



Rhoda Gbla, visiting human rights defender from Sierra Leone

The 2008-2009 academic year was a year of firsts for CAHR: the first time we welcomed a full complement of 5 human rights defenders on our visiting fellowships scheme; the first time we ran our MA in Applied Human Rights; our first field trip to South Africa with a combined group of students and defenders; and the publication of the first issue of the *Journal of Human Rights Practice*. Other developments included the registration of our first PhD students, and the launching of CAHR's 'From the Field' seminar series.

### Human rights defenders

Our 5 visiting defenders this year came from Indonesia, Iraq, Nepal, Palestine and Sierra Leone. Programmes of work for defenders include participation in the MA, tailored training either in-house or externally, public speaking, internships and working on their own project(s). The value of the fellowships scheme to visiting defenders is clear from the feedback we are receiving on their return home (see below). The multiplier effect of the scheme is felt not only in the defenders' home country, it is also clearly felt at CAHR. MA students, in particular, gained an enormous amount from having experienced practitioners participating in and leading classes.



Amir from Iraq speaking at a conference

### Saifora from Afghanistan

As a result of my time in York, I have been able to make contact with many donors to raise funding for the work of my organisation, which is the only network of women's NGOs in Afghanistan. In particular, I have secured donor support for a three-year programme of work based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (on the impact of war on women and women's contribution to peace). We are planning to work on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1820, which calls for a halt to sexual violence against civilians in conflict zones.

I am also a part of a team that established a civilian oversight committee to monitor how the police deal with gender-based violence at police stations. As a result of its recommendations, 17 Family Response Units led by female police officers have been established. I submitted a proposal to UNIFEM to provide training to these female officers, which was successful. We also run the first ever hotline for victims of violence, and we have a database of organisations working with gender-based violence victims. The government ratified the Shia family Law in February 2009, which does not favour women's rights. However, we have been able to successfully lobby to prevent it from being applied in practice.

While in York, I got the chance to see the curriculum for human rights education in schools. This has led me to work on developing a curriculum with the Ministry of Education. This has been well received and now we have some funding to provide training to staff of the Ministry of Education and to teachers.

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## MA in Applied Human Rights

Students on our MA this year came from 8 different countries, and included experienced practitioners from organisations such as Peace Brigades International. The mix of students, defenders, staff and visiting lecturers made for a positive learning environment.

What initially drew me to the MA was the uniquely vocational and practical aspect, which really makes it stand apart from all the other human rights courses in the UK. I have particularly benefitted from the chance to work with and learn first-hand from human rights defenders, and the excellent guest lecturers from a wide range of organisations. The field project in South Africa is an incredible opportunity and really prepares us for working in the field.

*Jillian Smith, MA Student 2008-9*

Defenders and students worked together with local partner organisations in South Africa during our December field trip. Groups worked with partners on issues such as the right to health; transitional justice, memorialisation and cultural heritage; and the concerns of emerging social movements, including privatisation and access to land. The intention is that these projects should provide a context for testing and developing new skills, learning to adapt to unfamiliar contexts, and gaining confidence as a result.

The field trip provided an invaluable experience for understanding what human rights and NGO work entails. It deepened my knowledge of human rights at a grassroots level, particularly in situations where even the most basic rights are denied, and my understanding of the way people actively seek to secure their own rights.

*Tom White, MA student 2008-9*



An exhibit from the *Breaking the Silence* exhibition

One collaboration, between 2 CAHR students and the Khulumani Support Group and Human Rights Media Centre, illustrates this potential. This partnership successfully worked together to bring an exhibition of South African art work to York for three weeks. The exhibition, entitled *Breaking the Silence: a Luta continua* (the struggle continues), was created by survivors of apartheid-era human rights abuses, as a means of healing and as an advocacy tool in their ongoing fight for reparations. Students led the way in raising funding, finding a venue for the exhibition, organising events to accompany the exhibition – including a sold out documentary film showing at York's premiere cinema – and devising an outreach programme. This project illustrated that such partnerships can be of benefit to both CAHR students and the South African partners.



Body maps illustrating human rights violations

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## *Journal of Human Rights Practice*

In March 2009 the *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, published by Oxford University Press and based at CAHR, was launched. It seeks to provide a platform for new developments, innovative thinking and critical reflection for both practitioners and academics. As such, it will be an invaluable resource for the Centre – a vehicle for visiting defenders to share their experiences and knowledge; a rich source of readings for teaching and training; and more. To give just one example from Issue 1 – Manfred Nowak, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, provided invaluable insights on how to conduct fact finding on torture and ill-treatment, and conditions of detention. For more details and a free copy of Issue 1(1), see: <http://jhrp.oxfordjournals.org/>

## Staff news

**Paul Gready** spent much of his research time setting up, and writing for, the *Journal of Human Rights Practice*. He has also published articles in *Development in Practice*, *Comparative Literature Studies* and *African Affairs* (forthcoming). In recent months he has been invited to join the Advisory Group of the Silence Speaks initiative at the Center for Digital Storytelling, and the board of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

He spoke at a number of events, including: Justice for Apartheid Crimes: Corporations, States and Human Rights (Oxford Transitional Justice Research, Oxford University, 30 January 2009); Reconstructing Rwanda: Fifteen Years after Genocide (Centre for International Human Rights, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 20 March 2009); Human Rights and Anti-Poverty Strategies (seminar hosted by Global Partners and Associates, London, 1 April 2009); Recovering Stolen Generations, Land and Culture: Indigenous Rights and Transitional Justice (Centre for International Human Rights, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, 1 May 2009); and Measuring Human Rights (British Institute of Human Rights, policy seminar series, London, 28 May 2009).

**Michael Kearney** worked extensively on the report 'Occupation, Colonialism, and Apartheid? A Re-assessment of Israel's Practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories', published by the Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa, in June 2009. He also contributed an entry on 'Propaganda for War', in Rüdiger Wolfrum (ed) Max Planck Encyclopaedia of Public International Law (Oxford University Press, 2009).

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He spoke at a number of events including The Death of the Liberal State (OSI Summer School, Bilgi University, Istanbul, July 2009); A Hierarchy of Hate Speech (Marie Curie Summer School, Leiden University, June 2009); Occupation, Colonialism, and Apartheid? (Minority Rights Summer School, NUI Galway, June 2009); International Criminal Law: Accountability for Grave Breaches of International Humanitarian Law in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Kadir Has University, Istanbul, April 2009); and The Prohibition of Propaganda for War in International Law (NUI, Galway, February 2009).

**Lena Barrett**, as well as managing the fellowship scheme, contributed a chapter on 'Human Rights Defenders in Europe' to the European Yearbook on Human Rights 2009 as well as a chapter on 'The New Normal: Human Rights Organisations after 9/11' to a book entitled *The International Human Rights Regime Since 9/11: Transatlantic Perspectives*, eds. Michael Goodhart and Anja Mihr (forthcoming).

## New staff

CAHR is delighted to welcome two new staff, who both have extensive experience as both practitioners and in the academy.



**Martin Jones** has published on various topics, including the interpretation of the definition of refugee, refugee status determination and the prohibition on refoulement to torture. His research interests include the reform of the governance of the international refugee protection regime, the interaction between international and national refugee law, and refugee law in Asia.

He is managing editor of the journal *Refuge*. Martin is a member of the executive committee of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration; a founding and active member of

the Southern Refugee Legal Aid Network; and a consultant to refugee legal aid organizations in Cyprus, Egypt, Hong Kong, Jordan, Malaysia and Turkey. He serves as the chair of the Legal Aid Working Group of the Asia Pacific Network for Refugee Rights, a regional coalition of over 100 NGOs, and sits on its steering committee.

He is currently working on a project funded by the US Institute of Peace to develop in partnership with local legal aid NGOs

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**Lars Waldorf** works on mass violence, post-conflict recovery, transitional justice, and international criminal justice. He ran Human Rights Watch's field office in Rwanda from 2002-2004 and reported on genocide trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

He has authored numerous chapters, journal articles, and reports on Rwanda, and is currently writing a book on Rwanda's community genocide trials (*gacaca*) with generous support from the United States Institute of Peace. Recently, he co-edited two books: *Localizing Transitional Justice* (Stanford University, forthcoming 2010) and *Disarming the Past: Transitional Justice and Ex-Combatants* (SSRC, 2009).

Over the years, he has worked as a consultant for the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, and Front Line Defender. He previously worked as a civil rights lawyer in the US from 1990 to 2000.

## Upcoming events

- Responsibility to the Story - conference organised in collaboration with Amnesty International, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, and Panos London, 9-11 September 2009. For more information visit <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/cahr/Events/Index.htm>
- An event at the House of Commons, on 21 October, designed to raise funds for the human rights defenders' scheme and generate awareness about CAHR and its work.
- Social Justice in Changing and Challenging Times – conference, 6 November 2009. <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/cahr/Events/Index.htm>