

Biennial Report

2014-2015



BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE OF
ENGLAND & WALES

Promoting justice and protecting human
rights through the rule of law



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BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE OF
ENGLAND & WALES

BHRC believes that the existence of an effective legal system and structure is a crucial pre-condition for the protection of liberties, democracy and justice.

GET INVOLVED

Interested in supporting the
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information, please contact the
Contact Coordinator at:
@barhumanrights.org.uk

Rights Committee of
Wales

et Chambers

Foreword

The last two years have seen a bold expansion in the scope and impact of the Bar Human Rights Committee's work. In addition to our more familiar activities, such as statements and letters of concern over ongoing human rights abuses, or providing human rights and law school training in countries like Nigeria and Tanzania, we've moved into new, ambitious areas – for example our role as the driving force behind new Female Genital Mutilation Protection (FGM) Orders legislation in the UK – and seen this feed back into our international endeavours.

BHRC's standing and visibility within the UK has grown substantially: our work on FGM protection has been acknowledged in Hansard, and BHRC has been singled out for praise by Jeremy Corbyn at a public meeting on legal aid, by the former Chairman of the Bar, Nick Lavender QC, at the Opening of the 2015 Legal Year, and by the 2015 Chairman of the Bar Council, Alistair Macdonald QC. Our 2014 report on sexual violence in Sri Lanka was included in subsequent Home Office guidance on the country, and has been cited in High Court litigation. A strong relationship is growing with UK parliamentarians, as BHRC's forensic skills in law are increasingly sought to complement and strengthen political discourse and diplomatic pressure.

Of course, our focus remains on international issues, grounded in our leading expertise on matters of international law. We were the first international organisation to attend and report upon the trial of the former President of the Maldives Mohammed Nasheed, and we have led international opinion with our statements of concern in relation to cases in Bangladesh, Egypt, China, Iraq and Bahrain. BHRC continues to play a unique role in facilitating dialogue between San José de Apartadó Comunidad de Paz and the Colombian government, and to deploy its legal expertise in submitting Amicus briefs – particularly in death row cases in the USA – and conducting human rights law trainings ranging from Federal High Court Judiciary to non-government human rights actors.

We have seen BHRC strengthen old valued partnerships – such as with Peace Brigades International, the Law Society Human Rights Committee, the International Senior Lawyers' Project, Reprieve and the Euro-Med Human Rights Network – and also build relationships with new partners such as Plan UK and Coram.

In particular, we remain grateful to the Bar Council for its ongoing support, true to the late Anthony Scrivener QC's vision – back in 1991 – of the need for a human rights branch of the Bar. BHRC also remains the proud sum of its parts and reliant upon its members and executive who demonstrate their commitment in different and equally important ways: financially, attending events and working pro bono on BHRC projects.

We currently occupy a profound moment in history: refugees drowning in their thousands off the shores of Europe, tens of thousands of children facing death through starvation in Northern Nigeria, the third oldest city in the world being bombed out of existence, the Yazidi genocide ongoing, and old political certainties unravelling at an unprecedented pace. The steady work of BHRC in providing a voice for the vulnerable remains vital in such periods of socio-political flux and uncertainty. In such circumstances the nimble expertise, principles and passion of the Bar Human Rights Committee are more urgently required than ever, and the words of the sixteenth century metaphysical poet John Donne ever more relevant:

Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

Kirsty Brimelow QC



*Kirsty Brimelow QC
Bar Human Rights Committee
Chairwoman
Photo credit: Shahin Shahablou*

BHRC's standing and visibility within the UK has grown substantially, but our focus remains on our leading expertise in international law



About The Bar Human Rights Committee

The Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC) is a small organisation of barristers working voluntarily to promote justice and respect for human rights through the rule of law. Our resources are limited, making our interventions carefully chosen: we base our work on key issues of concern, and our capacity to respond in a credible and authoritative way to effect meaningful change.

MISSION

BHRC is dedicated to promoting justice and respect for human rights in countries other than England and Wales through the rule of law. BHRC's work includes the protection of advocates, judges, human rights defenders and the marginalised and vulnerable. BHRC believes that the existence of an effective legal profession and infrastructure is a crucial pre-condition for the protection of civil liberties, democracy and justice.

OBJECTIVES

BHRC's objectives are:

- to uphold the rule of law and internationally recognised human rights norms and standards;
- to support and protect practising lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are threatened or oppressed in their work;
- to further interest in and knowledge of human rights and the laws relating to human rights, both within and outside the legal profession;
- to advise, support and co-operate with other organisations and individuals working for the promotion and protection of human rights;
- to advise the Bar Council of England and Wales in connection with human rights issues

ACTIONS

BHRC's actions include:

- conducting international fact-finding investigations and investigative research on human rights situations;
- conducting trial observation missions to monitor proceedings where there are reasons to believe that the judiciary may not be independent or impartial and/or the defendant might otherwise be denied the right to a fair trial;
- building capacity through training in advocacy, human rights and humanitarian law;
- training and supporting judges, lawyers, academics, civil society activists and others concerned with human rights;
- monitoring human rights violations and raising awareness of human rights violations before state and non-state actors;
- participating in international litigation, including by intervening as amicus in foreign proceedings;
- promoting the rule of law and human rights through public events; and
- assisting individuals and groups to hold states accountable for abusive practices and to ensure adherence to international human rights norms and practices.

Find out more at <http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk/about>

Letters & Statements of Concern

BHRC raises concerns regarding alleged human rights violations around the world through public statements of concern and letters to those in positions of authority. In doing so, we aim to demonstrate to state authorities that international attention is focused on these issues, enable dialogue to take place between BHRC and relevant officials (or other individuals), and build pressure for cases to be reviewed and any violations curtailed.

Our statements respond to incidents occurring across the world. Some build upon our prior work and expertise in a particular country; others result from direct approaches by organisations seeking assistance, or by our monitoring of emergent human rights abuses.

Copies of all BHRC statements and letters can be found on our website.

BANGLADESH

Since 2012, BHRC has played a key role in highlighting concerns over Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT): these include a lack of the most basic fair trial rights protected and upheld by international law, as well as concerns about the independence and impartiality of the judges. We have repeatedly called for Bangladesh to suspend the court pending a full, independent and impartial investigation.

BHRC is opposed to the death penalty, but we have also underlined the requirement for "super due-process" where capital punishment forms part of any sentence.

Many of the ICT's trials have resulted in capital penalties: BHRC has sought to place pressure on the Bangladesh authorities to suspend such sentences in circumstances where very serious breaches of international law and the right to a fair trial appear to have taken place. We have sought to liaise with other organisations, including the UN and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office here in the UK, to seek to suspend executions where they have taken place.

On 11th November 2014, BHRC released a statement calling for the immediate suspension of the death sentences handed down against Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Motiur Rahman Nizami by the ICT.

As with other cases before the ICT about which BHRC had previously expressed concern, there was evidence that these trials were flawed, in particular in respect of arbitrary limitation of witness evidence, limited ability to cross-examine key witnesses, and concerns relating to the impartiality of judges.

On 8th April 2015, BHRC called on the Government of Bangladesh to stay the imminent execution of Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, following the Supreme Court's rejection of his death penalty review petition two days earlier. Ignoring evidence that Kamaruzzaman's trial was flawed on a number of counts, Bangladesh carried out his execution on 11th April.

On 19th November 2015, BHRC issued another statement calling for the immediate suspension of the executions of Mr. Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, a former leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami party, and Mr. Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, a former leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist party. Both trials were in flagrant breach of international fair trial standards. In spite of much international concern about the safety of their convictions, Mr. Mujahid and Mr. Chowdhury were executed by hanging on 22nd November 2015.

Whilst BHRC and others have been unsuccessful in being able to suspend the ICT processes, we have worked with many organisations to try to raise international awareness on these issues. There remains an urgent need for accountability for the atrocities committed in Bangladesh in 1971 to be provided by a fair and lawful process of justice. We remain committed to this issue and have continued to observe and raise concerns about ongoing proceedings.



Mir Ahmed bin Quasem

Accountability is still urgently needed over Bangladesh's 1971 atrocities



Malek Adly Photo credit: Lilian Wagdy

disadvantaged on an unprecedented scale. BHRC continues to work with local groups to monitor this situation, and find effective ways to ensure lawyers and other groups can carry out their lawful and professional duties without undue interference.

EGYPT

The deterioration in Egypt's rule of law and protection of human rights has become marked over the last two years. It has affected core civil freedoms such as freedom of the press (through arbitrary arrest, detention and unfair trials of journalists, including foreign journalists), freedom of association, and freedom of speech. It has also impacted upon those who seek to uphold such freedoms, including human rights defenders, activists and lawyers. BHRC has been engaged on an active programme of developing and building links with local partner NGOs and civil society in Egypt.

On 29th April 2014, BHRC released a statement expressing concern over the mass convictions and sentencing to death of 720 defendants by the Minya Criminal Court in Egypt. BHRC noted with alarm that these mass verdicts followed trials which bypassed the most basic requirements of fairness: the majority of the defendants were tried in their absence, and no specific evidence was put forward by the prosecution in respect of individual defendants. BHRC called for these verdicts to be set aside, and for the Egyptian authorities to ensure that due process be afforded to everyone.

On 31st July 2014, BHRC signed an Open Letter to the UK Ambassador of Egypt H.E. Ashraf El Kholy, expressing dismay at the sentencing of the Al Jazeera journalists Peter Greste, Mohammed Fahmy and Baher Mohamed. It called on the Egyptian authorities to urgently review their cases with a view to securing their immediate release, referring to the convictions as "representing a flagrant denial of justice and the right to a fair trial".

On 29th May 2015, BHRC issued a statement of concern in relation to the prosecution of Egyptian women's rights lawyer Azza Soliman. The case against Ms. Soliman stemmed from the fatal shooting in January 2015 – allegedly by the Egyptian police – of Ms. Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, a prominent Egyptian activist.

The shooting occurred at a protest against State killings of activists, during the 'Arab Spring' uprising of 2011. Ms. Soliman gave witness evidence to the police in respect of the violent crowd dispersal and shooting. Subsequently, she herself was charged and prosecuted with criminal violation of Egypt's protest laws. The case raised serious concerns that the prosecution was being pursued as a reprisal against those willing to speak out against State violence.

On 12th November 2015, BHRC expressed serious concern at the arbitrary detention of the Egyptian journalist and leading human rights defender Mr. Hossam Bahgat. Mr Bahgat was detained on charges relating to the peaceful expression of his views in newspaper articles, and in breach of Egyptian domestic legislation.

Mr Bahgat, a civilian, was also brought before a military court, in apparent breach of Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. BHRC called on the Egyptian Government to ensure full respect of the fundamental rights of Mr Bahgat and of all journalists working in Egypt.

CHINA

On 17th July 2015, BHRC sent an open letter to the President of China Xi Jinping, expressing concern over the arrest and detention of 220 lawyers, staff, human rights defenders and their family members across China. Those arrested were reportedly accused of "causing social chaos through open defiance in the courtroom, on the internet and in organising protests".

Specific concerns were raised over the severe methods in which the Public Security Ministry orchestrated the arrests (often without following legal procedure or providing reasons), and over Chinese media reports referring to these individuals as 'gang members' who had committed criminal acts, prior to any judicial finding of guilt.

BHRC called on the Chinese authorities to immediately release all those detained, and to provide any remaining prisoners with proper access to effect defence lawyers. The majority of the imprisoned lawyers and human rights defenders were subsequently released. However, thirty-eight defenders remained in pre-charge detention at the end of 2015.

The arrest of the lawyers and human rights defenders reflected a year of crackdowns on civil society, journalists, religious groups and the socially

IRAQ

On 10th February 2015, BHRC sent an open letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, to express deep concern about reports of the inhumane conditions being suffered by Iranian refugees residing at Camp Liberty in Iraq.

BHRC asked that Camp Liberty be recognised as a refugee camp under the supervision of the UN High Commission for Refugees; we further called on the UN and international community to ensure that the Iraqi Government ends the siege of the camp, and guarantees the refugees' unrestricted access to medical services, and their right to be able to sell their assets.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

On 21st July 2014, BHRC released a statement condemning the killing of civilians and attacks on civilian objects in Israel's military assault against the Gaza Strip, codenamed 'Operation Protective Edge'.

On 3rd August, BHRC and a number of leading practicing lawyers and senior legal academics made a submission to the International Criminal Court (ICC) urging it to assume jurisdiction to open an investigation into crimes being committed in the Gaza Strip during Operation Protective Edge. The complaint was reported in the media, and generated significant debate.

BHRC received a response from the Office of the Prosecutor at the ICC on 1st October. In their letter, the ICC asserted its view that it did not have jurisdiction to deal with the allegations. BHRC met with the Office of the Prosecutor in the Hague to further discuss the issue.

On 1st January 2015, the Government of Palestine lodged a second declaration under article 12(3) of the Rome Statute, accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) over alleged crimes committed "in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, since June 13, 2014". On 2nd January 2015, Palestine acceded to the Rome Statute by depositing its instrument of accession with the UN Secretary-General.

On 16 January 2015, the ICC Prosecutor announced the opening of a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine in order to establish whether the Rome Statute criteria for opening an investigation are met. BHRC continues to monitor this situation.

NEPAL

On 29th September 2014, BHRC and the International Senior Lawyers Project UK wrote to the Minister of Peace and Reconstruction in Nepal, in response to the passing of the Truth and Reconciliation Act 2014.

We raised concerns over the Act's neglect of the pervasive power imbalance between the victim of any crime and the perpetrator, which risks leaving a significant number of victims without any recourse to a proper justice mechanism. The Act seeks to proceed with the creation of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (as envisaged by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006). However, BHRC and others raised concerns that the commissions will not be able to meet their stated objectives due to a lack of credibility and independence, and because the Act does not conform with international standards, particularly in relation to amnesties.

In 2014 BHRC urged the ICC to investigate crimes committed during Operation Protective Edge



*Painting of Palestinian children wounded by rocket attack on Gaza
Photo credit: Jose Mesa / Mataparda*

On 6th November 2014, BHRC sent an open letter to the Prime Minister of Nepal in response to the arrest and prosecution of Madhesi activist Chandra Kant Raut. In September 2014 Dr Raut was placed under detention and then subsequently charged for allegedly inciting separatism in the Madhes region of Nepal, an offence that carries a sentence of life imprisonment. BHRC appealed to the Nepalese authorities to call to account the actions that led to Dr. Raut's loss of liberty, with a view to securing his release without fear of further arrests. It also called upon the authorities to ensure the internationally protected right to freedom of expression to all Nepali citizens, in order to preserve the rule of law and administration of justice in Nepal. Following international outcry, Raut was released on bail in October 2014, but has been subject to re-arrest on multiple occasions.

BHRC continues to closely monitor the situation in Nepal, and develop links with local partners in the country.

NIGERIA

On 12th April 2014, BHRC co-signed a letter to the Home Secretary Theresa May, expressing concern about the reported visit of Nigerian pastor Helen Ukpabio (the founder and head of the Liberty Gospel Church in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria), who entered the United Kingdom to promote her belief in witchcraft. In the letter, the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN), the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) and the BHRC cited the cases of Victoria Climbié and Kristy Bamu as examples where witchcraft beliefs played a role in the horrific torture and murder of children.

In September 2014, BHRC, together with other NGOs including the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN), wrote a joint letter to the Home Secretary with an urgent request to refuse Bishop David Oyedepo leave to enter the UK, pursuant to section 3(1) and 3(2) of the Immigration Act 1971 and paragraph 320 of the Immigration Rules.

Bishop Oyedepo is a highly influential Nigerian pastor who is known for slapping a child and calling her a 'foul devil' during one of his ministries, and for accusing children of being witches. Videos have been published online in which Oyedepo is seen slapping a child, and subsequently stating that he 'slapped a witch'. It was submitted that this type of behaviour – physical assault linked to witchcraft accusations – could place children within the UK at significant risk of harm and that his entry into the UK would not be conducive to the public good. In October 2014, Oyedepo was refused a visa for the UK.

RUSSIA

BHRC co-signed an open letter to the Russian President Vladimir Putin, calling for a repeal of the 'foreign agents law' used to stigmatise civil society organisations in Russia. This law is being used by the Russian authorities to target NGOs by registering them as 'foreign agents' without their consent or prior court decision. The letter, signed by 148 organisations around the world, was handed to the Presidential Administration on 20th November 2014.

The number of NGOs on the Register has continued to increase despite international pressure from BHRC and others: several have been fined large amounts and some forced to close. The European Court of Human Rights has to date failed to communicate to Russia a collective complaint by sixteen leading NGOs, originally submitted in 2012.

SAUDI ARABIA

On 19th January 2015, BHRC wrote an open letter to King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, and to the UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Philip Hammond MP, condemning the ongoing treatment and imprisonment of the Saudi Arabian blogger Raif Badawi. Mr. Badawi was sentenced by the Criminal Appeals Court in May 2014 to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes, followed by a 10-year travel ban, a ban on using media outlets, and a fine of 1 million Saudi Arabian riyals; this sentence was pursuant to charges of "insulting Islam through electronic channels" on a web forum he had created. The first part of Mr. Badawi's public flogging was carried out on 9th January 2015, in violation of Saudi Arabia's obligations under the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which Saudi Arabia ratified in September 1997.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office responded to BHRC's concerns confirming that they had been raised at a senior level with the Saudi authorities. BHRC continues to monitor Mr. Badawi's case, and engage with international pressure for the King to issue a pardon.



Pastor David Oyedepo slapping a child accused of witchcraft



Raif Badawi
Photo Credit: PEN International

SPAIN

On 21st March 2014 BHRC, Garden Court International, Red Lion Chambers and Doughty Street Chambers International released an open letter to Mr. José Antonio Griñan, Chairman of The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), regarding the recent restriction placed on Universal Jurisdiction in Spain.

In the letter, BHRC and others expressed their deepest concern over the decision, which will drastically limit the jurisdiction of Spanish courts in respect of the gravest international crimes. However, they welcomed and supported the decision of the Socialist Workers' Party to appeal the reform to the Constitutional Court. They also urged the PSOE to maintain the strongest possible resistance to the universal jurisdiction restriction, and pledged support for their appeal before the Constitutional Court.

Whilst the restriction was passed into legislation in 2014, there remains considerable opposition both within Spain and internationally. BHRC continues to work with its Spanish counterparts.

TURKEY

On 1st December 2015, BHRC and the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) released a statement expressing deep sadness at the fatal shooting of Tahir Elçi, President of the Diyarbakir Bar Association, in southeast Turkey on Saturday 28th November 2015.

Mr Elçi was a fearless human rights defender and consistently principled advocate for minorities across Turkey, as well as for the victims of a wide range of human rights abuses. A victim of torture himself, Mr Elçi was instrumental in bringing cases of torture, detention and disappearances against Turkey before the domestic courts as well as the European Court of Human Rights.

BHRC and DPI called for an effective investigation by the Turkish authorities to bring about a prompt prosecution of those responsible for his murder, the circumstances of which remain unclear. No suspects had been identified or charges brought by the end of 2015.

UKRAINE

On 4th February 2014, BHRC and the Bar Council released a joint statement expressing serious concern over the deterioration of the rule of law in Ukraine, specifically relating to demonstrations in Kiev and other regions of Ukraine.

BHRC expressed concern that a number of court hearings had taken place against demonstrators who were not given the opportunity to obtain legal representation, several of whom were detained in custody as a result. The letter also highlighted disturbing reports that suspected demonstrators were detained without court orders authorising their detention. In many cases the whereabouts of their detention was unknown, even to their relatives.

BHRC and the Bar Council urged the government of Ukraine to investigate these reports as a matter of urgency, and to take all necessary steps to ensure that anyone arrested in connection with the demonstration is detained only in accordance with due legal process.



Tahir Elçi Photo Credit: Zete.com

Fact Finding Missions & Reports

BHRC conducts in-depth research projects and produces thematic reports on the most complex and pressing human rights violations. This work often stems from other BHRC actions such as statements of concern, meetings or events, which may highlight the need for more substantive interventions.

BHRC fact-finding reports are made possible by the development of strong relationships with lawyers and other NGOs in relevant countries, who provide crucial assistance in facilitating missions and identifying issues of concern.

Restrictions on BHRC's capacity, whether financial or around the availability of pro bono barristers, require us to limit the number of these missions and reports, choosing them carefully to achieve specific strategic goals.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

Over the course of 2014, BHRC was engaged in important work on preventing female genital mutilation (FGM) by proposing legal reforms. Whilst BHRC's ambit is international, this was an issue which involves a huge cross over between international law and domestic law. There was also an international drive to tackle the issue at the time. Our expertise on this issue was based on Kirsty Brimelow's work with Unicef in Nigeria, Zimran Samuels' work on honour-based violence and forced marriage protection orders, and assistance from others such as Felicity Gerry, Dexter Dias, Charlotte Proudman, Theodora Christou and Joanne Cecil.

In February 2014, BHRC gave evidence to the Home Affairs Committee that the UK was failing to meet its positive obligations under international law to protect those at risk of FGM. One of BHRC's original recommendations within that evidence was the introduction of mandatory reporting for professionals and the introduction of civil protection orders for potential victims of FGM. BHRC also made similar representations to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in preparation for their report for the March 2015 session of the Human Rights Council.

Following a Ministry of Justice consultation, to which the BHRC submitted a comprehensive response, BHRC's recommendation on civil protection orders was brought into force under the Serious Crime Act 2015. While criminal offences punish perpetrators after FGM has happened, the new civil orders allow for intervention to prevent potential victims being subjected to FGM in the first place.

Throughout the legislative process, members of BHRC assisted in drafting and advising on key aspects of the Serious Crime Bill in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, attending meetings with politicians, peers and civil servants. The new legislation now makes provision for:

- An offence of female genital mutilation carried out abroad
- Anonymity for victims of female genital mutilation
- An offence of failing to protect girls from risk of genital mutilation
- A duty to notify police of female genital mutilation
- Guidance about female genital mutilation
- Female genital mutilation protection orders

Since the implementation of the Serious Crime Act 2015, the BHRC has continued to monitor the new provisions on FGM, including mandatory reporting for professionals and the introduction of the civil protection orders. The Health and Social Care Information Centre data shows that from July to September 2015 there were 1385 newly recorded cases of FGM, 50% of which were in London. There have been scores of civil protection orders applied for local authorities and police authorities which have successfully protected girls at risk of FGM. Notably on 10th September 2015, in a case heard by Mr Justice Baker, the new orders assisted in securing the return of a teenage girl at risk who had been abducted to Sudan.

The BHRC has continued to work closely with survivors and campaigners in relation to both the international and domestic aspects in the development of the new law provisions.



BHRC event on the introduction of FGM Protection Orders

BHRC's recommendations on FGM Protection Orders were added to the Serious Crime Act 2015

IRAN

BHRC took the publication of the new Charter for Citizens' Rights in March 2014 as an opportunity to review a number of human rights issues in Iran. A positive step for human rights in the Islamic Republic, the Charter provides an opportunity for consultation and dialogue, and sends the message that human rights are part of the President's policy plan for legal reform.

BHRC's findings and recommendations were set out in the specialist study 'Human Rights in Iran and the Draft Citizenship Rights Charter', which sets out Iran's international treaty obligations, followed by identification of the relevant Articles in the Constitution of Iran.

The report was launched in conjunction with a statement urging the President of Iran, Mr Hassan Rouhani, to ensure that the new Iranian Charter for Citizens' Rights unambiguously guarantees access to fundamental rights to all living within the country and acts as a roadmap for legal reform with human rights at its heart.

BHRC continues to work closely with those advocating for an end to human rights violations in Iran, producing statements of concern and hosting events which build on the findings of the 2014 report.



Front cover of BHRC / WHRIN report on Nepal

NEPAL

In early 2014, BHRC published a report in partnership with the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN), on violence against women accused of witchcraft in Nepal. Professor Susan Edwards co-authored the report on behalf of BHRC; it was edited by Zimran Samuel and Theodora Christou.

The report focuses on the widespread violations that take place in Nepal due to the belief in Boksi witchcraft. By raising awareness of this issue, BHRC and WHRIN hope to work with the Nepalese Government and civil society organisations to develop the solutions required to put a stop to the torture and killing of women in the name of 'combating witchcraft'.

In June 2014, Kirsty Brimelow QC, Courtney Barklem of the Law Society's Human Rights Committee and Naina Patel, Director of Education and Training at the Bingham Centre, conducted a week-long scoping mission funded by Peace Brigades International. The mission focused on identifying potential projects to address the capacity building issues which have contributed towards impunity for serious crimes, including those committed during Nepal's recent conflict.

Unfortunately, the devastating earthquake in Nepal in April 2015 caused human rights work to be de-prioritised by the Nepalese government, behind an urgent humanitarian effort.

PAKISTAN

On 29th July 2015, BHRC published a report entitled: 'A Death a Day: Pakistan's Return to the Death Penalty', focused on Pakistan's decision at the end of 2014 to abandon its six-year moratorium on the death penalty. By the time of the report the country had hanged almost 180 prisoners: roughly one person a day.

The report examines why Pakistan has returned to capital punishment and the circumstances of those chosen for execution. It reveals that since the moratorium was lifted, Pakistan has executed its citizens in violation of certain principles of justice reflected in Shari'ah law, Pakistan's own constitutional law and international human rights law.

SRI LANKA

On 21st March 2014 BHRC, the International Truth & Justice Project and human rights lawyer and co-author of the previous UN Panel of Experts report on mass atrocities in Sri Lanka, Yasmin Sooka, launched the report 'An Unfinished War: Torture and Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka, 2009-2014'. The report draws on testimonies, medical examinations and psychiatric assessments from 40 victims, all Tamil men and women who have sought asylum in the UK. BHRC barristers took the statements from a substantial number of the complainants.

The report established that there was a prima facie case of crimes against humanity against Sri Lanka in respect of torture, rape and sexual violence of Tamils post the ending of the conflict. The report was launched ahead of the 26 March UN Human Rights Council Debate on a US-led resolution, which called for an international investigation into alleged past war crimes and current ongoing violations in Sri Lanka.

Following its release at the Canadian Embassy and then the Canadian Ambassador's Residence in London, BHRC presented the report at the United Nations in New York in May 2014. The report was widely covered by national and international press. The Home Office has included its findings in their Country Information and Guidance document, 'Sri Lanka: Tamil Separatism', providing guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling claims by national/residents of Sri Lanka.

AMICUS CURIAE BRIEFS

BHRC's assistance on *amicus curiae* briefs and advisory work continues to be sought on diverse human rights concerns across the globe. Our intervention in cases will often come at the request of NGOs already working on a specific issue, or from an individual claiming that their rights have been violated. Legal interventions of this type demonstrate the relevance of international law and can, over time, lead to significant change.

The resource-intensive nature of preparing *amicus* to a high standard means that BHRC seeks to intervene only in the gravest cases of suspected violations of a defendant's fair trial rights. In most cases, this involves those facing the death penalty. BHRC condemns the death penalty as a means of punishment, but also is concerned with the flawed circumstances in which it often is applied.

COLOMBIA – DAVID RAVELO CRESPO

In August 2014, BHRC submitted an *amicus curiae* brief to the Supreme Court of Colombia in the case of David Ravelo Crespo, a Colombian human rights defender who has been in prison since 2010. Mr Ravelo is a member of CREDHOS, a regional human rights organisation in the Magdalena Medio region.

David Ravelo was detained on 14th September 2010, and on 5th December 2012 was sentenced to 18 years in prison for aggravated murder. International human rights organisations have denounced the conviction as politically motivated, highlighting procedural irregularities during the trial. The conviction is based principally on the statements of a demobilised paramilitary soldier, who testified under the Justice and Peace Law (JPL) 975 of 2005. His testimony was subsequently undermined by further evidence which emerged from conversations in detention.

The prosecutor in Mr. Ravelo's case was William Pacheco Granados, a former Police lieutenant who had been barred from public office for his alleged involvement in the forced disappearance of a young man in Armenia district. As a result he should not have prosecuted the case: even if there was an argument against his removal, there was at least an appearance of bias.

BHRC had previously filed an *amicus* brief on this case in 2013 to the Tribunal of Santander which was accepted and welcomed. Unfortunately, the Colombia Supreme Court is one of the few courts which refuses to accept *amicus* briefs, and did so in this instance despite protestations.

BHRC continues to monitor the potential for further interventions in Colombia, alongside Kirsty Brimelow QC's ongoing mediation work relating to the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó (see July 2015's "Rupture and Reconciliation in Colombia" event, below).

UAE – AHMAD MONAL ZEIDAN

In August 2014, BHRC submitted an *amicus* brief to the Court of Appeal of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, in the case of Ahmad Monal Zeidan, a British national arrested and convicted on drugs charges despite allegations that he was tortured by police.

BHRC sought leave and presented written submissions concerning the importance of initiating a full, prompt and impartial investigation into allegations of torture, in accordance with the UN Convention Against Torture and the duty upon the Court to exclude evidence allegedly obtained through torture. We also explained the importance of consular assistance, which Mr. Zeidan had not received, in safeguarding against ill treatment. We advised that pursuant to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, a review must take place of a conviction obtained in its absence.

Disappointingly, the Court of Appeal did not address the allegations of torture in its judgment, upholding the conviction and sentence to nine years' imprisonment. On appeal to the Supreme Court, Mr Zeidan had a change of lawyers who unfortunately did not want the involvement of an *amicus*.

USA – CHRISTOPHER SEPULVADO

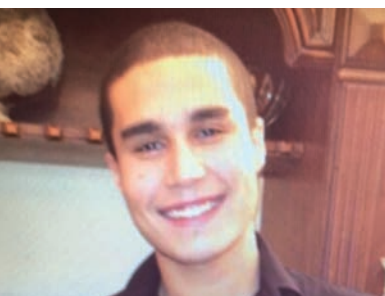
On 31st January 2014, BHRC submitted an *amicus curiae* to the Supreme Court of the United States on behalf of Christopher Sepulvado.

Mr. Sepulvado was due to be executed on 5th February 2014: on or around 27th January, the State of Louisiana changed the protocol used to carry out executions. There was no indication that the State had secured the



David Ravelo Crespo

Photo Credit:
Front Line Defenders



Ahmad Zeidan
Photo Credit: Reprieve

pharmacological instruments necessary to administer the lethal injection from a licensed and duly authorised distributor and so Mr. Sepulvado sought leave to appeal to the US Supreme Court, in order to have the process reviewed.

As *amicus*, the BHRC sought to ensure that the narcotics intended for the lethal injection were not provided to the Louisiana Department of Corrections in violation of federal and international law, including the European Commission's Europe-wide export control procedures.

The case arose against a background of flux in the pharmaceutical market: previous cases had already raised concern about the cocktail of drugs used in lethal injection as a potentially painful and inhumane punishment. BHRC's *amicus* submission highlighted the previous involvement of British and European pharmaceutical companies in supplying drugs to US State Departments of Correction (purchases often made with a degree of duplicity or without full disclosure). Subsequent lobbying by NGOs in European countries to stop these supplies has left US executioners searching for alternative and untested drug combinations.

Although the Supreme Court denied Christopher Sepulvado's petition, Louisiana agreed a stay of execution while the protocol was reviewed. His execution has been delayed until at least 2018; Mr. Sepulvado remains on death row.

USA – KONSTANTINOS FOTPOULOS

On 30th April 2014, BHRC published a submission in support of a clemency application to the Governor of Florida Rick Scott, by the dual Greek-American citizen Konstantinos Fotopoulos.

Mr. Fotopoulos was originally sentenced to death in November 1990. His lawyers believed that a submission in support from BHRC would be well received, because of Governor Scott's previous travel to Europe and sensitivity to European views.

We sought to draw the Governor's attention to Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits the death penalty in all circumstances, as well as EU law. We also relied upon British, European and international law which prohibits execution where a lengthy period has passed due to the 'death row phenomenon,' since Mr Fotopoulos had been on death row for 23 years. We reiterated the concerns that we expressed to the USSC in Sepulvado, relating to the combination of drugs being used in lethal injection, a problem which also pertained to Florida. Mr. Fotopoulos currently remains on death row in Florida.

USA – SHONDA WALTER

In November 2015, BHRC joined with the International Bar Association, Paris Bar Association, Law Society of England and Wales and Bar Council to Northern Ireland in an *amicus* brief submitted before the Supreme Court of the United States of America, in the case of *Shonda Walter v Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*.

The submission challenged the use of the death penalty as being unconstitutional, and in breach of international law by constituting cruel and inhuman punishment. Whilst the argument was unsuccessful, it is part of a developing body of jurisprudence against the death penalty.

BHRC sought to ensure that execution drugs were not provided to Louisiana in breach of international law



Konstantinos Fotopoulos

Trial Observations

BHRC's trial observations provide independent evaluation and international accountability for trial processes where defendants' rights may be at risk. Our expertise is regularly sought by concerned individuals and human rights organisations around the world.

In determining whether it is appropriate for BHRC to observe a particular trial, we are obliged to carefully assess our limited resources, our ability to guarantee the safety of BHRC observers, and the availability of sufficient access and in-country support to ensure the accuracy of our reporting. These restrictions mean that trial observations remain one of the most substantial items of BHRC expenditure, and thus undertaken only in exceptional circumstances.

We are very grateful to the Bar Council of England and Wales, who are providing funding to our trial observation unit from 2015 onwards. This will enable us to increase the number and scope of trial observations we are able to undertake.

BAHRAIN

In June 2015 BHRC attempted to observe the trial of Sheikh Ali Sahman, the leader of Al-Wefaq, the largest legally permitted political society in Bahrain. Salman had been arrested by Bahraini security forces in December 2014, just two days after his re-election as Al-Wefaq's Secretary General, after delivering a speech calling for reforms to Bahrain's political system.

BHRC's visa request was met with a response that there was an "ongoing review of government regulations for granting of visa to NGOs". This formal position followed a previous incident when a BHRC trial observer was unable to gain entry into Bahrain.

Discussions between BHRC's Chairwoman and the Bahrain Ambassador provided BHRC with assurances that we would be allowed entry to the country; this did not transpire, with subsequent requests for information or reasoning left unanswered by the Bahraini government.

It is disappointing that this has not been resolved. BHRC has a long history of fair and accurate trial observations and reporting in Bahrain, and has been grateful in the past for access both to high-level ministers and to activists, ensuring that our reports were informed and balanced. Bahrain has not suggested any wrongdoing by BHRC: we continue to look for clarification on the decision to cease issuing visas, and restart our work in Bahrain.

INDIA

BHRC Vice-Chair Schona Jolly attended the Supreme Court hearing of Professor Devinderpal Singh Bhullar in March 2014, monitoring two hearings and meeting with Prof Bhullar's wife. Ms. Jolly also met with Professor Bhullar's legal team to consider strategy and legal argument around commuting his capital sentence on the grounds of mental health impairment, following on from BHRC's previous work on the case with the Death Penalty Project in 2013.

On 31st March, Professor Bhullar's sentence was commuted. BHRC's input into his legal strategy was an important factor in securing this verdict, and we continue to work informally with his legal team. Professor Bhullar has since been released on parole, after 23 years' imprisonment.



Devinderpaul Singh

MALDIVES

Between 26th February and 6th March 2015, BHRC's Vice-Chair Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh undertook a trial observation mission to the Maldives, to monitor the trial of the former President and head of the opposition Mohamed Nasheed. Mr. Nasheed is a former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience and environmental campaigner; he was the first democratically elected president of the Maldives, but lost power in controversial circumstances in February 2012.

BHRC has been closely following the case of Mr. Nasheed since he was originally charged with abusing his presidential office by ordering the arrest and detention of the Head of the Maldivian Criminal Court. The charges were dropped in September 2012, but in October Mr Nasheed was again arrested in relation to the same incident, this time under more serious anti-terrorism legislation. Serious concerns have been raised about the political motivation for his arrest and prosecution.

BHRC's detailed trial observation report documents the findings of BHRC's mission. Based on Ms. Ní Ghrálaigh's observations of the trial proceedings, subsequent interviews and publicly available accounts of the trial, the BHRC concluded that Mr. Nasheed's right to a fair trial had been breached.

In light of its findings, the BHRC considered Mr. Nasheed's conviction to be unsafe. Our report was considered by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which acknowledged our assistance and concluded that Mr. Nasheed was being arbitrarily detained. Subsequently, Mr. Nasheed was released from prison on medical grounds and thereafter granted asylum in the United Kingdom.

Following BHRC's trial observation report, Mr. Nasheed was released and granted asylum in the UK



Mohammed Nasheed

Public Seminars & Events

BHRC's public events are used to draw public attention to urgent matters of global human rights concern, or to promote new BHRC reports and projects. They enable us to forge and strengthen links with our partner organisations by providing a platform for their work, and to grow BHRC's own visibility and membership.

Our events include film screenings, debates, speeches and seminars, drawing large and influential audiences both from the legal community and more widely. We remain grateful to Doughty Street Chambers for generously providing their events venue and refreshments for BHRC's use.

2014

ROUNDTABLE WITH COLOMBIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER, ROMMEL DURAN CASTELLANOS

On 4th February BHRC hosted an event with Colombian human rights lawyer Rommel Duran Castellanos, chaired by Jodie Blackstock. Mr Duran spoke about the human rights situation in Colombia, the serious risks for lawyers there, and in particular the difficulties the Committee for Solidarity with Political Prisoners have faced in accessing prison facilities to see their clients. The meeting was co-hosted by Peace Brigades International (PBI), Colombian Caravana UK, and the Alliance for Lawyers At Risk.

BAHRAIN: PERVERTING THE COURSE OF JUSTICE

On 29th May, Human Rights Watch and BHRC held a joint event following the publication of a new HRW report examining the justice system in Bahrain, chaired by BHRC Vice-Chair Schona Jolly. The report's author Josh Colangelo-Bryan, Bahraini journalist Naheeza Saeed, and Deputy Director of HRW Middle East & North Africa Division Joe Stork discussed why little has changed in the Gulf state since its treatment of anti-government protesters during the country's popular uprising in 2011 was first exposed.

GUATEMALA: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

BHRC and PBI held a joint roundtable on 19 May 2014, hosting a speaker from the San Juan communities in Guatemala; the panel discussed the practical difficulties for human rights defenders in

Guatemala and the serious risk which activists face, chaired by Schona Jolly. BHRC has continued to create ongoing links with civil society in Guatemala following this meeting.

"AN UNFINISHED WAR" LAUNCH AT THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION

On 11th June, during the London Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Canadian High Commission hosted an event to recognise Sri Lankan survivors of sexual violence. Guests including Bianca Jagger and British Tamil artist, M.I.A. read excerpts from the report "An Unfinished War: Torture and Sexual Violence in Sri Lanka 2009- 2014". The report by Yasmin Sooka, BHRC and The International Truth & Justice project, Sri Lanka, analyses patterns of recent sexual violence by the security forces in Sri Lanka (see the "Reports" section for more detail).

BRITISH NIGERIA LAW FORUM SEMINAR ON TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

On 14th June, BHRC Chairwoman Kirsty Brimelow QC spoke alongside the Attorney General of Nigeria at a seminar for the British Nigeria Law Forum on terrorism, with particular focus placed on the crimes of Boko Haram and the kidnapping of the Chibok girls. A number of leading lawyers and counter terrorism experts from the UK and Nigeria spoke about what can be done to assist the Nigerian Government to better protect its citizens.

LAW, GENDER AND RELIGION: IN CONVERSATION WITH ASMA JAHANGIR

On 30th July, BHRC and the Law Society held a joint event at the Law Society featuring Asma Jahangir, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, and previously UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Arbitrary and Summary Executions. Ms. Jahangir talked about her work, her hopes for the future and responded candidly to questions from the floor. The event was chaired by Lady Justice Black.

WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS AND PERSECUTION: A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

This event was held in partnership with the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network on 3rd October, launching





Beatrice Mtetwa, Nicholas Lavender QC and Kirsty Brimelow QC

the joint WHRIN / BHRC report 'Witchcraft Accusations and Persecution in Nepal'. The panel discussed legal issues relating to witchcraft accusations both in Sub-Saharan Africa and in diaspora communities in the UK. The panel included Professor Susan Edwards (Professor of Law at the University of Buckingham) Gary Foxcroft (Executive Director of WHRIN), and Leethen Bartholomew (Community Partnership Officer for Hackney Safeguarding Children Board), with the discussion chaired by Kirsty Brimelow QC.

THE RULE OF LAW IN ZIMBABWE

BHRC and Garden Court Chambers hosted an event 7th October featuring David Coltart, a human rights lawyer from Zimbabwe who has represented many people facing politically motivated prosecutions under Robert Mugabe's rule. He was also one of the founding members of the MDC (the opposition party to Mugabe's Zanu-PF) and became Minister of Education in 2009-2013.

Mr. Coltart spoke on the erosion of the rule of law in Zimbabwe, describing a number of improvements in the protection of human rights offered by Zimbabwe's new constitution despite ongoing problems with implementation, as well as the application of draconian and unconstitutional legislation.

On October 10th, BHRC hosted another roundtable event with Zimbabwean human rights lawyer Beatrice Mtetwa. Ms. Mtetwa was in the UK to receive the 2014 Women of the Year Human Rights Award in recognition of her extraordinary contribution to the defence of journalists and freedom of the press. She spoke about the challenges facing the rule of law in Zimbabwe, and shared her personal experience of being imprisoned, and described how it prompted her to shine a spotlight on the situation of women in detention in her country.

ANNUAL BAR CONFERENCE 2014

BHRC ran an engaging and thought-provoking seminar on 8th November at the Annual Bar Conference, title 'Human rights and reconciliation: mediation on the world stage'. Our panel included Jonathan Powell (former Chief of Staff to Tony Blair and Britain's Special Envoy to Libya), Professor Philippe Sands QC of UCL and Matrix Chambers, Mark Muller QC, (Senior Adviser to the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue) and Kirsty Brimelow QC. The debate spanned the conflicts in Iraq, Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, as well as the role of non-state mediators and the challenges of truth and reconciliation processes.

2015

WHITE SHADOW

On 22nd March, BHRC and the Witchcraft Human Rights Information Network hosted a screening at the Tricycle Theatre of "White Shadow", a feature film directed by Noaz Deshe which tells the story behind the headlines of the persecution of people with albinism in Tanzania. The screening was followed by a Q&A chaired by Kirsty Brimelow, which included Deshe, lead actor Hamisi Bazili, Under the Same Sun International Advocacy Officer, I.K Ero and WHRIN Executive Director Gary Foxcroft. BHRC has continued to work closely with WHRIN and others on the issue of violence against people with albinism following this event, providing research and logistical support.

INDIA'S DAUGHTER

On 6th March, Plan UK, BHRC and Doughty Street Chambers held a special screening of the ground breaking film India's Daughter, which tells the story of the brutal gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh in Delhi in 2012, exposing the attitudes to women which allowed it to happen. The film powerfully explores the wider social reasons behind the prevalence of sexual violence and shows that through the biggest mass mobilisation in India since independence, millions of Indians were no longer prepared to see their daughters abused.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion chaired by Kirsty Brimelow, with the film's Director and Producer Leslee Udwin, Dr Maria Misra (Lecturer in Modern History, University of Oxford and Fellow of Keble College) Alistair McDonald QC (Chairman of the Bar Council), author Kathy Lette and Tanya Barron (CEO, Plan UK).

A BURDEN OF PEACE

22nd June saw a screening of the documentary "Burden of Peace" hosted by BHRC at Doughty Street Chambers. The film tells the story of Dr Claudia Paz y Paz, the first woman to lead the Public Prosecutor's Office of Guatemala, her struggle against corruption and impunity, and her eventual arrest of former dictator Efraim Rios Montt on charges of genocide. His conviction becomes the first conviction for genocide of a former head of state in a national court in world history, yet Claudia pays a heavy price for her relentless commitment to justice and human rights.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion with film-maker Sander Wirken, who talked about his experience of documenting Claudia's day-to-day efforts and battles against some of the most

openly corrupt of elite classes. A large number of attendees were human rights lawyers and activists from Guatemala and Latin America, and offered substantial interaction with the panel.

RUPTURE AND RECONCILIATION IN COLOMBIA

On 3rd July, BHRC hosted a seminar on the challenges faced by the current peace talks between the Colombian Government and the victims of its decades-long conflict, particularly the peace community of San José de Apartadó.

The community declared itself a neutral zone in 1997 in the civil conflict: a civilian protection strategy based on international humanitarian law. Since then, the community has suffered hundreds of killings and reprisals. In 2005, a massacre committed by paramilitaries and the Colombian army left eight people dead, including three children. In response, the community declared themselves in 'rupture' with the Colombian state.

BHRC's event saw Jon Dew, diplomat and former British Ambassador to Colombia, gave his perspective on the on-going peace process in the country. Anthropologist Gwen Burnyeat discussed her academic study into the San José de Apartadó Comunidad de Paz, including her work as a volunteer with Peace Brigades International and then as a Masters Candidate at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá. Kirsty Brimelow QC spoke about her role facilitating dialogue between the Colombian Government and the Peace Community, including her work to recommence dialogue between the State and the community in 2012, and the issuing by President Santos of a historic formal apology to the community in 2013, apologising for stigmatisations made against it

after the 2005 massacre by ex-president Alvaro Uribe.

SEMINAR ON FGM PROTECTION ORDERS - WHAT IMPACT ON GIRLS AT RISK?

On 16th July, BHRC hosted a seminar at Doughty Street Chambers where panellists Alimatu Dimonekene, Seema Malhotra MP and Zimran Samuel discussed the introduction of FGM Protection Orders in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; specific focus was given to BHRC's role in the creation of these orders, and BHRC's previous work on FGM in conjunction with Unicef in Nigeria.

ANNUAL BAR CONFERENCE 2015

BHRC ran a specialist session at 2015's Annual Bar and Young Bar Conference in London. The session was entitled "Trial Observations and Show Trials: the Role and Impact of Trial Monitoring". Chaired by Kirsty Brimelow QC, panel speakers included Blinne Ni Ghrálaigh (Vice-Chair of BHRC), Professor Mads Andenas (Chair of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention) and Alex Wilks (Principal Programme Lawyer at the IBA Human Rights Institute).

THE PROTECTION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS: A BARRISTER'S ROLE

On 2nd December BHRC hosted an event as part of the "Human Rights in Collaboration" series in the lead up to International Human Rights Day. This event was an opportunity to hear more about the work of BHRC, meet barristers on BHRC's Executive, and find out how to get involved in pro bono international human rights work. Our three speakers were Kirsty Brimelow QC, Zimran Samuel and Gráinne Mellon.



BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE OF
ENGLAND & WALES

Support The Bar Human Rights Committee

The Bar Human Rights Committee relies on membership subscriptions and individual donations to fund our ongoing work around the world. As a member, you will also receive up to date news about BHRC's work, opportunities to get involved in projects and the drafting of statements, letters or research reports, and invitations to BHRC events.

Your support enables us to:

- Produce statements, letters of concern and amicus curiae briefs in support of people facing unfair trials and imprisonment
- Send our Trial Observation Unit to witness and monitor unjust or unfair trials wherever they occur
- Provide international training, support and leadership to lawyers, human rights defenders and civil society groups under threat
- Lead investigations and publish detailed reports into serious human rights abuses
- Lobby governments and other state actors to improve fair trial protections and legal standards
- BHRC's core operational costs are covered by a grant from the Bar Council. This means that every penny of your membership subscription directly funds our project work, enabling us to send BHRC lawyers wherever they're most needed. Your support is vital to the growth of BHRC, and our ongoing work to protect advocates, judges, human rights defenders and vulnerable communities around the world.

BHRC Membership is open to every practising or non-practising member of the Bar of England and Wales, and all law students (including trainees and pupils) in England and Wales.

To find out more, visit <http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk/join>

BHRC Executive Committee Members 2014 & 2015

Kirsty Brimelow QC (Chair)	<i>Doughty Street Chambers</i>
Sudhanshu Swaroop (Vice-Chair)	<i>20 Essex Street</i>
Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh (Vice-Chair 2015)	<i>Matrix Chambers</i>
Michael Ivers (Treasurer)	<i>Garden Court Chambers</i>
Jodie Blackstock	<i>JUSTICE</i>
Professor Bill Bowring	<i>Birkbeck College, University of London</i>
Joanne Cecil	<i>Garden Court Chambers</i>
Dr. Theodora Christou	<i>Queen Mary, University of London</i>
Russell Fraser	<i>2 Dr Johnson's Buildings</i>
Schona Jolly	<i>Cloisters Chambers</i>
Ajanta Kaza	<i>1 Pump Court</i>
Gráinne Mellon	<i>Garden Court Chambers</i>
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Pete Weatherby QC	<i>Garden Court North</i>

Co-opted:

Phil Haywood	<i>Doughty Street Chambers</i>
Lucy Mair	<i>Garden Court North</i>

Advisory Board:

Mark Muller QC	<i>Doughty Street Chambers</i>
Peter Carter QC	<i>Doughty Street Chambers</i>
Professor Sir Nigel Rodley	<i>University of Essex</i>

Staff:

Illari Aragón Noriega, Co-ordinator (March 2012 to June 2014)
Céline Grey, Coordinator (June 2014 – Present)

Acknowledgments

BHRC thanks all its members for their support to realise its mandate and continue to expand its efforts to promote and protect human rights and respect for the rule of law internationally.

BHRC is grateful for the generous support of its funders:

Coram Children's Legal Centre
Doughty Street Chambers
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
General Council of the Bar of England and Wales
United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef)

During 2014-2015 BHRC has worked with the following organisations:

ABColumbia
Addameer
All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights
Amnesty International
British Embassy Colombia
British Nigeria Law Forum
Colombia Caravana
Comité de Apoyo al Tíbet
The Commonwealth Lawyers Association
Coram Children's Legal Centre
Centre for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance

Democratic Progress Institute
European Human Rights Advocacy Centre
International Bar Association Human Rights Institute
International Senior Lawyers Project
International Truth & Justice Project, Sri Lanka
José Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective
Peace Brigades International
The Law Society of England and Wales
Maldivian Democracy Network
National Council of Resistance of Iran
Reprieve
The Rights Practice
Solicitors International Human Rights Group
Safe Child Africa
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Nigeria
The Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network (WHRIN)

BHRC memberships and alliances

BHRC is a member of the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk and the Attorney General's International Pro Bono Committee. Kirsty Brimelow QC, Chair of the BHRC, currently represents the BHRC on the Lawyers' Advisory Committee for Peace Brigades International; Dr. Theodora Christou and Blinne Ní Ghrálaigh represent BHRC within the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network.



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