

# **Nomination Statements**

January 2020 – December 2021

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All ballots are due by Sunday 8 December at 1pm. All members in good standing are eligible to vote.

# Executive

(Nominations in alphabetical order by surname)

## Jacob Bindman (re-standing)

I am a barrister at Garden Court Chambers and wish to stand for re-election to the Executive Committee.

I was initially motivated to become a lawyer by the abuses of power and gross injustice that I witnessed in the aftermath of 9/11. Since then I have worked on a number of international human rights issues including Guantanamo Bay, legal issues regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict and death penalty work. That background made BHRC a very interesting and important organisation for me to get involved with.

In my time on Executive Committee I have greatly enjoyed witnessing and contributing to the amazing work that BHRC does. In the last year I have worked on projects relating to Guantanamo Bay, Hong Kong and Bahrain. I have also represented BHRC at meetings and events. I am very keen to continue with this work and get involved in the ever expanding range of issues that BHRC works on.

Perhaps now more than ever it is essential to encourage a strong commitment to the advancement of human rights from a broad section of the legal profession. Whilst in the political sphere the protection of basic human rights has been relegated to a disturbingly low level of importance, we in the profession must be determined to prevent further erosion from taking place.

**Seconded by Grainne Mellon**

## Jodie Blackstock (re-standing)

I am an employed barrister and the Legal Director of JUSTICE, a human rights NGO which works to strengthen the UK justice system and enable effective and fair access to justice. I have been a member of the BHRC Exec since 2012 and Treasurer since 2016. I have assisted our work through statements of concern, trial observations, meetings, events and amicus briefs across a number of issues and countries. I am passionate about the work of BHRC, which undertakes important work. Over the last year I have developed an advocacy training programme for Indian law students, in the context of gender-based violence, which I am currently in Delhi delivering. Working with impressive local lawyers, our aim is to integrate advocacy and vulnerable witness handling into law school programmes – which currently have no advocacy training - and to expand this to lawyers and the judiciary. I have also been working on State interference with lawyers in China, as well appalling treatment of Uighur peoples in Xinjiang, including holding a Parliamentary event to raise awareness. As an office holder, I assist with the strategic direction and general running of the organisation, and as Treasurer I manage our modest income and expenditure to ensure this is utilised to its full potential and properly accounted. If re-elected I will continue to develop the projects in India and China, while supporting other members in their important work. I also aim to work with partners to develop the connection globally between the environment and human rights protection.

I would like to stand as an office holder.

**Running for an office-holder position.**

**Seconded by Joanne Cecil.**

## Bill Bowring (re-standing)

I was a founder member of BHRC in 1992, and have been an Executive Committee member ever since. I am actively involved in human rights activities in countries of the FSU as well as Turkey and Palestine. I am a practising barrister, now taking cases at the European Court of Human Rights (against Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia and Russia). I have been teaching human rights and civil liberties law since 1990, at University of East London, at Essex University, at London Metropolitan University, and now at Birkbeck College, University of London, where I am Professor of Law. I was the founder and am now a member of the International Steering Group of the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC), which works with local partners in FSU countries to take cases at the Strasbourg Court. I am a Trustee, also since 1992, of Redress, working for torture survivors; and a trustee of Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights. I am the International Secretary of the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, and President of the European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH). I took a very active part in BHRC’s successful Palestine project some years ago. I have recently been closely involved with the Golan Heights project, and with the Kazakhstan training project. On behalf of BHRC I observed the early stages of the trial in Madrid of the Catalan politicians and civil society activists. I am an inveterate networker.

**Seconded by Jodie Blackstock**

## Isabel Buchanan

I have relatively broad experience of international and domestic human rights law and practice, which I have developed academically and professionally (both before being called to the bar and since). Where I have country specific experience or expertise, this overlaps with some of the BHRC’s recent areas of focus (i.e. China, South Asia and Turkey).

Prior to practicing at the bar, I spent several years working in Pakistan (with local lawyers, rather than an international organisation) as a caseworker on death penalty cases. This involved regular attendance at first instance and appellate hearings in Lahore, Islamabad or Karachi. I subsequently spent some time living in China where I largely focussed on language study, but also engaged with Beijing’s legal community. I have spent two years living in the US: one studying (human rights law, amongst other things); the other working with US counsel. Since beginning practice, I have worked on a range of public law/human rights cases and have developed a relatively significant international human rights law practice. That practice includes a great deal of work focussed on fair trial and constitutional guarantees in Turkey. Details are available on my chambers webpage. As for relevant non-practicing work: I have published a book about Pakistan’s criminal justice system and was a legal panellist and contributor to Protecting Children in Armed Conflict (Hart, 2018).

**Seconded by Emma Dixon.**

## Joanne Cecil (re-standing)

I have been an active member of the BHRC executive for the last six years and carried out work on its behalf for over a decade. This includes undertaking a significant proportion of the non-public facing work such as drafting funding proposals for staffing and projects. I have extensive experience with the Committee having worked closely with both the Chair and successive Project Coordinators. I was the BHRC representative (Board Member) for Role UK.

It is a real privilege to be part of the Committee. If elected I hope to continue to build upon the work undertaken, the successes achieved and importantly increase the involvement of the membership.

By way of background, throughout my career I have been dedicated to ensuring access to justice both in the UK and overseas. I was an independent Commissioner on the Legal Aid Review Commission (the Bach Commission), am a board member of the Standing Committee for Youth Justice and sit on the Criminal Bar Association Executive Committee. I am an advocacy trainer at Inner Temple and Lead Facilitator for the Advocacy and the Vulnerable Course. I was awarded the LALY Legal Aid Barrister of the Year in 2019.

Prior to coming to the Bar, I worked for a NGO in Washington DC for several years on the areas of the death penalty, fair trial and Guantanamo Bay. This included advising the EU on interventions and drafting amicus curiae briefs in U.S. Supreme Court cases. I continue to advise and consult alongside my domestic practice. Examples include drafting a training and resource manual for UK consular officials in South East Asia regarding effective consular intervention; evaluating and monitoring justice systems in South East Asia with a particular focus on juvenile justice and death penalty; devising training programmes and education curriculum for members of the judiciary and lawyers (EU Gov’t funded), including a joint BHRC, Coram and UNICEF project on juvenile justice in Nigeria; and youth advocacy training most recently in Rwanda.

**Running for an office-holder position.**

**Seconded by Grainne Mellon.**

## Dr Theodora Christou (re-standing)

I first got involved with BHRC in 2004, working on a joint BHRC/BIICL project, Legal Tools for Commonwealth Africa with Peter Carter QC (former Chair). I have since been involved in a number of initiatives including on the themes of Witchcraft Accusations and Persecution; Child Rights; GITMO; Torture and Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka; VAW and FGM; Tanzania legal reform; and election rights in Zimbabwe.

In 2017-19 my focus has continued to be on Egypt, together with other countries as the need arises. As part of our relationship with PBI and the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk, I continue to meet with lawyers and Human Rights Defenders from around the world. Having been nominated by BHRC I now sit on the EC of EuroMed Rights working primarily on Egypt and Turkey which has bought in opportunities for BHRC. It is great that we have been able to involve a number of members in particular on trial observations and drafting statements and press releases. I have also worked with the IBA on drafting a Handbook for assisting lawyers at risk and again it was wonderful to have a member of our drafting committee working on this. A priority of mine will continue to be greater engagement with members.

If re-elected, I will continue to work on our existing projects in addition to developing new initiatives and harnessing the commitment to human rights of BHRC members.

In addition to Executive Committee member I am interested in also taking up an officer role.

**Running for an office-holder position.**

**Seconded by Peter Carter QC**

## Stephen Cragg QC (re-standing)

I am currently one of the Vice-Chairs of BHRC and have been a member of the Executive for four years. I am a barrister in private practice specialising in human rights law and public law at Doughty Street Chambers. I have been very active for BHRC as Vice-Chair: I had a period as acting Chair at the start of 2019; I have edited or written many of our reports and letters of concern; I have observed trials and carried out training of journalists in Turkey; I attended and spoke at the Nigerian Bar Association 2019 annual conference; I have worked closely with other organisations such as the Law Society, ROLE UK, Article 19, and the IBA in developing BHRC’s work.

My previous voluntary roles include the position of chair of the trustees of Public law Project from 2008-2015. In the past I have served on the Executive Committees of the Haldane Society, the Law Centres’ Federation and Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights.

I am keen to remain active and involved with BHRC as an important organisation at the forefront of the protection of human rights in many countries around the world, and to continue to further develop our growing influence. I would like to continue as one of the Vice-Chairs of BHRC.

**Running for an office-holder position.**

**Seconded by Kirsty Brimelow QC.**

## John Cubbon

Since 1996 I have worked on criminal justice issues arising in fragile and conflict affected states. I spent over 19 years as an employee of the United Nations and since 2015 I have undertaken tasks for the UK Stabilisation Unit as a Deployable Civilian Expert. I have seen the aftermath of large-scale violations of human rights and encountered strong and sometimes understandable resistance at local level to addressing them. I have in addition contributed to the well-meaning but often ineffective efforts of the international community to overcome this resistance. Despite all this I appreciate now more than ever the long-term benefits of a firm stance on human rights. As accepted base-line principles for the resolution of disputes and political reform throughout the world, they are unparalleled and irreplaceable. In this respect there has been huge progress since the proclamation of the UDHR in 1948, notwithstanding the shocking violations that have occurred during the same period. What I would bring to the Executive Committee is an understanding of the full gamut of mechanisms for the protection of human rights both globally and regionally and of the myriad international bodies operating in the field as well as direct experience of the unwillingness of governments to fulfil their obligations. I was called to the Bar in 1993. I have been a member of the BHRC since the early 1990s and a member of the Drafting Committee since 2017.

**Seconded by Mr Navid Pourghazi**

## Haydee Dijkstal

I would be honoured to serve as a member of the Executive Committee in order to provide assistance to the important work the Committee undertakes. Given my practice of nearly 10 years in the areas of international criminal and human rights law, I feel that I could make a valuable contribution and provide meaningful assistance to the Committee and its work. During my international practice, I have acted on legal teams before the International Criminal Court, International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and Special Court for Sierra Leone. This has included the defence teams for Charles Taylor (SCSL), for Abdullah Al-Senussi (ICC) and for Milan Lukic (ICTY). I am currently co-counsel for victims and the Government of the Comoros in the case of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla (ICC), and have been on ICC legal teams for victims from Sudan, and for the Government of Kenya. I have also practiced international human rights law before the African Commission / Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and for victims participating in a domestic Commission of Inquiry on human rights violations. In addition to practicing as a Barrister, I am fully qualified as a US attorney and have acted as counsel on US cases involving the Alien Tort Statute and Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. I am on the ICC List of Counsel, a full member of the Association of Defence Counsel in The Hague, and elected to the Victims Committee of the ICC Bar Association.​

**Seconded by Diana Constantinide**

## Tatyana Eatwell

I am a long-standing member of the BHRC. In that capacity I have contributed to the BHRC’s Public Interest Case Support project (PICS), Malawi, and its Military Courts project. I now hope to contribute more fully to the work of the BHRC as a member of the Executive Committee.

I am a specialist in international law, with particular expertise on international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and the law of State responsibility. I represent individuals and work closely with non-governmental organisations based in the Middle East, East, North, and Southern Africa, the USA, and the UK. Much of my work involves engaging the UN Special Procedures Mechanisms and regional human rights mechanisms, as well as conducting high-level advocacy at a government and UN level. In addition, I have provided expert legal opinion to the UN Special Procedures Mechanisms on questions of diplomatic protection, consular access and dual nationals, and on questions of State responsibility, jurisdiction, and immunity arising out of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

If elected, I will lend my knowledge, experience, and professional networks to the furtherance of the invaluable work of the BHRC and the development of new initiatives. In particular, I am interested in assisting individuals and groups to hold States accountable for the abuse of national security laws to suppress free speech and political opposition.

**Nominated by Caoilfhionn Gallagher QC, seconded by Steven Powles QC**

## Michael Ivers QC (re-standing)

Our committee is strong and there are a number of exciting projects taking place at the moment and the prospect of more in the future. I’ve been in the committee for a number of years now and bring some knowledge and expertise in discreet fields as well as a wealth of experience of challenging issues where judgment is called for, I believe I’ve also been able to promote our organisation and with it its aims when I’ve conducted observations, spoken at events or attended meetings. I’ve been an officer holder for the last few years as well and whilst I would be happy to continue, I would also not wish to stand in the way of the movement of personnel into office holder positions which is, of course, healthy in any organisation.

**Running for an office-holder position.**

**Seconded by Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh.**

## Gráinne Mellon (re-standing)

I have been an active member of the BHRC Executive Committee for seven years and am currently the Secretary. I would like to be considered for an office holder position again.

In the last two years, I have worked on significant BHRC projects including trial monitoring in Egypt and Turkey, training of lawyers in the principles of international human rights law in Kazakhstan, children’s rights work in Nigeria and refugee work in Calais and beyond.

In addition to extensive project work I have also contributed to the general workings of the committee- including recruitment and staffing, fundraising, membership and the development of the advisory board. This involves regular work with the Chair and other office holders, the Project Coordinator and partner organisations.

I have organised and spoken at events on behalf of BHRC across the bar and beyond. I continue to co-represent BHRC on the PBI Legal Advisory Committee and have continued to build and forge links with relevant NGOs and human rights organisations.

If re-elected, I would continue to contribute to projects I have been involved in so far and in particular to develop crucial freedom of expression work in Turkey, children’s rights work in Nigeria and ongoing work on the protection of refugees. I would also like to broaden the involvement of the membership, many of whom have a lot to give and may not know how best to get involved.

Working with the BHRC is a real privilege and I very much hope you consider voting for me.

**Running for an office-holder position.**

**Nominated by Zimran Samuel. Seconded by Stephen Cragg QC.**

## Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh (re-standing)

I am a barrister at Matrix Chambers, specialising in human rights, crime and international law, and appearing before both domestic and international courts and tribunals. My commitment to human rights is long-standing. Prior to joining the Bar, I worked for a number of civil liberties solicitors’ firms and NGOs, including on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.

I have been a Vice Chair of the BHRC for four years, and was a committed member of the BHRC Executive for the preceding six years. Throughout that time, I have been actively involved in the work of BHRC, representing BHRC at meetings, workshops and conferences, undertaking trial observations and providing training to lawyers, NGOs and bar associations in other jurisdictions. I further support BHRC’s work and aims through drafting and editing letters, statements of concern, and substantive reports, through developing links and working relationships between BHRC and other human rights organisations around the world, and in drafting and securing funding bids for BHRC projects.

I have historically had regional responsibility on the BHRC Executive for the Middle East, and have spent considerable time in the region, including in Palestine, providing training to lawyers and NGOs on human rights and humanitarian law. I continue to work closely with human rights groups and lawyers there.

I am standing down this year as Co-Vice Chair due to the time pressures of other endeavours, but would be privileged to have the opportunity to continue to serve as a fully engaged member of the Executive, including to oversee a trial observation project for which I have recently secured funding for BHRC. One of my key priorities over the coming two years would be to continue to work to increase the involvement of BHRC’s wider membership in BHRC projects.

**Seconded by Michael Ivers QC**

## Catherine Oborne

I have a long standing commitment to international human rights and have been a BHRC member for many years. I have volunteered as a Pegasus Scholar with the Inner Temple for the respected human rights lawyer in Zimbabwe and have a track record of seeking to advance awareness about the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. In the past, I have worked with the BHRC executive to organise events and statements of concern on these issues.

In addition, I have experience working on trial observations, for example, conducting a trial observation in the UAE in relation to perceived political dissidents there. I would be keen to work hard to advance the work of the BHRC throughout the world and in particular on current issues concerning the Uighurs in China as well as the ongoing human rights abuses and clampdown in Turkey.

**Seconded by Joanne Cecil**

## Zimran Samuel (re-standing)

As a barrister I work predominantly on human rights issues affecting children internationally. I also practice in mental health law. Prior to coming to the Bar, I worked at the United Nations Headquarters (in the Office of Legal Affairs) in New York.

I have been a member of the BHRC since I was a student. Over previous years I have played an engaged role in the work of the BHRC, assisting with the Committees work on a range of issues including witchcraft accusations in Nepal, FGM and amicus briefs relating to torture and unlawful detention. I have had the pleasure of playing a role in the BHRC’s longstanding work relating to the blasphemy law in Pakistan and religious freedom more generally.

Within the last year I have worked on a number of key projects and events including on Kashmir and the Asma Jahangir conference in Lahore.

I have also played a supportive role on projects that other members have led over the last 2 years.

I attended the launch of Trial Watch in New York and have subsequently maintained a relationship between Trial Watch and the BHRC. This very much something I want to develop see through to positive trial observations and an ongoing relationship.

I would be very excited to continue to work on the Executive Committee for a further term of office.

**Seconded by Joanne Cecil**

## Kate Stone (re-standing)

I have been inspired by my two years on the Executive Committee and would value the opportunity to continue contributing to BHRC’s work as part of the Executive.

I am a member of Garden Court North Chambers in Manchester and a longstanding member of the BHRC. My domestic practice is focused on inquests, particularly those involving state responsibility, public law and private law actions against public authorities. Human rights law is therefore a key part of my daily work. Alongside this I have worked on a wide range of IHRL issues both as part of the BHRC and with other NGOs, including the Environmental Defender Law Center and Oxfam. My work on the Executive has included collaborating with colleagues from across the world on a toolkit for lawyers at risk of human rights violations as a result of their work. I have a particular interest in women’s rights, transitional justice and human rights and the environment.

Whilst having young children as a member of the Executive has brought with it some constraints in terms of overseas travel it has only reinforced my commitment to using our collective legal skills to support and empower those facing human rights abuses and to promote universal human rights. If elected for another two years I would like to continue our work outside London and also to develop the Committee’s work on women’s rights.

**Seconded by Pete Weatherby QC**

## Peter Weatherby QC (re-standing)

I have been on the Executive Committee for about nine years. I am based in Manchester.

My first involvement with BHRC was concerning Bahrain and this remains an area of continuing work. I have conducted trial observations in Bahrain, Kuwait and Turkey. I am currently involved with training programmes for lawyers in Nigeria. I have assisted with work in respect of arbitrary detention in Kashmir, and the death penalty in the US.

The Committee has substantially expanded its work and influence over the last six years, and the current leadership is continuing that progress with vigour. I strongly support the view that BHRC exists to make a difference and is not an academic discussion group.

I have a human rights-based practice both domestically and in Strasbourg. I have a background in criminal law and specialise in public inquiries and inquests involving serious failures by state agencies. I have been involved in the campaign to codify a Duty of Candour on public authorities and officials in the UK.

I have advised on prison law provisions internationally and I have been involved in repatriation, extradition, and miscarriage of justice cases from a variety of jurisdictions, including the Maldives, Thailand, Japan, Bulgaria, and Spain. I have practiced in Mauritius and I am currently challenging its biometric ID card system before the UN HRC.

I practice at Garden Court North, and I am also a door tenant at GC London. I am keen that the Committee continues to broaden its work and influence by involving more barristers from outside of London. I am also a trustee of INQUEST, a supporter of Justice, and the Prison Reform Trust.

**Seconded by Kate Stone.**

## Aswini Weereratne QC

I would like to contribute my expertise and enthusiasm, particularly around child protection and mental disability issues, domestically and internationally. Over the last two decades I have conducted extensive litigation in group actions and for individual claimants in relation to non-recent child sexual and other abuse. This has led to acting for several core participants before IICSA, including for the Child Migrants Trust, helping to achieve a long sought after acknowledgement of responsibility from HM Government for the scheme that sent thousands of children to brutal institutions in the British colonies between the 1940s and 1970s. I acted for the British Council investigating the modern day protection of children overseas from sex tourism. I am currently involved in a strategic litigation project in Sri Lanka aimed at the de-institutionalisation of children in residential care who face risks to their health, education and development, and risks of sexual exploitation. On mental disability I have acted in numerous cases establishing human rights violations, for example, article 5/8 ECHR breaches on behalf of people lacking capacity. MS v. UK established that MS was held in a police cell under the MHA without access to medical treatment in violation of article 3 ECHR. I spoke at the Lawasia conference in November 2019 on the UNCRPD in the Asia/Pacific region. I assisted the BHRC in drafting a statement of concern following impeachment of the Chief Justice (Sri Lanka) in 2013.

**Seconded by Kirsty Brimelow QC**

## Amanda Weston QC (re-standing)

I am a barrister called in 1995 and I have a public law/human rights practice with a significant international element. Examples of my recent work include:

* Advising Global Witness on gaps in anti-corruption/money laundering measures in UK and EU immigration law and practice
* Commissioned by UNHCR to prepare and deliver training materials on International anti torture instruments (UNCAT, Refugee Convention)to the Hong Kong Immigration Dept and Torture Appeals Board, training and consultation for the Justice Centre, Hong Kong
* Cross-border national security cases (eg L1, G1, S1 & others, Ignaoua) involving comity principles
* Lectures at Hong Kong University, Stanford and regular contributions to the Centre for European Policy Research on citizenship and counter-terror measures.
* Training/support on international human rights instruments in Alexandria, Egypt for lawyers working on detained cases
* Speaking at Chatham House (with Human Rights Watch) on a panel addressing procedural safeguards in criminal and civil sanctions against ‘enemy combatants’ in Iraq & Syria
* Trial observations in Kuwait
* Letters drafted on behalf of the Committee concerning human rights violations in Iran

I am particularly keen to expand my involvement in policy, education and normative work on international child rights which I note is one of the Committee’s key project areas and since being a member I have facilitated a working relationship with the Global project on the Ending of Corporal Punishment against Children in particular with Anna henry former legal advisor to the Children’s commissioner. I am an alumnus of the University of Orléans where I studied International Public Law in French as an ERASMUS scholar, am fluent in French and have basic Hebrew and Arabic. While childcare responsibilities have prevented me from taking on e.g. trial observations abroad, foreign travel is now easier for me if required as part of working with and for the committee. In February 2020 I will be attending the trial of Khaled Sheikh Mohamed on behalf of BHRC.

I have a full schedule of projects and exciting ideas to expand barrister and student barrister involvement in the coming two years and hope very much to be given the opportunity to continue to work with the committee to further these aims.

**Seconded by Grainne Mellon**