

# CAHRnews

Centre for Applied Human Rights newsletter

Dear Friends,

The academic year 2016-17 has been very eventful at CAHR, and this issue of CAHRnews has a particular focus on our research initiatives as well as York as a human rights city.

CAHR staff were awarded the first three GCRF research grants at the University of York for innovative research collaborating with NGOs from across the global south. Ongoing research to the protection and security of HRDs led by Dr Alice Nah has resulted in workshops with civil society stakeholders conducted in Mexico, Kenya and Uganda. CAHR also organised a workshop on temporary relocation in Geneva.

We are also excited by human rights developments in York: York is hoping to declare itself the UK's first human rights city in April. Running up to this event, the York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN) has launched the York Human Rights Indicator Baseline Report. As a part of YHRCN's local outreach work, CAHR students organised the annual York Human Rights Film Festival in March, and a short film event as part of the York International Women's Festival.

Sanna Eriksson  
Centre Co-ordinator, CAHR

## CAHR awarded York's three first GCRF grants

CAHR has been awarded the University of York's three first grants from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF):

**Paul Gready (CAHR) and Jean Grugel (Politics)** were awarded an AHRC/GCRF grant for collaboration research with the NGO ActionAid, on using the arts to explore creative activism and development alternatives. The research will involve participants in Bangladesh, Uganda and the UK and seeks to develop a research network to explore the ways in which art and creative activism can contribute to efforts to understand and enact development alternatives. Development alternatives is understood to mean the diversity of practice and thinking that offers an alternative to mainstream development approaches (e.g. neo-liberal, service delivery, aid-centred, hierarchical, entrepreneurial), in particular, diverse voices and approaches from the Global South rarely heard in development debates and practice.

**Martin Jones (CAHR)** received an ESRC/GCRF grant for research on the law of asylum in the Middle East and Asia. This 2-year project looks at developing legal engagement at the frontiers of the international refugee regime, and takes place across Egypt, India, Malaysia and Hong Kong. It will provide funding to local lawyers to pursue legal advocacy for the rights of refugees drawing on a range of innovative sources of law, including other international treaties, local constitutional law, various local legislative provisions, local jurisprudence, and common-law principles, and support the mapping of the relevant local legal frameworks through doctrinal legal analysis, interviews and workshops with legal experts, and discussion with refugee community leaders.

**Lars Waldorf (CAHR)** was awarded a GCRF/PaCCS grant for a research project examining an innovative way of empowering persons with conflict-related disabilities in Sri Lanka through the combination of dance and law. It consists of four main activities: (1) workshops that combine integrated dance (where disabled and able-bodied dancers perform together) and legal empowerment; (2) flash mobs and dance performances in busy, public spaces by workshop participants; (3) research on how the workshops and performances affect the agency, dignity, welfare, and inclusion of persons with conflict-related disabilities; and (4) dissemination of research findings to development policymakers and practitioners.

Further information about these and other CAHR research projects is available on our website at <https://www.york.ac.uk/cahr/research/>.



Left: Alice and Sanna recently visited Uganda and Kenya as part of the Security of Defenders project.

Whilst there Alice was able to catch up with one of our former visiting defenders, Gacheke Gachihi, and his colleagues at the Mathare Social Justice Centre.

## CAHR hosts workshop on Civil Society Networks of Protection in Kampala, Uganda

Dr Alice Nah organised a workshop on Civil Society Networks of Protection for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in conjunction with DefendDefenders' (East & Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) in Kampala, Uganda, on 23 February 2017.



About 20 participants from national coalitions, networks and civil society groups working on the protection of HRDs at risk in the East and Horn of Africa region took part in the workshop.

Amongst the issues discussed were: defenders not realising their rights as defenders; the problem of risk transfer (in which protection actors seeking to assist defenders at risk get threatened themselves by perpetrators); the unexpectedness of the immediate protection needs of defenders; the challenges of managing limited protection resources; and the challenges of protecting particular groups of defenders, especially those that continue to face risks over the long-term.

These research findings will be summarised in a Civil Society Guide co-authored with DefendDefenders.

## Sharing research results with human rights defenders and the UN Special Rapporteur for HRDs in Mexico City



Human rights defenders (HRDs) face very high levels of insecurity and violence in Mexico. Examples of human rights violations that have occurred in recent years include extrajudicial killings, torture and enforced disappearances. Mexico is one of the 5 countries studied in the research project, *Navigating Risk, Managing Security and Receiving Support: A study of Human Rights Defenders at risk in Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya and Indonesia*, led by Dr Alice Nah from the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR).

CAHR staff member, Patricia Bartley, travelled to Mexico in January 2017 to run a workshop jointly hosted by the University of York and Peace Brigades International (PBI) Mexico on 14<sup>th</sup> January. The workshop brought together participants (HRDs) from the research study, other HRDs from across the country, the UN Special Rapporteur for HRDs, Michel Frost, members of the UN office in Mexico City, staff from PBI and researchers from CAHR at the University of York.

After a general explanation of the project Erick Monterrosas and Paola Pacheco presented the research findings for Mexico. This was followed by questions and a discussion of some of the main issues raised. Women defenders were keen to stress that they regularly face greater levels of violence, abuse and economic hardship than their male counterparts.

The second part of the workshop was devoted to a discussion on the working of the National Protection Mechanism for HRDs and Journalists which started operating in Mexico in 2012. The UN Special Rapporteur was keen to gather the views and experiences of the participants on this new mechanism in advance of the start of his official visit between 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January. The workshop participants reported that they appreciated the opportunity to hear more about the study and to be consulted on the recommendations.

Both the discussion paper with the research findings for Mexico and a series of policy briefs being produced from this study will be available very soon on the [Security of Defenders project website](#).



Left: Workshop attendees in Mexico taking part in discussions.

## Law of Asylum workshop in Kuala Lumpur

In mid January, a group of refugee lawyers gathered in Kuala Lumpur to confront their role in protecting refugees even in jurisdictions where the law, the legal profession and the courts have been largely silent. The meeting kicked off a two year collaborative research project between the Centre and leading refugee lawyers from Egypt, India, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

These jurisdictions are traditionally seen as beyond the frontier of the international refugee regime; the project seeks to question this assumption and carve out a productive role for lawyers and the law. According to the principal investigator of the project, Martin Jones, there is a pressing need for such questioning and for the development of new protection practices: "The jurisdictions where refugee law is seen as irrelevant occupy a huge swath of territory, stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pacific Ocean. Given the worldwide refugee crisis and the reality that a majority of world's refugees are hosted by states in this swath of territory, it is imperative that we develop new ways of engaging legal actors and institutions in the protection of refugees."

As part of the project, the lawyers shared stories about their past experiences with refugees and the law. The stories were stories of challenges and setback but also of success – successes that have largely gone unnoticed in the mainstream literature about and practice of refugee protection. The storytelling method is at the heart of the project, which will document more than 120 legal encounters over the next two years in the selected jurisdictions and produce dozens of digital stories to reflect these encounters.

Alice Nah and Juliana Mensah from the Centre are co-investigators in the project; Kelley Loper from the University of Hong Kong is also a co-investigator in the project. The project is funded through the Global Challenges programme of the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council (UK).

For more information, see the project's website at [www.lawofasylum.net](http://www.lawofasylum.net).



## CAHR hosts workshop on temporary relocation in Geneva



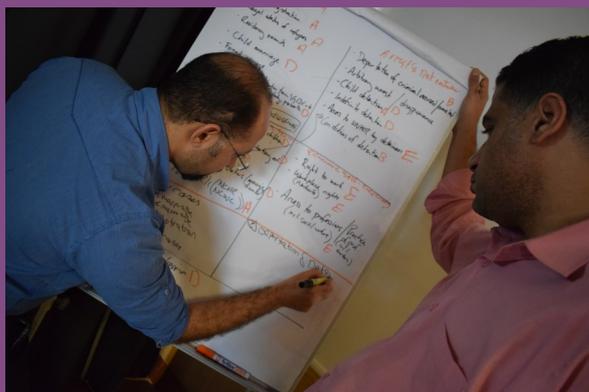
CAHR co-hosted a UN Human Rights Council side event on temporary relocation in Geneva on 1 March 2017. The co-organisers were the Dutch, Georgian, Costa Rican and Swiss permanent missions to the UN, Justice and Peace Netherlands, ProtectDefenders.eu and the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network.

The panelists included the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs Michel Forst, Mr Kees van Baar the Dutch Human Rights Ambassador, Joe Moses (HRD from Papua New Guinea), Memory Bandera (DefendDefenders), and Alexia Falisse (Justice and Peace).



On 2 March CAHR hosted a workshop on temporary relocation to build upon our work with the UN special rapporteur on HRDs and CAHR's extensive experience in running the Protective Fellowship Scheme for HRDs at Risk in identifying good practices for the protection of HRDs. The day was spent discussing issues affecting temporary relocation programmes, ranging from questions around access to relocation schemes to issues surrounding return after relocation. Participants in the workshop included relocation providers such as ICORN, Justice and Peace, Pan-African Human Rights Defender Network, Forum-Asia and Frontline Defenders.

Right: Kuala Lumpur workshop attendees sharing ideas and experience during workshop session.



## CAHR students participate in York International Women's Festival with an event focusing on WHRDs

On the closing day of the York International Women's Festival, CAHR students hosted *Women on the Frontline: Rights. Camera. Action*, an afternoon of short films examining the work of women human rights defenders around the world.



Through the Centre's Culture and Protest module, postgraduates Amy, Jon, Simon and Becky developed an interest in participatory filmmaking methods, which they applied to a project working with women human rights defenders from the Centre's Protective Fellowship Scheme.

The two short films they produced focused on human rights abuses in Egypt and environmental activism in Colombia and North Yorkshire, and were screened at the event. Other films shown on the day covered a broad geographical scope and addressed a number of different human rights issues, including films about Pakistani women's education advocate and Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, Honduran environmental and indigenous rights campaigner Berta Caceres and Zimbabwean women's rights activist and former CAHR fellow Nolwandle Simunyu.

Collectively, the films explored the many ways in which women can be human rights defenders, and highlighted the risks women face in human rights defence. The event, held at the Fulford Arms, was sold out.



## York: the UK's first Human Rights City

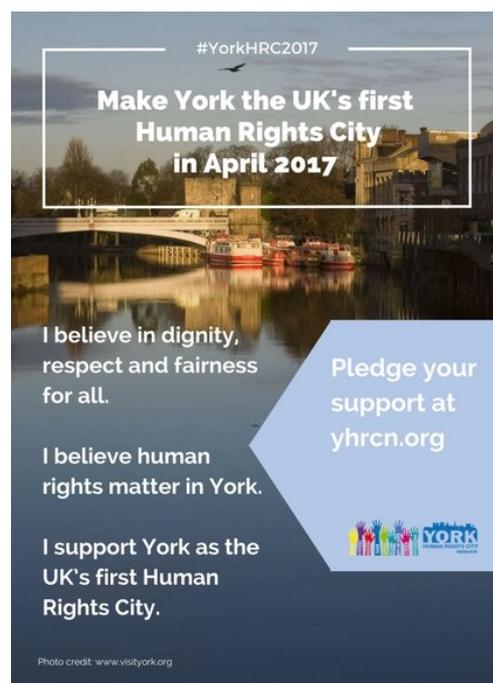
On 24 April 2017, the Right Honourable, the Lord Mayor of York, Councillor Dave Taylor, will declare York to be the UK's first Human Rights City.

As the UK's first Human Rights City, York has the ambition to use human rights in decision making, promote awareness and debate about human rights and ensure all residents' rights are respected.

Other cities in Europe and across the world have declared themselves Human Rights Cities but no city has yet done so in the United Kingdom. The declaration of a Human Rights City marks an ongoing process in which individuals, organisations and institutions engage with human rights giving localised meaning and context to these universal principles, freedoms and protections.

In 2015, York residents identified their local human rights priorities as the right to education, a decent standard of living, housing, health and social and

equality and non-discrimination (see our Human Rights Baseline Indicator Report for more information). These priorities help illustrate how human rights actually play out in our daily lives and will provide focus for conversation and action in York.



## Why York?

York is uniquely situated to lead on human rights in the United Kingdom given its rich history in democratic innovation, philanthropy and socially just and responsible business.

A key innovation in British civil and political human rights took place in York when King John granted York its Royal Charter that allowed the city to form its own local government.

Today, representatives from across the public, private and voluntary sectors in the city form the Fairness and Equalities Board work to address inequality and create a fairer York.

The legacies of the city's rich chocolate industry and charitably minded residents have fuelled thinking and innovations that have yielded model residential communities (New

Earswick), initiatives to address poverty and inequality and advocacy for the Human Rights Act.

As a Living Wage city, a number of York's employers, large and small, pay wages that reflect the level earnings that is required to achieve a decent standard of living, a human right we all have. As a Fairtrade city and City of Sanctuary ambitious to become "dementia friendly", York has made it clear with these and other initiatives that it embraces the values of dignity, fairness, justice and equality that underpin human rights.

## Perhaps the real question is why not?

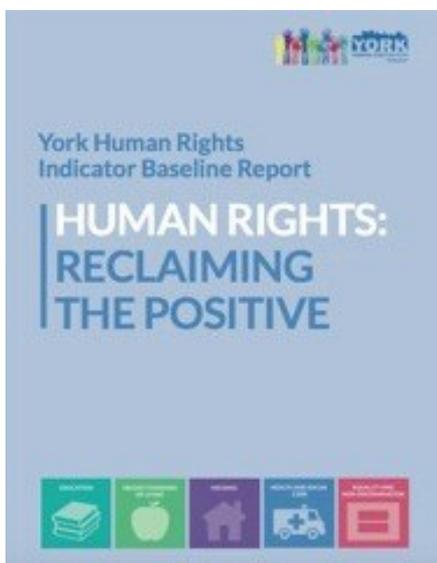
If you agree that York should be the UK's first Human Rights City, show your support at [www.yhr.cn.org/pledge-support/](http://www.yhr.cn.org/pledge-support/).

# York Human Rights Indicator Baseline Report



On 8 December 2016, York Human Rights City Network (YHRCN) launched the first annual Human Rights Indicator Report at King's Manor. The York Human Rights Indicator Baseline Report is the result of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESCR) grant with support from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Working with post-graduate students from the Centre for Applied Human Rights (CAHR), staff from the City of York Council and International Service, we were able to identify pieces of York-specific data, which measured on an annual basis, will allow us to assess the progress being made in York to protect and fulfil priority human rights, as identified by people who live, work and study in the city.



Furthermore, this report is intended to serve as a means of providing focus to discussion and debate about human rights in York and a platform for local advocacy.

In working more closely with organisations, the report serves as a means to both highlight the positive human rights stories in York and the areas where further attention and advocacy is required.

Themes that emerge from the 2016 baseline report are the progress that has been made in some area of the right to health and social care, the right to education and the right to housing, but as well the lack of continued progress under the right to a decent standard of living. The theme of inequality echoes the findings of other national reports, including that of the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#). For example, inequality can be seen in the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and peers which was larger than the national average in 2014/15 (but an improvement on data available for the previous year).

The right to equality and non-discrimination, protected under the Human Rights Act 1998, is a cross-cutting right, and through greater disaggregation of data and the inclusion of qualitative data in subsequent reports, we will be able to better monitor the enjoyment of human rights across wards and demographics in York. This ongoing project is a key component of our strategy to make York the UK's first Human Rights City. The report is available for download from the [York Human Rights City Network website](#) and printed copies are available at the Centre for Applied Human Rights.

# York Human Rights Film Festival 2017

Six postgraduate students from CAHR's two postgraduate human rights courses organised and ran the York Human Rights Film Festival 2017 on the weekend of 17-19 March, with themes matched to the priorities of the York Human Rights City Network who sponsored the event.



The programme showed short film productions by other student project groups covering topics such as human rights defenders, women's and environmental rights. Main feature films included 'The Divide', a film about the effects created by the imbalance in resources; 'Salam Neighbor', focusing on the plight of Syrian refugees in UN camps in Jordan; and 'High Water, Common Ground', a look at flooding in the UK and how community groups are taking action to mitigate against future disasters.

Each film was well attended and followed by a lively discussion with speakers from York Food Bank, York People's Assembly, York City of Sanctuary, York Travellers Trust, Inspire Youth, and the Two Ridings Community Foundation.



## CAHR hosts 7 HRDs on its Protective Fellowship Scheme in 2016-17

CAHR is hosting seven human rights defenders (HRDs) on its Protective Fellowship Scheme for HRDs at Risk in 2016-17.

The fellows include Colombian and Egyptian human rights lawyers, journalists from Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia and Tajikistan, and a Chadian HRD working on torture prevention. The fellows have given public talks in CAHR's Learning from HRDs public lecture series, as well as at Amnesty International's regional and local conferences across England. They have also done outreach work in schools in York and Yarm, and advocacy in London with Members of Parliament and The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO).

The current fellowship period ends in mid-April and new fellows are expected to arrive in York in September 2017. [The Protective Fellowship Scheme](#) is possible through generous donations from the Sigrid Rausing Trust, ProtectDefenders.eu, the JA Clark Charitable Trust, York Alumni and individual donations.



Above: CAHR staff Sanna Eriksson and Dr Alice Nah met with former CAHR visiting fellow Majid Maali in Kampala, Uganda, at the DefendDefenders General Assembly in February 2017.

## Fellowship case study: Colombian human rights lawyer benefits from advocacy opportunities

In 2016-17, CAHR has hosted Johana Rocha Gómez, a Colombian human rights lawyer working for the organisation [Tierra Digna](#) that defends the rights of communities in the face of extractive industries. The time at CAHR was an opportunity for Johana to develop her research "Demilitarising security policies for extractive industries: challenges in the building process for Territorial Peace in Colombia", receiving support from CAHR and its academic staff. Besides conducting research, one of the main benefits of the Protective Fellowship Scheme for Johana has been the opportunity to create awareness in the UK on the situation of human rights in Colombia, and the opportunities she has had to conduct advocacy with several UK-based and European organisations and governments.

In November 2016 Johana travelled to Morocco to the Conference of Parties on the Climate Change Convention, where she had the opportunity to take part in the global discussions on energy transition and control emission of greenhouse gases in order to achieve better conditions for climate justice.

In December she participated in the first annual EU Temporary Relocation Platform meeting as a beneficiary, to meet with other HRDs benefiting from EU funded relocation initiatives globally. She has also conducted advocacy at the [Swedish](#) and British governments, and met with German and British Members of Parliament in order to raise awareness around the impact of extractive industries on local communities in Colombia, the challenges for territorial and environmental peace in Colombia, and the persisting risks for environmental human rights defenders. During her visit to Berlin, Johana also participated in public action organised by the NGO [Kolkol](#), in order to raise awareness about the plight of environmental defenders in Latin America.

In March 2017 Johana attended a UN Human Rights Council parallel event in Geneva, presenting on a panel on [Environmental Defenders: responding to a global crisis](#) together with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs, Michel Forst, and the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, John Knox. Additionally she met with the Special Rapporteur on toxic wastes, and with diplomatic delegations from the Netherlands and Norway.



Together with her Egyptian colleague, fellow lawyer Doaa Mostafa Ahmed Hassan from the Fellowship Scheme, she completed a short secondment with the legal firm Drystone Chambers in London. The idea of the secondment was to learn more about the use of human rights mechanisms in international criminal cases.

Johana has also conducted local level outreach work, holding talks at the University of York, at local schools, at the local York Amnesty International group, and with ABColombia, the University of London – Goldsmiths College, and the Coal Action Network. As a result of Johana's different advocacy and outreach activities, she is now confident that Tierra Digna's work is better known among solidarity groups in civil society as well as with government and intergovernmental actors.

You can follow Johana (@joharochag) and Tierra Digna (@TierraDigna) on Twitter.

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