FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear ISHR Community,

Inasmuch as our world is not yet out of the woods, in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic, human rights issues are still among the recurring decimals of our reality today. We all are called to be attentive to the wellbeing of our neighbors, especially as this pandemic moves across our various populations.

“Privilege, you see, is one of the great adversaries of the imagination; it spreads a thick layer of adipose tissue over our sensitivity... when we are comfortable and inattentive, we run the risk of committing grave injustices absentmindedly.”

— Chinua Achebe

Article continues on next page ...
We wish you all health and strength, as most of us try to seat out this pandemic, as to flatten the curve. We are all called upon also never to forget the mission of this ‘vocation’ we all have chosen; to fight for, and defend human rights, wherever they are in danger of being trampled underfoot, violated or used as a scaffold for those politics that are anti-human, unjust and unfair.

In this edition, Albania sent us their March-April report for your perusal. We thank the Albanian section for the good work they are doing in standing by the Albanian earthquake victims, as their report shows. We thank their president, Prof. Dr. Magarita Kola, for her able leadership. We thank also our very dear own Katrin Bornmüller for all the support, she has been rendering to the Albanian section in this regard.

We bring you also a snippet of the genocide and crimes against humanity court-proceedings, against an Islamic State operative, taking place in Frankfurt. The ISHR has been in the forefront of working with the Yezidis in North Iraq since 2014. We have documented their pain, their rape, and the genocide perpetrated against them, by the Islamic State. It is natural that we would be observers of the trial against Al Taha, J., a member of the Islamic State, who stands before a court of justice in Frankfurt, accused of crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes. Our very dear own Khalil Al Rasho is observing this trial for us. And from the court room, he sent us the report, which you would read in page 3.

The ISHR, represented by Katrin Bornmüller participated in a videoconference on Iran in the corona-crises. Her thoughtful presentation is also included in this edition. We also present you the ISHR Germany’s press release on the Cuba dissident, who has been tormented for his stand on human rights. We also regretfully announce the passing away of one of our fellow advocate and fighter for human rights, Maja Caspari.

Happy reading!

Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher
President of the International Council of the ISHR

Emmanuel Onyemaechi Ogbunwezech, Ph.D.
Managing Editor

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR Albania

ISHR, Albania Report (March–April, 2020)

ISHR Albania due to Covid-19 pandemic had a slowing down activity over the course time March-April, 2020.

1. In the last couple of months ISHR Albania is involved in helping areas affected where the latest earthquake in Albania caused the most damages and 53 people died and hundreds were wounded. The ISHR Albania through its members organized the distribution of foods, clothes and beddings enabled by network of friends and supporters of ISHR, Albania.
On 26 November 2019 a magnitude 6.4 and intensity 8 earthquakes struck Durrës and Tirana county. Many buildings which were not built in accordance with engineering standards collapsed causing an overall estimate of 52 deaths. The residents that were affected by the earthquake, whose homes are either completely destroyed or inhabitable, are currently living in tents in the cold winter days. They are in need of new homes, clothes, sanitary supplies and food. The EU office in Albania estimated that some 1.9 million people out of a total population of 2.8 million have been affected by the earthquake. Of those, more than 3,000 people were injured, 14,000 became homeless and throughout Albania 14,000 buildings were damaged of which 2,500 are rendered uninhabitable. The distribution stopped upon the restricted measures because of Pandemic announced by government on March 14th, 2020.

2. Supporting the Ashraf3 Camp, established in Manzë, Albania near Tirana: According to the discussion with community members of Ashraf Camp in Albania that Katrin Bormuller had during her visit in Albania on January, 2020 which brought into attention that they were in need of medications and ambulances Mrs. Bornmuller in close collaboration with ISHR, Albania was able to find an ambulance to donate for Iranian refugees in Albania. Still, the ambulance is in Germany due to the inability to transport it caused by the Covid-19 pandemic

3. Blood feud situation and ISHR, Albania Intervention: Blood feud in Albania still remains one of the toughest problems to tackle from the Albanian government. Many children remain isolated without contact with the outside world and therefore no education. Under the situation of Covid-19 as the restricted measures had to be obeyed the only possibility for ISHR, Albania to continue to help those families affected from blood-feud was to put pressure to local authorities to provide help in foods and medical stuff. ISHR, Albania office number is acting as an open line for claims of this marginalized group after the commitment of ISHR was announced.

4. Human Rights Campaigns: ISHR, Albania remains committed to the main mission of organization and as such has been very active on recent initiatives of Civil Society in Albania in denouncing the violation of the Albanian constitution and human rights that have come as a result of the restrictive measures coming from the pandemic. ISHR, Albania has become part of a coalition of organizations that have protested against the violation of the rights of citizens by normative acts issued by the Albanian government lately.

Prof. Dr. Magarita Kola
ISHR, Albania Section
**CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS**

**Frankfurt**

ISHR monitors the first case worldwide, against a perpetrator of the Islamic State in connection with Genocide against the Yazidis.

The ISHR is actively monitoring the Genocide court process, against a member of the Islamic State, Taha al-J, at the High Court in Frankfurt am Main. The Process which began on Friday, the 24th of April, 2020, witnesses Taha al-J on the dock, accused of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War crimes. The accused was extradited from Greece at the instance of the German Federal Prosecutor’s office.

Taha’s wife, the German Jennifer W., had followed him to the Caliphate in 2015. She had already been arrested by German authorities in 2018 and charged before the Munich Higher Regional Court. You would see the name make appearances many times in the report of the Frankfurter Proceedings.

One must reiterate that this trial in Frankfurt is the first criminal case of its kind, worldwide, against a member of the Islamic State, in relation to the crimes of genocide against the Yazidis.

The IS commenced their persecution and genocide against the Yezidis in 2014, in the Sinjar region of Iraqi. Many Yezidis were tortured, executed, enslaved, sold, and raped, and visited with various forms of unprintable atrocities, all of which constitutes crimes against humanity and war crimes as well. More than 3000 Yezidi men, women and children are still either in IS captivity or dead. Many families are never ever going to be reunited with their loved ones again.

The ISHR has been working with the Yazidis since the prosecution started. We are present in many camps across Northern Iraq where Yezidi sought refuge. We have conceptualized and implemented many human rights and humanitarian projects in these camps, including support for the liberated captives of the IS, financing psychological therapy for some liberated captives, organizing sewing courses for the Yazidi women, and so many others.

Six years after the genocide and with the very first court proceedings of its kind, taking place in Frankfurt, where we are headquartered. It is natural that the ISHR would be there to monitor the process.

ISHR’s man, monitoring the proceedings in no other than our very own Khalil Al Rasho, the leader of our Humanitarian Help Desk for the Near East, at the ISHR in Germany.

Below is his report on the 6th day of hearing in the case.
The 6th hearing of 22 hearings at Frankfurt District Court, Room 2, 11 May 2020

Today witnessed the presence of many spectators, due to the fact that interest in the case seems to be growing. There were especially many political science students present. There were also some Yezidis, interested Germans, writers and people from the Kurdish community. There weren’t a lot of journalists or the press present.

Today’s proceedings saw another witness for the prosecution being called. There were always different witnesses, so that the statements can be compared among other things. The judge was satisfied with the different testimonies of the witnesses, because they were basically similar. The Defense lawyer tried to establish contact with the FBI Agent. To that end, he asked the witness questions about the FBI agent. However, the witness refused to answer, as he was not allowed to disclose any personal information. In the second part of the trial, the motorway from Düsseldorf to Ulm was “re-enacted”. In terms of content, it was found that Jennifer revealed the following information about the IS situation:

1. Jennifer has very good contacts with the Islamic State. She is a member of the IS-Police (Al-Hasba).
2. During the conversation Jennifer told the FBI person a lot of information about secret groups working for the IS from Europe (Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium and Albania). She wanted to send her links to the websites and arrange contacts. Jennifer also explained that all groups have the same goals, but work under different names.
3. Jennifer has information about the brother of Abu Bakir Al-Bagdadi and other key people in the IS administration she met in Al-Faluja.
4. The Islamic State has some tanks and she wants the IS to get more tanks.
5. She told how she and her husband travelled from Raqa (Syria) via Mosul to Al-Faluja and what difficulties they had. Like for example fear of bombing airplanes which is why they made many breaks and stayed overnight in different places. So the journey took five days.
6. On the journey from Düsseldorf to Ulm, Jennifer made sure that they kept the times for prayer. She was very enthusiastic and convinced of this rule. At the rest areas she tried to pray in a “non-visible” corner. With every person in the rest area she felt that she was racist.
7. Jennifer also confirmed that her ex-husband ran over a man with a tank as punishment. She was only married to him for a month. However, that month she only saw him for a week because he was on the front line the rest of the time. After that they got a divorce. According to Islamic rules she has to wait four months before she can marry again. Her ex-husband hates her for unknown reasons.
8. Jennifer is afraid of any presence of police cars on the highway.
9. Jennifer has confirmed that the PKK is not what we think (that it belongs to a terrorist organization). The PKK has changed and developed.
10. She was excited about how the IS has taken other areas by war. She was fascinated by how quickly it worked. After the IS took the different areas, the administration in these areas was not good.
11. Jennifer has told us that she joined the IS before Abu Bakr Al-Bagdadi became the Khalifa.
12. About the bureaucracy of the IS, she said that all the documents, identity cards, certificates, etc. are issued in the Wilaya office.
13. She compared the nature in the Islamic State with the nature in Europe. In her opinion, the most beautiful place is the surroundings of Raqa.
14. The German police arrested Jennifer in a parking lot near Ulm while the FBI agent went to the toilet. At that moment, Jennifer said that she belonged to an Islamic society and that the men were not allowed to touch her. She insulted the police officers and asked for the FBI agent. The police said that they arrested her too. Thereupon she continued to rant and rave. She is afraid that the policemen will treat her daughter, who was there all the time, badly. The police assured her that she was in good hands and that she had nothing to worry about. Jennifer was taken to prison and her car was taken to the police station to be searched.

Note: Some answers are not related to the main topic. The questions were all asked by the FBI agent.

Khalil Al-Rasho
ISHR Germany

ISHR EVENTS

Berlin

*ISHR took part on a Videoconference on the Iran in the Corona crisis*

The Honorary Chairperson for the German section of the ISHR, Katrin Bornmüller was invited to participate on a video conference on the 1st of May, 2020 in Berlin. The video conference was organized by German-Irans and their supporters. The “German Solidarity Committee for a Free Iran” under the leadership of Otto Bernhard and the “German-Iranian Society” are co-organizers. The citizens of Iran are fighting on 2 fronts: the deadly pandemic and the mullah dictatorship, which does not care in the least about the people. The citizens are left alone with their medical problems, the opposition is hushed up, and protests are suppressed. Protests were brutally suppressed in 8 prisons, which were afflicted by the pandemic. Instead of quarantine or prison leave, the regime reacted with naked violence: 30 dead, executions are in full swing, 11 prisoners were executed in 2 days, including a young man.
15 people participated in the videoconference, including professors and CDU/CSU members of the German parliament.

Below is the reaction and sentiments of Mrs. Bornmüller at that occasion.

**Iran in the Corona Crisis: The Current Situation and What to Do?**

_Greetings from the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)_

As the Honorary Chairperson of the German Section of the International Society for Human Rights – ISHR – I would like to extend my warmest greetings to you all. The catastrophic human rights situation in Iran has preoccupied the ISHR for years. Especially through my contact with the Iranian refugees in Albania, I am aware of the extent of the indescribable atrocities committed against the so-called political prisoners. With the human rights activist and lawyer Prof. Dr. Margarita Kola, the MEK has a unique representative. She is President of the ISHR Section Albania. The ISHR will donate an ambulance to the Iranian refugees in Albania.

As if the tragedies were not enough, the coronavirus then makes landfall in Iran. Iran is considered one of the worst affected countries in the world. The Iranian government’s rejection of a team of Doctors without Borders, which offered to help in mid-March with material for a treatment center with 50 beds, gives much food for thought. Insiders suspect that hardliners suspect spies among the doctors. But it is more likely that the team of doctors will know the true extent of the spread and could report it.

As early as 26 February 2020, Ebrahim Raisi, Iran's chief justice, announced that detainees should be tested for the virus; and in the event of a negative test result, up to 54,000 prisoners should be released on bail at times, according to the spokesman for the Iranian justice department, Gholamhossein Esmaili. This report, one must note, has two faces: this exemption explicitly does not apply to prisoners accused of actions against national security and sentenced to more than five years’ imprisonment. With this exception, the corona virus is used to increase the sentence, and the political prisoners are in danger of their lives! This is not only inhuman, but also an affront to the dignity of the prisoner. In Iranian human rights circles, there is a fear that they are being deliberately denied release from prison so that they can become infected and die.

The ISHR has just launched an action: “Help political prisoners in Iran”. On the ISHR website, numerous political prisoners, including women’s rights activist NARGES MOHAMMADI and Sakharov Prize winner NASRIN SOTOUDEH, are presented with their pictures and fates. Please visit our website www.igfm.de and take part in this campaign. Every voice counts.
The ISHR calls on the Iranian government to release all political prisoners; in this particular situation, to give political prisoners the same protection from the virus as any other Iranian citizen.

Katrin Bornmüller, ISHR Wittlich

Cuba

Tormented but unbroken and full of strength for human rights

José Daniel Ferrer released after six months / Cuba’s best-known political prisoner sentenced to four and a half years in house arrest.

Frankfurt am Main/Havana, April 6th, 2020 – Sunken cheeks, the whole body emaciated, the head shaved bald – his body shows the tortures that he had faced. José Daniel Ferrer, Cuba’s best-known political prisoner, was released on Friday, April 3, 2020, but was sentenced to four and a half years house arrest.

The case has attracted international attention for months: The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) has been campaigning for his release since his detention, and the European Parliament has passed a resolution on this.

The founder and president of the Cuban opposition movement UNPACU has been in custody since October 1, 2019, was ill-treated in prison, and brought the catastrophic prison conditions to the attention with a hunger strike. The regime also released the three civil rights activists to house arrest who were arrested with him and who were sentenced to three and five years in prison.

“The international pressure has had an effect and we are very happy that José Daniel Ferrer has now been released from political captivity in Cuba,” explains Martin Lessenthin, Speaker of the Board of the ISHR, and adds that the state of the civil rights activist and the conditions of the detention have been catastrophic and would clearly show how the dictatorial regime deals with critical voices on the Caribbean island.

Torture, hunger and solitary confinement

After his arrest, Daniel Ferrer was taken to a police prison without charge, and then the State Security transferred him to an unknown location. He was chained and ill-treated in his cell. In addition, he was not allowed to contact legal counsel.

José Daniel Ferrer was often beaten and tortured and subjected to constant humiliation, particularly in the first three months of his detention, the Miami Herald reports. He was held in sol-
itary confinement in Aguadores prison in Santiago de Cuba for six months. Because he refused to wear the prison clothes, he received no medical care.

He went on a hunger strike for more than 20 days on October 30, 2019 to protest about the bad conditions in prison. He was not allowed to read or write and generally suffered from insufficient food supplies. According to his own statements, he lost 25 kilograms during detention.

As in the past, the Cuban government was unable to break Ferrer through the detention and sentence, as a recent video shows: He accuses the Cuban government, thanks for the international solidarity and makes clear that he will continue to work for human rights and democratic changes in his home country.

“Although Daniel Ferrer is now released, the civil rights activist’s family and the ISHR fear that the illegal arrest and unfair trial will result in him being arrested again if international attention has decreased,” Lessenthin said.

**Ferrer’s commitment to human rights in Cuba**

José Daniel Ferrer was arrested at his home in Santiago de Cuba on October 1, 2019 along with three other civil rights activists. The 49-year-old was already in political custody with 74 other opposition figures from 2003 to 2011 because he was allegedly guilty of “offenses against the integrity of the state”.

At that time he was sentenced to 28 years in prison. As part of the so-called Varela project, he and his colleagues had collected almost 25,000 signatures to anchor the right to freedom of speech and assembly in the constitution and to achieve the release of all political prisoners.

When long-term dictator Fidel Castro released 50 political prisoners, including José Daniel Ferrer, ahead of international pressure in spring 2011, everyone should leave the island forever. José Daniel Ferrer refused to turn his back on his home country.

He stayed on the island and founded UNPACU to continue to work for changes in Cuba and for respect for human rights. Since then, he and his colleagues have been monitored, harassed and briefly detained several times.

More information about human rights in Cuba: [www.igfm.de/kuba](http://www.igfm.de/kuba) (in German) and [www.ishr.org/regions/america/](http://www.ishr.org/regions/america/)

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**OBITUARY**

**Maja Caspari**

_Founder and head of the Romania Section, ISHR_

_Died, March 2020_

After 30 years of membership in the International Council, Maja Caspari, Chairperson of the Romania Section, left us in March 2020 at the age of 88 after a long illness.

Immediately after the fall of the Romanian dictator Ceausescu in 1989, Maja Caspari had the idea and the courage to bring sick people out of isolation and to persuade them to take on tasks
and responsibility for other sick people. From this initiative, when diabetics, cancer patients and parents of diabetic children met for the first time to help each other, the section of the ISHR was born, which helped to remove social obstacles to the integration of disabled and sick people.

Under most difficult conditions and equally difficult circumstances, it has, supported by the ISHR Sections from Germany and Austria, through extraordinary efforts and selfless work, achieved a great work from which everyone has benefited not only the sick and disabled, but also the citizens of her home town Medias.

The concern for human rights was already her concern during the time of the dictator Ceausescu, because she belonged to those who did not meet the criteria of perfection for the communist dictatorship of Ceausescu, namely the handicapped people, who were not allowed to show themselves in public and lived a life of inner exile in the circle of their relatives.

Maja Caspari, herself severely ill with diabetes, had raised her voice against this and worked to improve her situation. With the foundation of the Cancer and Diabetes Centre in Medias, which is self-administered by the sick and their relatives under her leadership, she restored justice and dignity to those, who were previously outcasts.

She set an example to all disabled people in Romania through her personal commitment and rendered them invaluable service, through her constant struggle with the authorities and institutions.

The Cancer and Diabetes Center became the base of humanitarian aid for numerous charitable associations in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and other European countries. Thanks to this aid, Medias became known far beyond the borders of her town and her nation.

As the head of the Romanian section of the International Society for Human Rights, she persistently and publicly pointed out human rights violations and other legal grievances. She contributed to human rights education and called on citizens to take action themselves for the preservation of human rights.

Maja Caspari, with almost 30 years of membership, was one of the pillars of the International Council of the ISHR.

We will honour her memory.

Karl Hafen,
Member of the Board of the International Council of the ISHR
Congratulatory Message sent by Thomas Schirrmacher to the President of the Romanian ISHR on the 25th jubilee in June 2015

Dear Mrs Caspari,

dear leaders, members and friends
of the Romanian Section of the International Society of Human Rights,

In December 1989 a dispute over religious freedom which arose in Timisoara, the city where I teach regularly at the University of the West, became the starting point of the Romanian Revolution. The Communist government wanted to get rid of a pastor, because he often criticized the government, but his church members and then a steadily growing number of all kind of citizens protected the pastor, including some from Romanian, Hungarian and German backgrounds alike. The harsh and brutal reaction of the government became a signal for protests all over Romania, the beginning of the end of a rule against human rights. We very much regret those people that died, yet it was the Romanian people who fought for freedom and human rights against a dictatorship.

The history of the brave Romanians involved with the IGFM/ISHR started well before this, but it was a proud and obvious sign of a new area, that they gathered quickly and founded our Romanian Section in 1990 at a time, when no one knew what would be coming. But they wanted to ensure, that the new Romania would be built around the idea of human rights.

Thus the fact, that the Romanians elected a President from Sibiu, with his fight against corruption and being from German descent, proves that Romania has learned to go beyond racism, government control, government corruption, and to give human rights a fair chance. The Romanian ISHR played a vital role in this.

On behalf of the International Council of the ISHR, I congratulate you to the 25th birthday of your section and thank you for all your work done in the last 25 years. On behalf of the worldwide ISHR family, I am proud that we have so many experienced human right fighters in our midst. I hope that your history will someday be written so that others may learn from your good example.

Yours, Thomas Schirrmacher
President of the International Council of the ISHR