how these alternatives are rights-based and to advocate for their recognition and adoption by policy-makers.

CAHR's Transitional Justice Research: Updates from Tunisia and Nepal

CAHR has been conducting critical research around transitional justice processes in Nepal and Tunisia, seeking to advance justice processes after conflict and political violence. Two reports have recently been published.

A report was launched in Tunis in May 2016 by the ongoing Transitional Justice Barometer research project, a collaboration between CAHR and the Tunis-based Kawakibi Democracy Transition Centre and Dutch NGO Impunity Watch. The report is titled 'The Victim Zone and Collective Reparation in Tunisia: Ain Drahem and Sidi Makhlouf, "So Rich and Yet so Poor"'. Tunisia's Transitional Justice Law includes an innovative definition of a 'victim zone' – a geographical region that can claim to be a collective victim before the Truth and Dignity Commission. Reparations to such regions seek to address social exclusion and violations of social and economic rights on a geographical basis. The Barometer's research focussed on two communities that had been subject to decades of social, economic and cultural exclusion - Sidi Makhlouf in the Médenine Governorate in the south-east, and Ain Drahem in Jendouba in the mountains near the Algerian frontier. The report both documents the human impact of such exclusion and proposes routes to addressing it through reparative approaches.

CAHR also has a long history of conducting research around Nepal's political transition, and recently concluded a project to understand the impact of the demobilisation of Maoist rebels on young people - many recruited as young teenagers - who constituted the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The report, also published in May 2016, is titled 'Poverty, Stigma and Alienation: Reintegration Challenges of ex Maoist Combatants in Nepal'. CAHR's research sought to understand how effectively integrated into civilian communities the ex-PLA were, and did this using a participatory action research approach, by training a group of ex-PLA to research their ex-comrades. These *peer researchers* also drove the research agenda, insisting that the project support them to mobilise ex-PLA to give them a voice they currently lacked. The [research report](#) was the culmination of a project whose mobilisation element has proved highly successful. The week the report was released the authorities announced an additional payment to those fighters who had been 'disqualified' from the demobilisation, due to being under 18 when recruited, while a meeting of the Discharged ex-PLA Association attracted a Deputy Prime Minister and representatives from all major parties, all making more promises to

Rights in Action

CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme for HRDs at Risk has since 2008 hosted 61 human rights defenders (HRDs) from across the globe. We spoke to six HRDs who had taken part in the Fellowship Scheme between 2012-2014 to find out how their time in York had impacted on their human rights work.

Most HRDs have gone on to train others after their return home on such diverse issues as human rights law, leadership, and digital and physical security. Some of the most impactful CAHR trainings have translated into practical actions. Based on the module 'Working Safely', Gullalai from Pakistan was able to develop and implement a much needed security plan for her organisation Khwendo Kor that works on women's empowerment. Masters level classes attended during the Fellowship Scheme have also had a wide ranging impact on HRDs' work. For Jestina Mukoko,

director of Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), they informed her decision to take ZPP's work into new areas, such community peace building projects.

For Stephen Chukwumah, executive director of Improved Youth Health Initiative working in eastern Nigeria, developing skills to conduct advocacy, speak publicly and make new connections, particularly with potential funders, was an invaluable aspect of the Fellowship Scheme. Stephen says, "With every new project I work on, every time I give a public speech I use these skills. I use them to improve my work".

Some of the HRDs' independent project work has developed into projects with a wide reach. With support from CAHR's artist in residence, Juliana Mensah, Jestina started writing a manuscript chronicling her experiences as an



Human Right Defenders 2016 with York MP Rachel Maskell and Dominque Muller CAHR Research Associate

HRD in Zimbabwe. The book has now been published and she is hoping that the book will reach 100,000 readers.

Finally, many of the Fellowship Scheme's benefits are less tangible. Carlos Santos from El Salvador joined the Fellowship Scheme in October 2013 at a time when he was at increased risk because of investigations he had made into enforced disappearances: "it was heaven, rest, [time] away from being a target."

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights presented a [report](#) to the Human Rights Council on March 3rd. The report provides a global review of good practices in the protection of HRDs by a wide range of actors, including the international community, states and civil society. Martin Jones and Alice Nah of CAHR provided technical support to the Special Rapporteur in the surveying of global practice and the expert analysis of the data. The report also praises the type of pedagogy adopted by CAHR in its teaching and training programmes and its involvement of HRDs in the classroom:

"In all educational sectors, successful human rights education bridges the gap between the knowing and the doing. Innovative pedagogies, such as role-based simulations, mock report writing and field placements, help to fill this gap... Successful education and training are often rooted in cooperation between educational institutions on the one hand and defenders on the other."

Outreach and Networking

Alice Nah - keynote discussion Singapore



Alice Nah, Lecturer at CAHR, delivered the keynote address at the Workshop on 'South-South Migration, Refugees and Diasporic Communities' organised by the National University of Singapore from 16-17 February 2016. In her paper, Dr Nah sketched out the political, legal, and social contexts in which forced migration occurs in South and Southeast Asia, arguing that these contextual

features create not only challenges for researchers, but also ethical obligations. Noting that the global production of knowledge about forced migration still has a Northern bias, she suggested that scholarship in Asia could reveal hidden assumptions, challenge taken-for-granted understandings, and throw up new and different research questions that may be overlooked by researchers and policy-makers in the North. Drawing on her research on forced migrants in Malaysia, she put forward an explanation of why the inequalities that non-citizens experience are normalised. She suggested the existence of deeply held beliefs by citizens and non-citizens in modern societies that some groups deserve more than others, and that justice or fairness in society is achieved not by treating people equally but by giving each group 'what they deserve'. These mental structures – which she calls 'hierarchies of deservedness' – result in calls for governments to first meet their obligations to citizens before attending to non-citizens on the rationale that this is 'fair'. She ended her paper by recalling the importance of researching, teaching and generating public discussion about forced migration in Asia so that this phenomenon is given greater visibility and is better understood by the broader public in this region.

Photo competition



1st Prize Winner

CAHR MA student Ida Malthe Soresnsen, wins first prize. The photo was taken as part of the MA field trip to South Africa 2015



York Human Rights Network - spreading the word about human rights cities

On 13-14 January 2016 the York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN) hosted a ground-breaking event on human rights cities, 'The Rise of Human Rights Cities: Why Cities? Why Now?' The aim of the workshop was twofold: 1) To explore the diverse ways in which cities have sought to give meaning and content to the human rights city label. 2) To explore the potential for existing and new networks to support the development of human rights cities in the UK and Europe. In addition to York, other cities represented included Bradford, Hull, Leeds and Kirklees in Yorkshire; Edinburgh and Dundee in Scotland; Belfast and Dublin in the North and South of Ireland; and Utrecht and Graz in continental Europe. One of the keynote addresses was delivered by Professor Paul Hunt, University of Essex and former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health. Moving forward, it was agreed that participants would create a 'community of practice' to support city-based human rights work in two inter-linked clusters - Yorkshire and Scotland - and discuss developing an action research project at a European level. CAHR's Director, Professor Paul Gready, stated: "There was a terrific energy at the event, and a desire to look into ways in which local authorities and city-based civil societies can be marshaled to create a positive local culture of rights. Attempts to develop such a human rights culture or counter-narrative are crucial given the hostile political environment for human rights in the UK and in other parts of Europe. YHRCN will work to support such work in other cities and, who knows, York may yet face competition in becoming the UK's first human rights city!"