



# IN SMALL PLACES CLOSE TO HOME

Celebrating 10 YEARS of human rights work at York





Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

**Eleanor Roosevelt, United Nations, March 27, 1948**

## Table of Contents

Welcome from the Vice-Chancellor	4
Welcome from the Centre Director	5
Introduction in numbers	6
Highlights	7
Our Fellows	8
Protective Fellowship Scheme	10
Jestina	12
Dina	12
Saifora	14
Global partnerships	15
York: Human Rights City	17
Teaching and learning	19
Research, art and culture and the Centre	21
Human rights defenders	22
Meeting global challenges	25
Development alternatives	26
Looking to the future	28
Philanthropic support	29
Thank you	30

## COVER IMAGES

Mohamed Elbaker  
Doaa Mostafa  
Hikma Ahmed  
Dina Meza  
Nodjigoto Charbonnel  
Johana Rocha Gomez  
Arwa Elrabie  
Jestina Mukoko  
Ahmed Al-Kolaibi  
Gerald Hayo  
Marc Niyonkuru  
Nea'ma Hisham  
Abdiaziz Ibrahim  
Ruth Mumbi  
Getachew Simie Obse  
Karak Denyok  
Mahad Omar Diriye  
Katsiaryna Borsuk

**CELEBRATING  
10 YEARS OF  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS**



## Welcome from the Vice-Chancellor

The Centre for Applied Human Rights was founded on the principle that real-life human rights experience and evidence should inform every aspect of its teaching and research, in order to improve the lives of people around the world.

As the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York celebrates its 10th anniversary, I would like to offer my sincere thanks and admiration to the Centre, for its extensive and committed work. Thanks to the clarity of thinking, energy, and imagination of the staff team under the strong leadership of Professor Paul Gready, and with the support of our funders and volunteers, the Centre – which is unique among British universities – has now hosted an impressive 75 human rights defenders from 44 countries.

The human rights defenders (people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights) hosted at York are cherished members of our community both during their time in the UK and as part of a powerful network of leaders in the field of human rights protection on their return home. I continue to be deeply inspired by their dedication to tackling discrimination and injustice, often at great personal risk.

During the present period of intense international political challenge, I have become ever more convinced of the vital role that universities play in helping to build and secure a society in which fairness and equality, together with freedom of thought and expression are celebrated and nurtured. At York, we have responded to this challenge with a firm commitment to welcoming staff and students from around the world and practical action to welcome refugee and asylum seeking-students. Of all our activity in this arena, none is more vital than the work of the Centre for Applied Human Rights.

The Centre is recognised as a source of expertise and leadership in the field of human rights defender protection and support, evidenced by its relationship with the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders. This is a tribute to the quality, relevance and authority of the work being carried out at York. We will continue to offer sanctuary and protection to human rights defenders at risk, to grow our international support network for ongoing in-country work, and to offer practical, research-based advice to human rights organisations around the world.

The Centre's vital work is ongoing, and is made possible thanks to the enduring generosity of our many funding bodies and supporters in York and around the world. In particular, I would like to offer our sincere gratitude to the Sigrid Rausing Trust and the Open Society Foundations for their sustained and transformative financial support.

I am very pleased to introduce this book to you and congratulate the Centre on its 10th anniversary.

### Professor Koen Lamberts

Vice-Chancellor and President  
University of York

## Welcome from the Director

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, from scratch. 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.

The first Fellows arrived in the spring of 2008, two women from Afghanistan and Zimbabwe. Since 2008 we have covered the A to Z of the globe. 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.

From this seed a Centre of diverse interests and expertise has grown and gathered momentum. For example, in 2016 we launched the Human Rights Defender Hub which integrates 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 within civil society.

We live in challenging times. A perfect storm of austerity, rising inequality, populism and nativism, and security concerns have rendered physical, administrative, legal and financial 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.

My thanks to all those who have supported us in our first decade, and I hope you will continue to support our work as we approach our adolescent years!

### Professor Paul Gready

Director, Centre for Applied Human Rights





# 10 YEARS

     **24**  
     **STAFF**

**TAUGHT 351**  
 POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

**34 CHEVENING**  
**SCHOLARS**

**58**      **VOLUNTEERS**

**15 BOARD**   
**MEMBERS**

**75 FELLOWS**  
**FROM 44**  
**COUNTRIES**

**25 FUNDERS**

**HOSTED 1**   
 ACADEMIC JOURNAL

## Highlights

### Human rights defenders and Protective Fellowships

Human rights defenders risk their lives to fight injustice and strengthen democracy around the world. The Centre's Protective Fellowship Scheme hosts up to 10 human rights defenders per year, who benefit from enhanced research skills, other capacity building, networking opportunities, and respite from an often dangerous environment. Our Fellows are at the heart of the Centre's work in supporting good practice in temporary relocation, establishing a research agenda and global network of researchers on human rights defenders, and integrating their experience into teaching a postgraduate programme for the next generation of activists.

### York: Human Rights City

York: Human Rights City (YHRC) is an initiative that seeks to address local human rights concerns in small places, close to home. By focusing on the positive difference human rights can make in the everyday lives of York residents we seek to create a culture of human rights that acts as a catalyst for change. In a survey, York residents selected education, housing, health and social care, a decent standard of living, and equality and non-discrimination as their priority rights – and YHRC has prioritised work on these rights. On 24 April 2017, York declared itself the UK's first Human Rights City.

### Research

The staff of the Centre are involved in ongoing research on a number of topics, including major funded projects on the security and protection of human rights defenders at risk, justice and/after authoritarian rule in Egypt and Tunisia, development alternatives, and the law of asylum in the Middle East and Asia. The Centre has received funding from multiple research councils and charitable organisations in recognition of its research excellence.

### Culture and human rights

The Centre has done groundbreaking work on the arts and human rights. In 2013 the Centre hosted Juliana Mensah, an artist with a background in community development and social action, as a Leverhulme Artist in Residence. More recently we have also worked with Emilie Flower, a film-maker and multimedia artist based at Insightshare and Pica Studios, and other artists around the world. The arts now inform many elements of our work from teaching courses on culture and protest, to using the arts to reflect on risk and wellbeing for activists, and mobilising the arts in research to imagine alternative approaches and futures and disseminate findings to new audiences.

### Teaching

The Centre teaches an MA in Applied Human Rights and an LLM in International Human Rights Law and Practice. These programmes are distinctive because of the participation of human rights defenders, the practice-based opportunities (for example placements in South Africa, Malaysia, or York; and projects, such as organising a film festival, linked to the Human Rights City campaign), and the fact that all staff have strong real-world experience.



Human rights defender training



...They cannot be seen  
on any maps of the world”



Our fellows

Our Fellows come from all over the world from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

Number of Fellows.



1. Afghanistan	13. El Salvador	25. Nepal	36. South Sudan
2. Azerbaijan	14. Ethiopia	26. Nigeria	37. Sri Lanka
3. Bangladesh	15. Honduras	27. Pakistan	38. Sudan
4. Belarus	16. India	28. Palestine/Gaza	39. Syria
5. Brazil	17. Indonesia	28a. Palestine/West bank	40. Tajikistan
6. Burma	18. Iran	29. Papua New Guinea	41. Thailand
7. Burundi	19. Iraq	30. Russia	42. Ukraine
8. Chad	20. Jamaica	31. Rwanda	43. Yemen
9. China	21. Kenya	32. Sierra Leone	44. Zimbabwe
10. Colombia	22. Kyrgyzstan	33. Somali / Kenya	
11. D.R.Congo	23. Liberia	34. Somalia	
12. Egypt	24. Mexico	35. Somaliland	

Protective Fellowship Scheme for human rights defenders at York


One of the most important elements in bringing about improvements in human rights at a local level is the presence of active human rights defenders. They often find themselves working in hostile environments and without adequate training and support. Over time, the cumulative challenges of working in such an environment can have a negative impact on the individuals concerned, their families and on their contribution to human rights work.

The Centre for Applied Human Rights created an innovative response to this challenge through its Protective Fellowship Scheme for human rights defenders. Fellows are invited to come to York for periods ranging from three to six months. During this time they benefit from time away from a difficult environment, and from educational resources designed to increase their effectiveness and their ability to influence policy and practice when they return home. The scheme makes a unique contribution in enhancing the sustainability of social activism.

The benefits are four-fold:

- **Protection:** Fellows have the opportunity to take time to recuperate and reflect upon their work, enabling them to return to their activism re-energised.
- **Capacity-building:** Enhancing the research and practice skills of human rights defenders – including the development of a project proposal – is a sustainable way to bring about medium and long-term social change in their home countries.
- **Strengthening networks:** Human rights defenders strengthen their support networks in the UK and beyond, to enhance their effectiveness and provide support if challenging circumstances persist.
- **Shared experience:** The Centre benefits from the experience of the Fellows, as their knowledge and experience is shared with staff and students.

The Centre is regularly involved in discussions concerning good practice in temporary relocation, at local, regional and international levels. Examples of this work include cooperation with the Pan-African Human Rights Defenders Network / DefendDefenders, Forum-Asia and the Scottish Government.

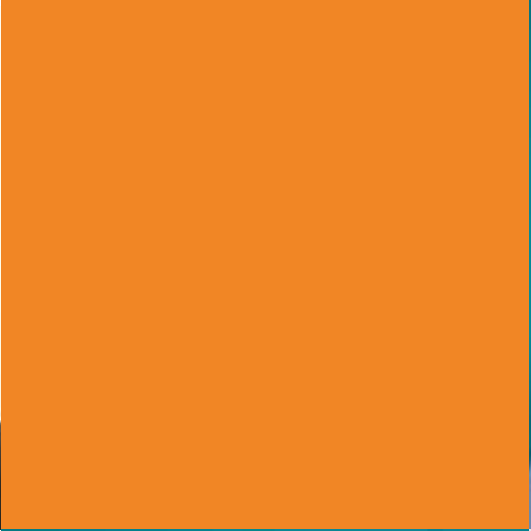
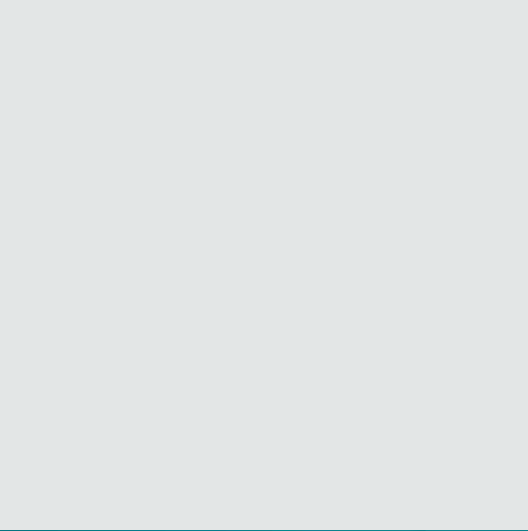
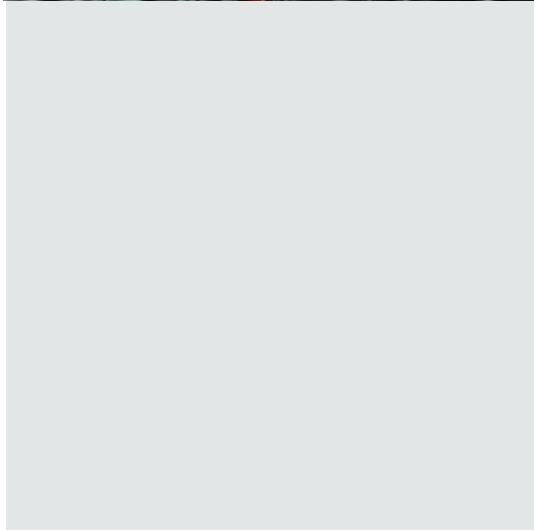


Hosting the visiting human rights defenders in the city of York has been an inspiration. They have brought to us their experiences of working for human rights in challenging environments. They have helped us to look at our society through a human rights lens and in so doing have created a link between the local and the global, and shown us that a human rights framework provides us with a shared set of values to which we can all aspire."

Stephen Pittam, Former Trust Secretary, The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust



*“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin?”*



*“In small places, close to home”*



*“So close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world”*



## In their own words



**Jestina M Mukoko**  
Zimbabwe, 2013/14

My experience as a visiting human rights defender at the Centre for Applied Human Rights has been both inspiring and invigorating. Apart from providing respite that I desperately needed after an intensive and trying time at the frontline the opportunity has also been life changing.

A seed sown a few years back found the ground in York to be fertile and germinated. I have been able to initiate the process of dealing with the pain and anguish that has burdened me for a long time. For a while my book project has occupied my mind but it took just a single creative writing class to transform all that. I particularly like the tranquility of the environment and I do not have to worry about who is following me or get agitated the moment there is a knock at the door. I have learnt so much as a visiting defender from all the classes that I have attended and

I am excited to share the experience with my colleagues back home.

“During my stay in York the people I interacted with at the Centre helped me to confront my pain and anger... The Artist in Residence at the Centre, Juliana Mensah... first pricked the bubble that made it difficult for me to recount the ordeal... The process itself was harrowing, rekindling and making me relive the ordeal. At times I could actually hear the breath of my tormentors. At times I felt uncomfortable as I imagined myself in the corner of the interrogation room. During that time I also remember dreaming that I had been abducted again and was relieved to wake up and realise that I was in York. The distance gave me a sense of security. It was also in York that the seeds of this book... grew to fruition as I began to write seriously.”

*The Abduction and Trial of Jestina Mukoko: The Fight for Human Rights in Zimbabwe* by Jestina Mukoko (KMM Press, Johannesburg, 2016, pp. 104-5)



**Dina Meza**  
Honduras, 2013

The Protective Fellowship had a profound impact on me – it changed my life: my vision about the world is different now. Before York I was very stressed due to the threats in my country on my life and my family, but when I arrived in York I started thinking differently when participating in classes organised at the Centre. I gained more knowledge... and I was improving my English. The environment in York was great. The students are very very good with the Fellows and the teachers' sensibility and professionalism is important.

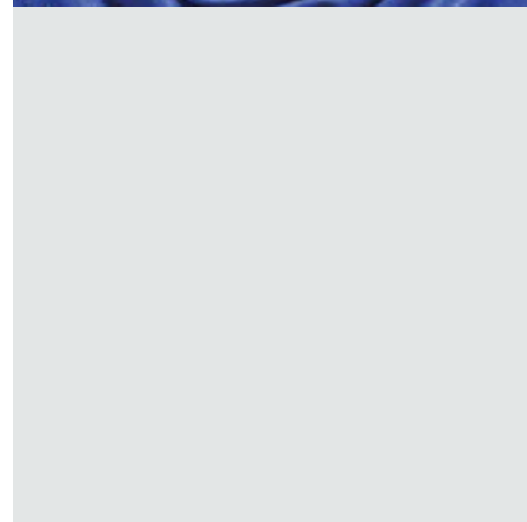
In the Centre I received support for my new project called Journalism and Democracy. Really, the project was born at the Centre. The project

has since developed into a digital newspaper called Pasos De Animal Grande. The project also helps journalists, media workers and vulnerable groups in Honduras (youth, women, indigenous and LGBTI persons) to exercise their freedom of expression, to document human rights abuses without censorship, to protect themselves against the threat of danger, and to be better connected with and supported by the international community. Risk management and how to structure safety plans have helped the project and the five staff who now work with me. I learned all this in York.

(The newspaper has been funded by a UK-based philanthropic organisation through connections Dina made while in York.)



“Yet they are  
the world of the  
individual person”



“the neighborhood  
she lives in”



“the school or college  
she attends”





## Remembering David Kato (1964 – 2011)

Human rights defenders often work in great danger. Following a period in York (2010), David returned to Uganda to continue campaigning for the rights of the LGBTI community. He was murdered in his own home, following a court victory against a newspaper which had called for gay activists to be killed.

“David believed in the rule of law and seeking justice. He always encouraged me to stand firm and not bury my head in the ground. His death made me stronger.”

John Wambere, Spectrum Uganda Initiatives (Guardian, 27 January 2016)



## Saifora Afghanistan, 2008

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 (which reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts). We ensure that relevant organisations know about this resolution, and carry out training with the government, NGOs and communities. We also advocate to the government about how to implement this resolution.

I am also a part of a team that established a civilian oversight committee to monitor how the police deal with gender-based violence (GBV) at police stations. This committee included Members of Parliament. 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, so we offer extensive training and system development packaging to them. We also run the first ever hotline for victims of violence, and we have a database of organisations working with GBV victims.

## JA Clark Award for Women's Empowerment

The JA Clark Award for Women's Empowerment enabled funding for three projects in 2015-2017 in Brazil (Spring 2016), Papua New Guinea (Autumn 2016) and Colombia (started Autumn 2017). All projects were developed during the Protective Fellowship Scheme and implemented after the Fellows returned to their home countries. One last project will be funded in 2018.

For example, the project on empowering women in Simbu Province, Papua New Guinea, tackled witchcraft-related violence and enabled Monica Paulus to establish the Simbu Human Rights

Defenders Network. The network consists of 25 organisational partners, and the training and awareness raising conducted through the network has reached 600 defenders, 200 survivors of witchcraft-related violence, and another 500 people in partner institutions such as the police, healthcare services and education. Overall Monica estimates that 5,000 people in Simbu province have been reached by the impact of her Fellowship. Monica says:

“The JA Clark funding was the basis of what the organisation (Simbu Human Rights Defenders Network) is now, and we are moving forward. It was really the JA Clark Award that made us come together and work together.”

## Global partnerships

### Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

The Centre for Applied Human Rights has become one of the world's leading centres for research on the security and protection of human rights defenders at risk. The Centre provides research support to the UN Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on the situation of human rights defenders for both thematic and country reports. We have provided research support to the UNSR for his reports to the UN's Human Rights Council on good protection practices (February 2016) and the protection of those who defend the rights of people on the move (forthcoming); to the UN General Assembly on environmental human rights defenders (August 2016); and for his country visits to Hungary (February 2016) and Mexico (January 2017).

*Many thanks for all your excellent work with the report. I am very pleased with the final product, and it will definitely be heavily used by us during the visit.*

Feedback on the Country Assessment Report: Mexico

*Your research into the country assessment was superbly helpful and professionally prepared. It helped us prepare and conduct the visit, especially due to the complex nature of the event.*

Feedback from the Office of the UNSR



Michel Forst, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

## The UN declaration

In 1998, after more than a decade of negotiation and advocacy, the UN General Assembly adopted the landmark Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The rights protected under the Declaration include:

- the right to be protected;
- the right to freedom of assembly, and of association;
- the right to develop and discuss new human rights ideas and to advocate for their acceptance;
- the right to criticise government bodies and agencies and to make proposals to improve their functioning;
- the right to provide legal assistance or other advice and assistance in defence of human rights;
- the right to unhindered access to and communication with non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, and international bodies;
- the right to access resources for the purpose of protecting human rights, including the receipt of funds from abroad.



Tunisian truth and dignity commission

Tunisia is attempting to address a legacy of rights violations committed under the previous authoritarian regimes, including sexual and gender-based violence against women. The Centre for Applied Human Rights began collaborating with the the Truth and Dignity Commission (TDC) during a three-year research project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Funding was provided to embed two researchers in the TDC to work on sexual violence. A second research impact grant extended and deepened the significance of this research.

This research will secure insights into what women survivors want by way of reparations for past abuses, and particularly transformative reparations which seek to challenge the everyday structures of discrimination and violence – in small places close to home. We will then collaborate with the Women’s Committee in drafting its section of the TDC’s final report, and associated recommendations. A final element of the project will seek to engage civil society actors, donors and relevant government agencies to build support for the recommendations and their implementation.

The project represents an innovative approach to partnership with a state-led transitional justice mechanism.

“The Women’s Commission at the Tunisian Truth and Dignity Commission (TDC), under my leadership, has participated in a research collaboration with Professor Paul Gready and the Centre for Applied Human Rights for three years. The research has focused on the very sensitive issue of sexual violations against women under previous authoritarian governments. Very little research of this kind has been conducted in Tunisia. The collaboration with York has been invaluable in shaping and conducting the research, and will provide important material for our final report and recommendations. Our aim is that transformative reparations and recommendations will address some of the needs of survivors, but also challenge the root causes of everyday sexual violence in Tunisia. The Centre’s support for our research, and in challenging political circumstances, has been invaluable.”

Ibtihel Abdellatif, Women’s Commissioner, Truth and Dignity Commission

Centre research team briefing TDC Commissioners on their research



York: Human Rights City declaration

In becoming a Human Rights City, York embraces a vision of a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe community built on the foundations of universal human rights. This vision is shared by citizens and institutions in our city, including the City Council, North Yorkshire Police, voluntary organisations and faith communities.

We are building on York’s own particular history of democratic innovation, philanthropy and an international outlook, all of which have shaped our commitment to social justice.

This declaration marks an ambition. A significant point in a journey, not a final destination. As the UK’s first Human Rights City we are committed to making our vision real, putting fundamental rights at the heart of our policies, hopes and dreams for the future.

“North Yorkshire Police have been involved in York: Human Rights City from its inception. Being an organisation that operates as a human rights practitioner, North Yorkshire Police has gained a great deal from the partnership with more academic organisations while helping to operationalise the aims of the group. This has seen the network arrange for the attachment of Master’s-level students, where they have undertaken research on the application of a rights based approach both vertically through the rank structure and across the departments in the York District. Although this research has helped to identify areas that can be developed, the greatest benefit has been in allowing officers to engage with people who are able to articulate their actions in terms of a rights-based approach and recognise the benefits that this can bring.”

Adam Thompson, Superintendent, North Yorkshire Police



## York: Human Rights City

On 24 April 2017, York declared itself the UK's first Human Rights City.

As a partnership, York: Human Rights City (YHRC) includes representatives of the City of York Council and local statutory bodies (North Yorkshire Police), strong civil society input from York Council for Voluntary Services and York Citizens Advice Bureau, and intellectual leadership from the Centre for Applied Human Rights. The declaration was the culmination of five years' work.

Through our work in a city we have been able to model a new approach to human rights, intervening in an integrated way to inform policy and practice, public awareness and action, and protection for vulnerable groups. Human rights is often criticised for being too adversarial. YHRC's approach to social change seeks a mature relationship with the City Council and other power-holders in the city, aiming to reclaim a positive image for human rights by addressing local, everyday concerns. The declaration secured cross-party political support in the city, and widespread interest from local civil society and business.

An annual indicator report assessing progress against five priority rights chosen as local priorities (education, housing, health and social care, a decent standard of living, and equality and non-discrimination) is at the heart of YHRC's policy and outreach work. The indicator report is complemented by 'Opinionate' workshops in secondary schools, an annual Human Rights Film Festival, training with civil society groups and the police, and more.



## Teaching and learning

### Postgraduate programmes

The MA in Applied Human Rights is rooted in the social sciences and humanities, and looks at how these disciplines inform and help us to understand human rights practice. It focuses on themes such as narrative, identity, culture and cultural diversity, power, participation and empowerment.

The LLM in International Human Rights Law and Practice engages students in a critical and nuanced examination of the key paradox of international human rights law: that the recent proliferation of treaties and adjudicative bodies has not significantly diminished serious human rights abuses.

Both programmes are informed by the Centre's expertise on human rights defenders, and the need to enhance the legal, political and social space for them to do their work.

The international stature of the programmes is illustrated by the high number of Chevening Scholars (international scholars funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office) who apply to study at the Centre.

Over the past five years 34 Chevening scholars have studied at the Centre, forming one third of all the Chevening scholars who have studied at the University of York during that time.



MA students in South Africa

### Innovative teaching

*"I was first attracted to the MA course offered at the Centre for Applied Human Rights because of its emphasis on practicality. The Centre not only ropes in lecturers with years of experience in various human rights issues, they also host a number of human rights defenders each semester. I always enjoy the unconventional teaching methods, and the lecturers' willingness to encourage constant class participation. There is so much to learn from a room full of people who come with different experiences and backgrounds in human rights. I absolutely love the interactive environment which makes classes fun and entertaining, and always something to look forward to."*

**Katrina Arokiam, Malaysia, 2012/13**

### Learning by doing

*"Alongside the teaching came the applied component of the MA. I have been involved in one project after the other. I worked on a team developing an advocacy strategy for traveller communities living in York, was part of another team which planned a Human Rights Film Festival, and then I worked on a human rights indicator project for the York: Human Rights City network. I believe it has made my experience well rounded and has allowed me to work with groups of people or on projects that I would have not had the chance to otherwise."*

**Mayada Soliman, Egypt, 2015/16**

*"One of the key components of the LLM is the two-week placement. Students are given the opportunity to conduct a research project in partnership with an organisation that is currently engaged in human rights work. The placement period is challenging, but the Centre offers a strong support network to the students throughout the placement process. This encompasses opportunities to foster strong relationships with teammates, guidance from the project supervisors, and the preparatory Defending Human Rights module. I cannot overestimate the value of the placement; my experiences were immensely rewarding and incredibly interesting."*

**Alice Trotter, UK, 2017/18**



Career development

“ I was employed by International Alert, a peace building INGO, as a Senior Project Officer in Lebanon within three months of finishing my MA in September 2015. My responsibilities include establishing a local mechanism of mitigating tensions in partnership with the local and affected community living in a multi sectarian region on the border of the endless war occurring in Syria since 2011. Being exposed to various modules, especially the Transitional Justice module, and the placement that took place in South Africa, was very significant in enriching my skills and extracting lessons which helped direct me in my current job.”

Rony Al Assaad, Lebanon, 2014/15

“ After a year of working on refugee issues, I wanted to develop my education in order to increase my career opportunities both within and outside the government. I chose the LLM at the Centre for a number of reasons: the practical dimension to the learning, the truly international flavour of the course and the Protective Fellowship programme. The LLM has not disappointed - it has provided me a thorough academic understanding of international human rights through interactive and applied learning. The knowledge and practical skills I developed during the LLM have already resulted in new career opportunities for me and have helped me to progress to more senior levels within government.”

Michaela Throup, UK, part-time 2010/11-2011/12

Doctoral

The Centre has a growing number of PhD students and considers applications for doctoral studies on a wide range of topics, with a particular interest in human rights defenders, human rights practice, human rights and development, refugee law and policy, non-state actors and international law, human rights law and religion, and transitional justice. Research students are supported through the Centre's practice networks, interesting teaching opportunities and expert supervision. A recent collaboration between the Centre and the international development organisation ActionAid, supporting a PhD student, is illustrative of our innovative doctoral delivery approaches.

“ After studying the MA in Applied Human Rights, I was keen to continue in the Centre's PhD programme. The fieldwork experience I gained during the MA visit to Cape Town inspired my PhD's exploration of transitional justice, masculinities and male victimisation. Additionally, it gave me a head-start on the PhD by facilitating links with a network of practitioners.”

Lucy Harding, UK, MA 2009/10, PhD 2015

Research

The Centre for Applied Human Rights is an interdepartmental research centre. As such, its role is to build research collaborations which span academic disciplines and to reach out to external partners such as NGOs, inter-governmental agencies, think tanks and social movements. All of our research involves such collaborations and focuses on real-world challenges.

Current funded research projects:

- Strengthening the security and protection of defenders at risk;
- Transformative justice in Egypt and Tunisia;
- Development alternatives;
- The law of asylum in the Middle East and Asia.

Areas of research expertise:

- Cultures of human rights practice;
- Economic, social and cultural rights;
- Human rights cities;
- Human rights and development;
- Non-state actors and international law;
- Refugee law and policy;
- Religion and law;
- Transitional justice.

The Centre also hosts the Journal of Human Rights Practice (JHRP), published by Oxford University Press. JHRP is the leading journal focusing on human rights application and activism.

“ The JHRP has not only filled a very big gap in the human rights literature, but has succeeded in bringing a whole range of new perspectives to bear on the field. In a short period, it has established itself as a must-read journal for everyone interested in how human rights advocacy actually works, or doesn't work, in practice.”

Philip Alston, John Norton Pomeroy Professor of Law, New York University



“the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice”



Case study:

## Strengthening the Security and Protection of Defenders at Risk through Research

**Navigating risk, managing security and receiving support**

The largest study of its kind, this research project focuses on how human rights defenders navigate risks, manage their personal security, and receive protection support in five countries – Colombia, Mexico, Egypt, Kenya, and Indonesia.

Through interviews, focus groups and surveys with over 400 human rights defenders at risk, this project proposes ways in which protection can be reconceptualised and reorganised for greater effectiveness. The findings point to the importance of:

- Developing individual and collective strategies to strengthen the wellbeing of human rights defenders at risk
- Protecting collectives and communities along with individual human rights defenders
- Protecting families and loved ones who share the risks that human rights defenders face
- Understanding the varied ways in which gender affects the risks and security of women and LGBTIQ defenders and how protection initiatives should be adapted accordingly
- Tracing the impact of negative narratives on the security of defenders and how these can be countered

- Strengthening the way security training is understood and implemented
- Understanding the way in which social networks shape experiences of security and protection

Research findings have been shared with over 700 academics, practitioners and human rights defenders at conferences, workshops, and meetings. The Centre has also worked with artists to develop a body of work – poems, short films, digital art, paintings, textile art, illustrations – aimed at building understanding amongst the public about the emotional journeys, experiences and motivations of human rights defenders at risk.

**Civil society networks of protection**

The Centre is also completing a study on local civil society networks of protection in the East and Horn of Africa in collaboration with DefendDefenders. This study highlights the overwhelming need for the protection of human rights defenders at risk at the local level, identifies the types of defenders that are the most difficult to protect, and recognises the difficulties that local civil society actors face in dealing with perpetrators and hostile state actors. This study shows that local civil society networks are significant actors for building public understandings about who defenders are, and about the right that every person has to promote and protect human rights.



## Artwork from the Navigating Risk Project

**The witness**

'The witness' depicts a human rights defender witnessing his friend being killed while he anticipates his own death.

**Ndereva Mutua, Kenya, 2017, oil on canvas**



**What makes you feel secure**

In a series of illustrations, Deena Mohamed highlights the factors that make human rights defenders in Egypt feel secure and the factors that make them feel insecure.

**Deena Mohamed, Egypt, 2017, illustrations**

**Cobija**

“A cobija is a blanket, and cobijar means to give shelter, to offer refuge, to protect someone. It's a verb, an action. That's the reason I like to make blankets from fabric scraps: making a blanket has a very symbolic meaning to me. And that's why I decided to make one as a response to the project Navigating Risk, Managing Security, and Receiving Support at the University of York. It also has a double meaning: human rights defenders protect us, but we also need to protect, shelter and take care of them. We need to show the work they do as well as the risks they face and the way they deal with them.”

**Rosa Borrás, Mexico, 2017, textile**





## Affective Necessities

*We need to break some beliefs  
we were educated  
that we should  
take care of others  
the training is  
you need to take care of others  
in order to be loved.*

*We need to deconstruct.*

*This recognition is ephemeral,  
a belief,  
the origin  
saying;  
the present is for sacrifice  
and struggle,  
the future  
for the working class  
and the proletariat,  
for us  
nothing,  
for everyone  
everything.<sup>1</sup>*

*That is a timebomb.  
The challenge  
affective necessities;  
health,  
just salary,  
air,  
a ten minute break  
each hour  
when we have ten hours of meetings.  
It was seen as an ornament,  
you are measured  
for the number of attacks you have suffered  
not by the way you survived.  
To find the balance  
make visible the tools which make us survive.*

## Case study:

### Meeting the Global Challenges

The Global Challenges Research Fund was established by the UK Government as key component of the UK Aid Strategy. Several Centre projects are currently funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund.

#### The Law of Asylum

Is someone a refugee if he or she has fled to a state that hasn't signed the Refugee Convention or recognised refugees in its domestic law? If this person isn't a refugee, does he or she have any rights? What protection is owed to him or her by the new state of residence? How can the law, lawyers and legal institutions respond to the vulnerability, needs and capacities of such individuals?

From Lebanon through to Malaysia, a majority of the world's refugees live in a broad, contiguous swath of states that have not signed up to the core international agreements concerning how refugees should be protected. In such locations, refugees are often treated as "outside of the law" and subject to discrimination, abuse and other serious human rights violations. The answers to the opening questions for these people are too often in the negative and the result can be catastrophic for refugees.

Working with four leading providers of legal aid to refugees in Egypt, India, Malaysia and Hong Kong, the project is evaluating the experiences of refugees, lawyers and legal aid organisations in using innovative legal arguments and frameworks to protect refugees. The project is supporting the mapping of the

relevant local legal frameworks through doctrinal legal analysis, interviews and workshops with legal experts, and discussion with refugee community leaders. The project has provided 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. It is collecting detailed stories about 120 of these legal encounters; these stories are being documented over time, using a range of material, and from multiple points of view. Forty of the stories will be turned into multimedia, digital stories for further online discussion and advocacy.

The goal of the project is to support new refugee legal aid programming in the Global South, particularly in places where such programming has been overlooked because either or both the lack of the Refugee Convention and the absence of local refugee legislation.

*"equal opportunity,  
equal dignity without  
discrimination."*



<sup>1</sup>Zapatista maxim "Para nosotros nada, para todos todo"



## Development Alternatives

This project seeks to use the arts to explore the links between creative activism and development alternatives. Development alternatives is understood to mean the diversity of practice and thinking that offers an alternative to mainstream international development – the mainstream being neo-liberal, service delivery, aid-centred, hierarchical, and entrepreneurial. Arts-based methods are being used to explore themes such as disruption, performance and translation. How can we think differently about such well-established practices as development and human rights? How do we include new voices – in particular diverse voices and approaches from the Global South – in such deliberations? What are our visions or utopias for the future?

As part of an GCRF/AHRC-funded project, the Centre and ActionAid are working with activists, artists and academics in Bangladesh and Uganda to develop and test new creative methodologies that equip researchers and practitioners to elicit (rather than suppress) alternative perspectives. In July 2017, Emilie Flower and Ruth Kelly facilitated arts-based workshops with artists and activists in Dhaka and Kampala. The workshops were experimental, testing how arts-based techniques can help disrupt our ways of knowing, make us sensitive to how we perform development and allow us to explore alternative models for resistance and alternative visions for the future. In 2018 further workshops will be held in Bangladesh and Uganda involving artists, activists and academics with a view to developing collaborative research projects on the theme of development alternatives.

### Workshop participants in Uganda:

“I think our society has forgotten to dream and yet I think change starts in the mind. If you can imagine it, if you can really see it, then you can walk towards its fruition.”

“And I think in a way we are talking about utopias, we are also talking about daring and thinking about the unexpected, inviting the unexpected to be part of what then we begin to create as a norm. So it's not a stable space.”

“ActionAid has a strong congruence with the work of the Centre for Applied Human Rights – a like-minded commitment to working with human rights defenders who are engaged in frontline struggles around the world, supporting people to reflect on their practice, to generate and to share knowledge. Some of our most exciting work together has involved finding creative ways to promote critical thinking and explore alternative visions of development.”

David Archer, Head of Programme Development, ActionAid



Uganda Workshop, July 2017



Bangladesh Workshop, July 2017

“Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere”

## Art and Culture at the Centre

Juliana Mensah produced the poem ‘Broken English’ while she was a Leverhulme artist-in-residence at the Centre.

### Broken English

Sometimes the English is broken  
and I don't fix it.  
Like the bone that snapped  
after a misplaced step sent her tumbling.  
It left the elbow at an angle  
it was not designed to hold.  
The joint that healed  
(while she lay in the camp for the displaced)  
grew too much cartilage,  
and is stronger now  
in that broken place.

Sometimes the English is broken  
and I leave it.  
Like the cracked glass with shards  
refracting more rainbow  
than the pane could ever hold.

Sometimes the English is broken  
and I sit with it.  
Listen to its song.  
She has taken the time to  
hold another's tongue  
in her mouth. Felt it sit  
like a slug at the back of her teeth,  
but did not vomit.  
Held it in place. Held her breath,  
exhaled, and let the words out  
for the others who could not come

Sometimes the English is broken  
and I look,  
pin the impulse to fix frayed edges.  
The visible stitches are his;  
disappearing words hastily sewn  
before they evaporate.  
This skill, the last echo  
of a previous life as a tailor, mending men

Sometimes the English is broken  
and I watch it  
plod across the page  
with a forthright grace  
part pidgin, part Shakespeare;  
mis/spelling his name in 50 ways.  
Creating words that live for generations  
longer than the word he meant to write.  
Forming worlds in those broken places  
to fill the holes the careless do not see.

It may, at times, be necessary  
to reword, reorder, to switch or tack  
for the sake of clarity.  
But hold the urge to reconstruct.  
Darning is for socks.  
Repair for furniture, bones and cars.  
Stitches for skin and fabric;  
mending is for objects more solid than the soul  
that travels in language.  
Sometimes we must let the English be broken.

Juliana Mensah



Looking to the future  
By Professor Paul Gready

A Centre like ours needs both a clear identity, something or some things it is known for doing, and to adapt as circumstances change. It is a hard balance to maintain. It involves holding on to a core while also letting go of the familiar to take on new and unsettling challenges as you try to anticipate the future. We are best known for our work on risk and protection, and their implications for activism. I hope we are also respected for the way we work – collaboratively, across disciplines and sectors, locally as well as internationally, blending academic insights with practice, combining leadership, reflection and humility.

One quality that I increasingly see underpinning our work is the search for innovative ways of working in challenging times. Such innovation necessarily takes many forms – the paradigm shift in human rights work (away from a top down legalism and towards more of a focus on non-state actors, civil society participation and forms of local action), alternatives to mainstream international development, or local work in York that seeks to reclaim a positive vision of human rights in the UK by focusing on local priority rights and collaboration with diverse partners.

With this in mind our plans for the future include:

- Supporting good practice in relation to security for human rights defenders, with a shift in emphasis from protection to prevention and from international relocation to supporting local and regional responses.
- Developing partnerships, such as those with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and ActionAid, to deepen our real work impact, enhance the experience of students and visiting human rights defenders, and generate innovative thinking and approaches.
- Championing Human Rights Cities as a new rung on the human rights ladder which can support but also challenge developments at national, regional and international levels.
- Experimenting with formats and framings in human rights communication, so that human rights both reaches new audiences and rediscovers its essence as a rallying point for resistance and hope against injustices of all kinds.

“Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere”

Philanthropic support

The Centre for Applied Human Rights has benefited enormously from the support and vision of a number of charitable trusts, foundations, organisations and donors. In particular, the Sigrid Rausing Trust has supported the core work of the Centre with substantial grants over a period of 10 years. We are extremely grateful for the often life-changing work this support has enabled.

Charitable trusts, foundations and organisations

- Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust
- East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project
- Equal Rights Trust
- European Commission
- Evan Cornish Foundation
- Fondation Internationale pour les Defenseurs des Droits de l'Homme (FIDDH)
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Freedom House
- Hivos
- ICORN
- J A Clark Charitable Trust
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Leverhulme Trust
- Open Society Foundations
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Stephen Clark Charitable Settlement 1965
- The Alan and Babette Sainsbury Charitable Fund
- The Bromley Trust
- University of York
- York Annual Fund

Thank You

We are immensely grateful to all those individuals and organisations who have so generously funded or given time to the work of the Centre for Applied Human Rights over the past 10 years. We also acknowledge the support of those donors who wish to remain anonymous.

<b>Individual donors</b>	<b>Research funders</b>	<b>Current and former staff</b>	<b>Current and former Friends of Fellows</b>	
Phil Harding	Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)	Patricia Bartley	Jessica Aitken	Jenny Kent
Felicity Riddy	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)	Lena Barrett	Jo Armistead	Georgina Kramer
Sarah Sylvester	Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)	Harkirit Boparai	Roger Armistead	Christine Kyte
Paul Tyack	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)	Heidi Chan	Jo Baker	Jessica Linstead
Anonymous		Ioana Cismas	Mike Barnard	Barbara Lodge
		Pippa Cooper	Patricia Bartley	Mary Machen
		Hannah Dwyer Smith	Wendy Bennett and Gil Singh	Maureen Maddock
<b>Advisory board</b>	<b>Former board members</b>	Jon Ensor	Sally Brooks	Gill Martin
Jo Baker	Andrew Anderson	Sanna Eriksson	Eleanor Brown	Susan Maughan Brown
Eleanor Brown	Andres Jaroslavsky	Helen Fairburn	Margot Brown	Felicia McCormick
Margot Brown	Felicity Riddy	Emilie Flower	Hilary Bryans	Nicola McDonald
Vanessa Charters	Roger Smith	Claire Fox	Ian Buchanan	Alice Olsson
Marilyn Crawshaw	Marion Simon	John Gray	Susan Buchanan	Lena Opfermann
David Maughan-Brown	Jack Mapanje	Paul Gready	John Craven	Robin Perutz
Andrea Rocca	Brian Phillips	Miriam Hemingway	Marilyn Crawshaw	Sue Perutz
Stephen Pittam		Martin Jones	Chrissie Dell	Tim Phillips
		Michael Kearney	Jack Donovan	Jane Phythian
		Juliana Mensah	Judy Donovan	Mick Phythian
		Dominique Muller	Fran Ellis	Stephen Pittam
		Alice Nah	Jo Green	John Pugh
		Emma Piercy	Thomas Green	Brian Quinn
		Judith Pink	Frederieke Hoogenkamp	Felicity Riddy
		Simon Robins	Carol-Ann Hooper	Jose Rueda
		Lars Waldorf	Dick Hunter	Kevin Sell
			Tanya Jane-Patmore	
				Louise South
				Deborah Taylor
				Marc Taylor
				Jadzia Terlecka
				Puvan Tharmanathan
				Jane Tod
				Hannah van Werven
				Gwen Vardigans
				Sylvia Voisk
				Helen Webster

“Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”



*“A seed sown a few years back found the ground in  
York to be fertile, and germinated.”*

Jestina M Mukoko, Fellow 2013/14



The Centre for Applied Human Rights

University of York  
York, YO10 5ZF, UK  
+44 (0)1904 325830  
cahr-admin@york.ac.uk  
[york.ac.uk/cahr](http://york.ac.uk/cahr)