



BAR HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Update bulletin – February/March 2013

Dear members,

A brief update of the BHRC activities during February and March. Please get in touch if you wish to respond to any of the *Call to Members* sections.

RECENT STATEMENTS AND LETTERS OF CONCERN

ZIMBABWE - On 22nd March, the BHRC released a statement expressing concern at the arrest and continued detention of prominent human rights lawyer and former President of the Law Society of Zimbabwe, Beatrice Mtetwa. To see the statement click [here](#)

BANGLADESH - On 4th March, following previous BHRC statements about the ICT, the BHRC expressed concern at the capital punishment verdict in the Delwar Sayedee case. The decision followed a trial that presented severe procedural and substantive flaws. In the statement the BHRC argued the overall failure to meet fair trial standards and called for the suspension of all proceedings. To access the BHRC Statement click [here](#).

NEPAL - On 12th March, the BHRC sent a public letter to the Nepalese authorities expressing concern about threats and incitement to commit violence against Ms Mandira Sharma, a Human Rights Defender. The threats are linked to the complaint pursued by Mr Sharma in respect of Colonel Lama - a Nepalese Army Colonel accused of human rights abuses perpetrated in 2005 during the Maoist conflict. Acting under Universal Jurisdiction, the UK police investigated the complaint and arrested Colonel Lama. He currently faces trial in England. BHRC is monitoring the case.

COLOMBIA - On 19th February, the BHRC expressed concern at the murders of two lawyers in Cali, Colombia. The Colombian Council of the Litigation Bar issued a statement calling for a full investigation and also drew attention to the murders of another 200 lawyers in the Valle region which have been carried out with impunity in the last decade. The BHRC has for many years maintained support to lawyers and human rights defenders in this country and recalled on the Cali Bar to bring justice for all these murderers.

FEBRUARY - INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

'The Impeachment of the Chief Justice' - SRI LANKA

On 27th February, the BHRC hosted an International Seminar titled 'The impeachment of the Chief Justice Sri Lanka'. Following two BHRC public statements on the matter earlier this year [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#), the seminar aimed to inform members of the legal profession and civil society in the UK as to the situation in Sri Lanka, and explore the implications of the impeachment process drawing from constitutional and international human rights law. The event had the participation of Dr. Nihal Jayawickrama, a Sri Lankan lawyer who is currently Coordinator of the Judicial Integrity Group [\[see his presentation\]](#) and Mr. Upul Jayasuriya, elected President of the Sri Lanka Bar Association. The event also had the participation of Geoffrey Robertson QC, who launched his [legal opinion](#) on the matter.



Geoffrey Robertson QC presents his legal opinion

MARCH - PUBLIC MEETING IN THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT Spotlight on the Bangladesh International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) - BANGLADESH

On March 18th March, the BHRC held an public meeting called 'Spotlight on the Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal' . The purpose of the event was to discuss questions and concerns around the ICT processes and in particular, the implications of its latest capital punishment verdict. The BHRC has followed proceedings before the ICT and has issued subsequent statements calling for a retrial, and then for the overall suspension of all proceedings in the Delwar Hossein Sayedee case. See statements [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#). The panel of speakers included Ambassador Stephen Rapp (United States Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues), Schona Jolly (Cloisters & Bar Human Rights Committee), John Cammegh (9 Bedford Row & barrister before the ICT) and Clive Baldwin (Human Rights Watch). The event took place at the Houses of Parliament and was hosted by Lord Avebury.



CALL TO MEMBERS - Recruitment for next training delegation - NIGERIA

The BHRC is calling for an expert to join a child rights training delegation to Nigeria. This will involve a three days workshop with [the Nigeria National Human Rights Commission](#) and two days child rights training with selected representatives from regional Child Protection Networks (CPNs).

This training delegation is the fifth to be conducted as part of the technical assistance project 'Capacity Development of Child Protection Network (CPN) in Child Rights Monitoring and Documentation in Nigeria' BHRC-UNICEF Partnership (2011-2013). See further [project information details](#). The delegation will be going to Abuja and it is likely to take place in a week in May (likely towards the end of May beginning of June), **precise dates to be confirmed**. The commitment to this training delegation is *pro bono*, however, flights, accommodation and *per diems* are fully covered by the project.

If you are interested in participating in this delegation please get in touch with the BHRC project coordinator to

request a brief application form. The deadline for submissions is **Friday 5 April 2013.**

Previous BHRC training delegation to Nigeria (November 2012 in Calabar, Cross River State in Nigeria)



Kirsty Brimelow QC with CPN training participants

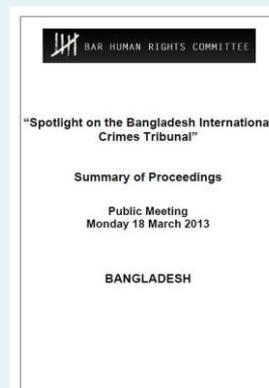
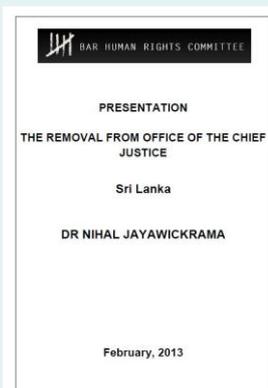
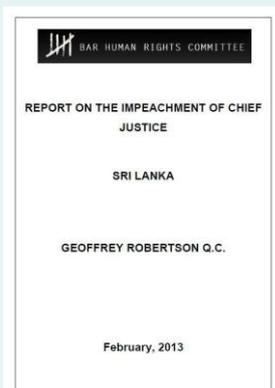


Practical group sessions at the Calabar training.

CALL TO MEMBERS - Amicus Brief - COLOMBIA

The BHRC is calling for members to help with the drafting of an Amicus Brief in support of human rights defender David Ravelo, recently sentenced to 18 years prison for aggravated murder in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Many irregularities were found in this case, including blatant inadequacy in the assessment of evidence by the judge and the fact that the prosecutor was previously convicted for a forced disappearance and in fact, was not permitted to perform duties in the first place. His defense lawyer, Alirio Uribe, was here in London last week to present the case and discuss avenues for support. He manifested that this case appears to form part of a pattern of attacks and political persecution of human rights defenders in Colombia. Please get in touch if you are able to work on drafting during April. We would welcome, in particular, the support of barristers with criminal litigation experience. Spanish is desirable but not essential.

BHRC Latest Publications SRI LANKA / BANGLADESH / TURKEY / PAKISTAN





**FORCED CONVERSIONS AND FORCED
MARRIAGES IN PAKISTAN**

Legal briefing on behalf of the Bar Human
Rights Committee of England and Wales

PAKISTAN

Zimran Samuel

MARCH, 2013



**REPORT ON BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE HEARING OBSERVATION:**

TURKEY

February, 2013