

# CAHRnews

Centre for Applied Human Rights newsletter

Dear Friends,

The Centre for Applied Human Rights has exciting research news to share and updates on the York Human Rights City Network's (YHRCN) local projects.

In May we hosted a workshop for human rights, development and humanitarian actors on the protection of human rights defenders (HRDs). We are now about to launch a new HRD Hub which will consolidate our work supporting HRDs. We have also received a research priming grant for a new, timely project on transition, austerity & activism; and CAHR's project on a transitional justice barometer in Tunisia is about to publish its first report.

YHRCN hosted the successful York Human Rights Film Festival in March; has continued with human rights workshops for school children; and is looking forward to your participation in its human rights indicator project.

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

Sanna Eriksson  
Centre Co-ordinator, CAHR

## Research

### Human Rights Defender Hub launched at CAHR

We are delighted to announce that in 2015-16 we will be launching a Human Rights Defender (HRD) Hub at CAHR. The Hub will both consolidate CAHR's reputation as a leading actor working to support HRDs through training and research, and respond to global developments affecting human rights work. Relevant global developments include: 1) A rise in the diversity of human rights activism. 2) The urgent protection needs of HRDs and emergence of an international protection regime. 3) The 'shrinking space' available for civil society in many parts of the worlds and the need to build a 'safe and enabling environment' for human rights work.

A grant from the Open Society Foundation will enable CAHR to recruit the Hub's first staff. In its first year the Hub will have three main priorities: 1) To launch a 'rapid research response' facility which will involve the rapid production of research to support the immediate needs of strategic partners. 2) To support the development of thematic research programmes at the Hub, in two areas: the 'Changing Face of Activists and Activism' and 'Risk, Security and Protection'. 3) To help build and maintain an international network of key stakeholders in order to support the dissemination of research and ensure it has real world impact.

A formal launch for the Hub will take place in January 2016.

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### Research priming grant for new CAHR led project

A University of York pump prime grant for a research project entitled 'Democracies in Transition: Austerity and Activism in Southern Europe' has been granted to CAHR's Director Paul Gready and colleagues from four University departments. The ongoing austerity-driven economic and political crisis in Greece and Spain constitutes a major opportunity to understand what transition means in contemporary democratic societies. A transition is underway, and this project seeks to analyse its political and economic consequences for democracy, activism, citizenship, welfare, etc. How is transition being configured? Transition from what, to what? Who are the actors involved and what are their roles? The project will build an inter-disciplinary network of scholars and practitioners to develop research projects and associated funding applications, using five themes to frame discussion: mobilisation and institutionalisation; spatializing transition; citizen attitudes to democracy and austerity; globalisation of crisis and protest; and political framing and communication.

## University of York researchers participate in 'States of Peace in Asia' conference in Myanmar

2015 is a significant year for Myanmar with nationwide elections scheduled for November and with peace agreements expected to end several ethnic insurgencies.

In June, Lars Waldorf attended a conference and study visit to Myanmar jointly organized by the Australian National University, London School of Economics, University of Yangon, and University of York. The conference, the first of its kind in Myanmar, examined the country's liberalization and peace-building from a wider, comparative perspective.

Afterwards, Lars joined colleagues in a visit to the new capital, Naypyitaw, where they attended a legislative session and met with the Election Commission. The trip ended with an excursion to northern Kayin state, which has been opened up in the last two years following cease-fire agreements with the Karen National Union.



Politics Department researcher Claire Q Smith addresses the conference in Yangon, June 2015.

## Protecting Human Rights Defenders: Learning across Development, Humanitarianism and Human Rights

Humanitarian, development and human rights actors are facing increasing risks as a result of their work. Yet, when it comes to protection, these actors have tended to work in separate silos. In order to encourage interdisciplinary discussion CAHR hosted a workshop on issues of risk and protection on May 5th 2015.

The workshop brought together practitioners, academics and donors from across diverse fields in order to address the central question: what lessons, synergies or tensions emerge by considering development, humanitarian and human rights actors' approaches to protection? Speakers included representatives from ActionAid, Amnesty International, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Frontline Defenders, Global Witness, the Overseas Development Institute (Humanitarian Policy Group) and the office of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights.

The ideas that arose from presentations and discussions at the workshop, alongside a review of relevant literature, have been written up into a working paper. The paper calls for actors to increase communication across fields around issues of protection to:



From left: Jamshid Gaziev (UN Special Rapporteur for HRDs' Office); James Savage (AIUK); Andrew Anderson (Frontline Defenders); and Alice Nah (CAHR).

share knowledge, combine protective strategies, define responsibilities in relation to protection, and explore new avenues for developing safe and enabling environments for activists at risk. This paper forms the first working paper of 'The Human Rights Defender Hub' which will be officially launched later this year. All working papers will be freely available on the Centre's website.

This project was completed with generous financial support from the Open Society Foundation's Human Rights Initiative.

## Maro Pantazidou joins CAHR as a Visiting Practitioner

Maro Pantazidou has recently joined CAHR as a visiting practitioner. She works on the intersections of human rights, politics, social development and learning. In her role with Amnesty International as Lead Advisor in the Strategy and Evaluation Unit she spent the last months coordinating the development of AI's new global strategy to protect civic space and enable the work of human rights defenders. In that context, Maro held a workshop with the HRDs who are part of CAHR's Protective Fellowship Scheme to explore potential responses to the shrinking space for civil society and the role of large human

rights NGOs. Maro has also collaborated in a number of research projects on emerging forms of citizen organisation and action – with a focus on Greece where she comes from. She currently works with CAHR developing thinking around transition and austerity in Southern Europe and serves as an advisory group member for the Transformative Justice in Egypt and Tunisia project.



Maro Pantazidou

## Victim Participation in Tunisia's Transitional Justice Process

CAHR has long been interested in understanding the relationship between victims of rights violations and processes that seek to address the legacies of those violations, notably those of transitional justice. An ongoing project in Tunisia seeks to both interrogate and expand the role of victims in such processes following the revolution that ousted the Ben Ali regime and triggered what became the 'Arab spring'.

The Transitional Justice Barometer is a collaboration between CAHR, the Dutch NGO Impunity Watch and Tunisian NGO [The Al Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center](#) (KADEM). It seeks to build a research capacity in Tunisia - through a research unit within KADEM - to provide prompt, relevant and high quality research that can support Tunisia's transitional justice process.

The first project of the TJ Barometer has been to understand how victims are participating in the process, including their attitudes towards their engagement. The study has found that victims perceive participation in a range of ways. They understand that any engagement with institutional mechanisms of transitional justice is participation, including the submission of files to the Commission for Truth and Dignity (a truth commission), or claims for reparation. Such indirect partici-

pation has dominated their engagement with the official process.

Some victims have established organisations to bring victims together, to both support each other and to advocate for their rights: this is considered a crucial form of participation, both for what it brings victims and for the impact it can have on the formal process. Victims are however divided, reflecting the secular-Islamist split that has characterised politics in Tunisia since the transition. Victims' groups are also often linked to political parties and as a result have on occasion been used to advance particular partisan agendas.

Many victims feel remote from the ongoing process, with little knowledge of the Commission and of the other mechanisms (military tribunals and a reparations process) that are ongoing. The most innovative element of Tunisia's transitional justice process is an effort to acknowledge and repair the systematic marginalisation of interior regions of the country that occurred under the previous regime. The danger is that a transitional justice process centred in Tunis will itself marginalise more remote regions of the country: certainly victims in these regions believe that this has happened in the first years of the process.



*Civil society consultation in Tunis, June 2015.*

The Barometer will shortly publish its first research report - on victim participation - and will continue to research Tunisia's transitional justice process in ways which seek to impact on its direction. How victims can engage with mechanisms - or indeed how they are excluded from them - will remain at the heart of its concerns.



*Transitional Justice Barometer Project meeting in Tunis, 2015.*

# Rights in Action

## York Human Rights City Network news

### Get engaged!

York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN) has continued with its indicator project, working very closely with the Council to create a set of human rights indicators for York. As part of this project we are looking for case studies of people affected by, or feeling passionate about, these themes:

- Education
- Non-discrimination & equality
- Housing
- Health & social care
- Standards of living

It could be a story of how you, a family member or a friend have been affected by these issues; or telling the story of a great project that has been successful in making a difference!

### Get in touch at

Yorkhumanrightscitynetwork@gmail.com

### York Human Rights Film Festival Success

Our Human Rights Film Festival was a huge success, drawing in crowds for a week of films exploring different forms of protest, from political theatre in Belarus to a mobile phone film festival from Syria. Our most successful screening was The Square, held at the Fulford Arms, where attendees supported guest speaker Sherif Azer in an act of soli-

arity with those facing continuing persecution in Egypt through mass trials.

### Opinionate workshops for school children

We held our biggest *Opinionate* Workshop yet, with 70 children from across different schools in York, over two evenings. The children analysed human rights cases from around the world, conducted mock trials, and designed posters based around their judgements. Make sure you keep an eye out for more *Opinionate* opportunities next term.



### Future YHRCN events in 2015/6

Keep tuned for details of our first *Human Rights City conference*, as well as a new programme of speakers and events over the next year, including taking part in *Democracy Week* at York Explore, and *Holocaust Memorial Week* with more workshops in schools, as well as our plans for *Human Rights Day* on December 10th!



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## CAHR public events

### Autumn 2015

#### LEARNING FROM HRDs

#### LECTURE SERIES

Fri 16 Oct 13:00 @ ARC/014

*Realities of an unrecognized conflict situation in Northeast India* Bondita Acharya (Women in Government (WinG)-Assam)

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Fri 30 Oct 13:00 @ AEW/003

*Shrinking spaces of CSOs in Kyrgyzstan & Russia*

Aida Baijumanova (Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan)

& Natalia Zviagina (Interregional Human Rights Group)

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Fri 13 Nov 13:00 @ ARC/014

*Sorcery related violence in Papua New Guinea*

Monica Paulus (Highlands WHRD Network)

#### CAHR & SPSW PRESENT

Fri 6 Nov 13:00 @ BS/005

*Building female dignity and self-reliance in the conflict zones of Northwest Pakistan*

Maryam Bibi

(Khwendo Kor, Pakistan)

**More info:** <https://>

[www.york.ac.uk/cahr/news/](http://www.york.ac.uk/cahr/news/)