



ISHR NEWSLETTER

February 2018

IMPORTANT DATES

6 February

Int. Day of Zero Tolerance
of Female Genital
Mutilation

12 February

Int. Day against the Use of
Child Soldiers (Red Hand
Day)

20 February

World Day of Social Justice

21 February

Int. Mother Language Day

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INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL INVITATION

We are pleased to announce the upcoming 33rd International Council meeting, to take place on April 8, 2018 in Bonn, Germany. See 'A Word from the President' for more details, and we look forward to seeing you there!

Featured this month:

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Meeting of ISHR Section leaders during the annual conference of the International Council in 2016.

"It is not enough to be compassionate – you must act."

- The Dalai Lama

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

Invitation to the upcoming annual International Council Meeting of the ISHR

Invitación a la próxima reunión anual del Consejo Internacional de la SIDH ~ Invitation à la prochaine réunion annuelle du Conseil international du SIDH ~ Приглашение на предстоящее ежегодное заседание Международного совета МОПЧ



Board of the International Council of the ISHR in 2016*.
Pictured left to right: Karl Hafen, Treasurer; Prof. Dr. Schirmmacher, President (back), Dr. Zachidov, General Secretary, Vice Presidents Dr. Nemcinova, Simone Schlegel, Rene Gomez-Manzano, Haydee Marin, and Marie Gerrard. *Not pictured: Vice Presidents Dr. Benanyarli & Dr. Suchorukov

It is my privilege to invite the leaders of the ISHR national sections and working groups to the 33rd ISHR International Council meeting on April 8, 2018 at the Gustav-Stresemann-Institute in Bonn, Germany.

As you know, elections of the board of the International Council takes place every four years, so there will be no elections this year. Therefore, attendance is optional. The conference will focus on discussing the work of the sections over the past year. We will also gladly accept short reports or greetings (written or as videos) from sections who cannot attend, which we will present at the conference. For organizational reasons, we ask that only one official representative from each section attends the International Council meeting.

As usual, the council meeting will take place following the 46th Annual Assembly of the German Section of IGFM/ISHR. This assembly is open to our guests from abroad, though please note it will take place primarily in German. It will include reports from national sections and groups, as well as from human rights experts and victims of human rights violations. Among the prominent guest speakers we are honoured to host this year include Cardinal Zen from Hong Kong, who will speak on violations against religious freedom in China. Regrettably, it is not possible for us to cover the costs of attendance this year due to budgetary restrictions. For those who plan to attend, please submit a written confirmation per email to maya.robinson@igfm.de by **March 15**, so that we can make the arrangements at the Institute. We are happy to assist with writing official letters of invitation to those who need it for receiving a visa.

I am very much looking forward seeing you in Bonn and wish you a safe trip.

Sincerely yours,

*Thomas Schirmmacher, President
Marat Zakhidov, General Secretary*

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR Ukraine

ISHR President meets with Ukrainian lawyers and human rights defenders in Kiev

On December 9, 2017, in Kiev, a meeting of lawyers and human rights defenders with the President of the International Society for Human Rights, Prof. Thomas Schirmmacher, and his wife, Prof. Christine Schirmmacher, took place. Participants in the meeting discussed the observation of the right to a fair trial in Ukraine.

In particular, the issues discussed included those that appeared in litigations against journalists Muravitskiy,



Prof. Thomas Schirmmacher and Prof. Christine Schirmmacher meet with human rights and lawyers in Kiev

Vasilets and Timonin, managing officers of tax authorities (the so-called “helicopter case” or the “case of tax collectors”), and in criminal proceedings against the former president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich.

According to the lawyers, violation of human rights includes the following:

- Accusation of journalists of high treason in connection with their professional activity – publication of the materials criticizing the state authorities and particular representatives thereof;
- Abuse of power by the military prosecutor’s office, in particular, prosecution of criminal cases on accusations which do not envisage participation of its representatives in the process (processes against the tax authority offices who are accused of corruption and who are not connected with the army or the military conflict in the East of the country);
- Beating of the arrested with the aim of disposing for an acknowledgement of fault and cooperation with prosecution for giving testimony against other figurants of the case (“helicopter case”, or the “case of tax collectors”);
- Actual suspension of the former President from participation in the criminal case brought against him expressed via denial by the court to provide Victor Yanukovich with a possibility to participate in court via a video-conference conducted within confines of the international legislation.



Professors Thomas & Christine Schirrmacher (first and second from left) in discussion with Anton Alekseyev, Exec. Director, ISHR Ukraine (far right)

Apart from discussion of the socially important processes, the participants of the meeting made Professor Schirrmacher aware of the problems with observation of the rights of lawyers. Criminal and disciplinary proceedings, threats from the side of representatives of state authorities, and radical groups, damage of personal property, and attacks are all part of the reality the Ukrainian lawyers face in their work, especially when they participate in the cases which have a “political coloring”. The President of ISHR noted that protection of human rights defenders and lawyers is an important direction in activities of the international organizations, in particular, the UN and other organizations on human rights protection (including ISHR).

One of the ways to provide for protection of lawyers and their clients, as well as human rights defenders is a thorough dissemination of information and publicity in their work. Modern means of communications provide for a possibility to disseminate information promptly. However, there exists the risk of persecution of lawyers and human rights defenders from the side of the persons who do not wish to make the materials of criminal cases public, who prefer “quiet” criminal cases that the public is not being made aware of. Search for a balance between the necessity of dissemination of information and a danger by so doing of bringing harm to a lawyer or a human right defender is an important task in building the information work.

Within the framework of the meeting the issues of interaction between the civil society of EU countries and the Ukrainian lawyers and human rights defenders were discussed. The variants of cooperation may include:

- Search of international specialists for provision of expert conclusions within the framework of criminal cases;
- Preparation of reports by international human rights organizations and their subsequent use as the evidence for addressing the European court for human rights (ECHR);
- Participation of international human rights organizations in the ECHR cases in the format of a “third party intervention”.

Further process of establishing contacts between the civil society of Ukraine and those of EU countries, as well as a dialogue with bodies of State authority are an important step on the way to implementation by Ukraine of the declared course of reforms, including the reform of judicial system.

*Anton Alekseyev
Executive Director, ISHR Ukraine*

ISHR Lithuania

Letter of thanks to ISHR partners in Germany and Lithuania for transport of medical supplies

The following is a letter of thanks written by Roma Ramanauskienė, the head of Kupiskis Hospital in Lithuania to the Lithuanian section and its partners in Germany:

‘On January 29, 2018 the auxiliary transport arrived well from Germany to Lithuania. Since the leaders in and doctors of the Kupiskis hospital do not speak German or English, they asked me to give you a huge thank you. In the name of all the doctors, the head and the patients of the hospital, we thank you and your staff for the great support we have received.

In the building with us is a hospital, a clinic, and a nursing home, so the hospital beds are very important to us and all medical supplies can be allocated where they are needed most. Since our country (Lithuania) is small and poor, we very rarely



Helpers hold up IGFM signs before unloading the medical supplies transported from Germany



Unloading process of the semi-truck full of hospital beds, wheelchairs, bedding, and much more for Kupiskis Hospital in Lithuania

receive necessary

support; items such as bedding, diapers, medicines, and bandages are not given to us by the state, and patients mostly must buy them themselves, so your support is a great relief for poor patients. Thank you again for your effort and your help.

We would also like to thank the organizer in Lithuania, Jurgita Samoskiene, Chairwoman of ISHR Section Lithuania. Without your mediation, the transfer of the relief goods would not be possible. Thank you also to Katrin Bornmüller, who has been sending humanitarian aid to Lithuania for many years. We wish you God's protection and much strength in your work and in your personal life’*.

*Translated into German by Jurgita Samoskiene, Chairwoman of ISHR Lithuania, and from German into English by Maya Robinson.

ISHR Lithuania

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

DR Congo: Peacefully protesting Catholic churchgoers killed by security forces

8 deaths in crackdown on protest against President Kabila on Dec. 31

The Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo has called for peaceful protests against President Joseph Kabila. Kabila's constitutional term was over in December of 2016, but he did not step down. An agreement was made through the Catholic Church that he was allowed to remain in power with the provision that elections would be held in 2017. Because Kabila violated the agreement and no elections were held, the Catholic Church has called for open protest for him to step down.

Kabila banned public demonstrations in September of 2016, and has since violently cracked down on protesters. On December 31, security forces attacked a large peaceful demonstration of Catholic churchgoers after Mass in the capital of Kinshasa, killing an estimated 8 people and wounding nearly 30 others. Kabila also cut internet access in the capital to prevent further demonstrators from gathering.



Pres. of Democratic Republic of Congo, Joseph Kabila in 2016. Via Wikimedia Commons.

Dr. Emmanuel Ogbunwezeh, expert on Sub-Saharan Africa in ISHR Germany, stated that Kabila's actions are nothing new in the African context; shutting down opposition through limiting freedom of expression and even violent repression is a common pattern for African dictators who have fallen out of favor. However, it remains a serious violation of human rights which should be condemned by the African and international communities.

Maya Robinson
ISHR Germany

ISHR EVENTS

Follow-up from the humanitarian aid transport to Iraq

Medical supplies, school supplies, and sewing machines delivered to refugees in Shekhan, Kurdistan



Khalil Al Rasho, head of humanitarian aid to Iraq of ISHR Germany and local helpers unload the delivery truck

In the last edition of the newsletter, the latest transport of humanitarian aid for refugee camps and communities in northern Iraq (Kurdistan) was being prepared by ISHR Germany. On January 17, it arrived in Dohuk, and in the following days, the goods were distributed in the nearby Sheikan refugee camps.

On February 12, the head of humanitarian aid to Iraq of ISHR Germany, Khalil Al Rasho, received the following message of thanks regarding the delivery of medical supplies from Dr. Fouad Khudida Qasim Alabidaal, a general surgeon working in Shekhan: 'We would like to send you our great thanks for all the members of IGFM for your great support to us

and we would like to notify you that all the medicines and medical materials have been received and distributed to the patients that need them'.

However, not only medical supplies were delivered, but also supplies for schools located in the camps in Sheikan, as well as for a new sewing studio! ISHR Germany has been progressively developing the sewing course program for refugee women over the past several years, to help provide a source of skill development, occupation, inter-religious understanding and interaction, and create a potential income source for the women taking part in the program who have lost everything in the war. With



The first sewing course in the new studio in Shekhan refugee camp, made possible by the recent transport of materials and machines from ISHR Germany. Photo courtesy of Khalil Al Rasho



Distribution of school supplies to 1700 young students in Shekhan. Photo courtesy of Khalil Al Rasho

this transport, it was possible to open a second sewing room to accommodate more women and more courses, which is an exciting development.

As of the end of January, the German section of the ISHR also received official recognition as an aid organization by authorities in Iraq, which will continue to simplify the process of delivering humanitarian aid to this area and to those who need it in the future.

ISHR Germany

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