

Newsletter N°3

CRW-CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

Sep. - December 2015



CITIZENS VOICES

Newsletter No. 3 Sept-Dec 2015



Contact us:

**CITIZENS
RIGHTS WATCH**
Our voices joined become stronger...

About Citizens Rights Watch:

Citizens Rights Watch is an independent, Non Profit, Non-Governmental organization dedicated to monitor worldwide governments, and watch their efforts to provide, facilitate, enhance and protect, citizens' rights. By focusing international attention where citizens' rights are ignored or digested, CRW gives voice to citizens in holding their governments accountable, and into bringing benefits justice to citizens around the world.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens_Rights_Watch

**APPLY for an internship,
more info at:
www.citizensrw.org**

**JOIN OUR FIGHTS FOR HUMAN
RIGHTS FOR ALL, EVERYWHERE
& FOREVER!**

Join us, check our Website, Twitter
or Facebook, and stay connected,
informed & take action with us!

How CRW Works?

Citizens Rights Watch, is an international human rights non-governmental organization comprised by professional volunteers from around the globe. Its volunteers include politics experts, lawyers, journalists, and academics.

Citizens Rights Watch is utilizing new technologies, and through online activism, is raising awareness of human rights violations, focuses on educating the people about their rights, and advocates through all media possible for citizens' rights around the world.

Philosophy:

Citizens Rights Watch promotes, supports, and work as an effective tool to protect Human Rights as stated in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Vision:

Monitor governments' compliance to THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS with focus on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Mission:

To encourage and drive ruling authorities in the world to focus on their citizens rights. Through online activism, and by using innovative technological tools, to push for the realization of universal human rights.



Eleanor Roosevelt and United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Spanish.

Table of contents

- About Citizen Rights Watch
- A letter from our S/G/
- Editorial Note
- Our Activists Reports
- Other Articles & Reports
- Our Partners

London, December 2015

A letter from our Secretary General

By **Dr Zoi Aliozi**
SG of CRW

Contact us:



HUMAN RIGHTS

You are all welcome to read our 3rd Newsletter. Through this triennial e-magazine, we aim at raising human rights awareness, giving people a chance to participate actively in our human rights work, and provide a platform where citizens voices can be heard. We cordially welcome our new authors and fellow activists who are coming from all around the world, and through their contributions we can raise awareness about human rights issues that are not part of the mainstream media's first pages.



I must report, that since August, we have been cyber-attacked a number of times and our website was hacked, resulting to many malfunctions of our Online platforms. We managed to tackle these attacks, but a BIG THANK YOU is in order to all our activists that contributed to our work in these times of emergency.

In Citizens Rights Watch, we have one mission: to contribute in the progressive realization of human rights for us and the future generations, by monitoring governments and the political will of power-holders in relation to human rights policies and promises. In doing so we condemn injustices, raise awareness of human rights violations, and push for change in a democratic way, by uniting our voices in demanding our rights. By using the tool of political shame to keep governments accountable for wrong practices, and for failing to fulfill their promises for human rights protection.

We use the power of the new technologies, and the unprecedented opportunity to connect Online and communicate with thousands like-minded people. Our motto is: **United Our Voices Become Stronger!**

We are basing our human rights work on Online activism, and on the power that peoples can exercise when united, against the arbitrary interferences of our governments. We needed a platform to advocate for human rights and speak out about injustices. That been said, you are all welcome to join us, and use our resources to that ends as well. We are a newly founded human rights advocacy group, with little resources, but we are growing through the need of our activists to speak up in an impartial and free way about human rights. You are all welcome to join us, and contribute from whichever post you see fit. Contact us through social media or email us, follow us on twitter, or check out our website. We welcome articles, letters, or campaign suggestions, new members, activists, and friends!

Join us, we need your support and help!

Thank you!

Dr. Zoi Aliozi

Secretary-General of Citizens Rights Watch

zoi@citizensrw.org



Editors Note

Human Rights in Crises

By **Dr Zoi Aliozi**

SG of CRW
& Editor-in-Chief

Contact us:



CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

Our voices united become stronger...

Human rights are understood, as a project for centuries, we talk about the progressive realization of human rights, because in 2015, we know that human rights are fully, and absolutely protected and enjoyed: NOWHERE in the world.

Our work is motivated by the frustration we feel, when we realize that all human beings have rights, everywhere and always, but in reality, other human beings are violating human rights or making sure that these rights are not enjoyed by everyone.

Our eyes these last months of 2015, have been on the refugee crises, and on the Climate Justice progress with the COP21 in Paris.

Refugees Crises: More than four million Syrian refugees are registered by the UN, as "persons of concern" falling within its mandate, The UN High Commissioner for Refugees documented that more than 1/4 of those are children. The popular topic of discussion among media and scholars, about distinguishing between "genuine" refugees and economic migrants, is part of a propaganda to manipulate the public opinion. It is not the role of Government Ministers to determine whether a protection claim is legally well founded. We cannot know how many of those who lost their lives in crossing the Mediterranean were seeking: asylum from persecution; (fleeing War); or 'simply' a better standard of living. We know one thing however, that their right to seek asylum, which is in the core of human rights, was not protected by Europe.



Dr Zoi Aliozi Citizens Rights Watch SG, speaking at the event: Syrian Refugee Information Night. (Amnesty Soc NUIG).

If you can help the volunteers in Lesbos, the busiest entry point for refugees in the EU, please CONTACT:

lesvosvolunteers@gmail.com

Refugees keep drowning every day in the Aegean sea. Remember the freedoms that make up the essence of Europe.



Citizens rights Watch Secretary General addressing the demonstrators in Climate March November 2015.

We protest in hope, love, and solidarity, to show to our leaders how it should be done. We demanded a legally-binding agreement in Paris, and WE SUCEEDED, since these huge demos around the world could not be silenced...We took our message to the table of negotiations.

Climate Justice: is the fair treatment of all people and freedom from discrimination with the creation of policies and projects that address climate change and the systems that create climate change and perpetuate discrimination. Climate change is undermining the fulfillment of a number of internationally protected human rights. The worst effects of climate change are likely to be felt by those individuals and groups whose rights protection is already insufficient. We work to highlight these risks and advocate for the consideration of issues such as: forced mass migration; increased disease incidence and strain on healthcare systems; threatened food and water security; the disappearance and degradation of shelter, land, livelihoods and cultures; and the threat of conflict; the right to self-determination; the right to life and health, a healthy environment; and the guarantee of these rights for the future generations, among other.

COP21: Paris (legally-binding) agreement formally adopted.

Check out the text here: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/>



BRIEF

human rights OVERVIEW

(Sep.-December) 2015

What are the most significant human rights issues raised since our previous Newsletter?

By **Athanasia Zagorianou**
CRW Researcher & Content
Editor of 'Citizens Voices'



CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

Our voices united become stronger...

1. Bagdad, Beirut, Paris, – Terrorist Attacks and Bombings:

On November 12, one of the worst terrorist attacks occurred in Beirut, Lebanon. The bombings, conducted by two suicide bombers in Bourj el-Barajneh killed more than 40 people. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attacks. Beirut bombings were not the only incident of ISIS violent attacks. Two weeks earlier, the terrorist group also claimed responsibility for crashing a Russian aircraft heading from Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt to St. Petersburg, Russia killing over 224 people. On August, Bagdad, that had already faced triple bombings earlier this year, faced another bombing that cost approximately 70 people their lives. On November 13, Paris was marked by one of the latest and deadliest ISIS attacks with mass shootings and bombings leaving behind 141 deaths including 7 perpetrators.

2. Japan: First Same Sex Couple Certificate: On November 5, Koyuki Higashi and Hiroko Masuhara became the first same-sex couple in Japan that received a certificate recognizing same-sex partnerships. The certificate was issued by Shibuya and Setagana wards. Even though it is not a legal bounding document and offers limited protection and benefits, it marks a significant step forward for the protection of same sex couples' rights in Japan.

3. Nepal's First Female President: Bidhya Devi Bhandari, women's right activist and deputy leader of the Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist 1, had been praised for her effort to increase female representation in parliament. On October 28, 2015 Bidhya Devi Bhandari won the presidential elections and became Nepal's first female President

4. China: One - Child Policy Ends: In 1978, the one-child policy was introduced in China with aim to control and prevent the country's growth population rate. The policy has received wide criticism and has raised human rights concerns over its negative effects on women and the society in general. Forced abortions, sterilization, fines, employment loss and many other human rights abuses have occurred within the country as a result of this strict policy, since it took effect almost two years after its introduction. This October, it was announced that the one-child policy comes to an end! As China's communist party stated "[China will] fully implement a policy of allowing each couple to have two children as an active response to an ageing population."

5. European Refugee Crisis: During these past months, the European refugee crisis has been escalated by the increasing numbers of people fleeing countries such as Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq to avoid war, violence, prosecution and extensive human rights abuses. Daily, hundreds of people, some by crossing the Mediterranean and others by following the Balkan route, jeopardize their lives with aim to reach Europe and be granted asylum. With Europe failing to appropriately tackle the crisis, thousands have went missing and lost their lives. Hungary, FYROM, Slovakia & other European countries avoid sharing responsibility & protecting immigrants and refugees in line with their international human rights obligations. Instead, some raised fences and impose border restrictions and use violence and request them to stop trying to cross their countries' borders as they are not welcome. According to the UN "In October alone, at least 90 children died in the Mediterranean, with nearly 1 in 5 under the age of two. Most of those who have drowned this year are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and are under the age of 12.

6. Myanmar's Historic National Elections: On November 8, after years of authoritarian military rule, Myanmar/Burma held its first democratic national elections. Even though thousands of citizens casted their votes democratically, not all of Myanmar's residents had this opportunity. Victims of constant discrimination, abuse and prosecution by the government of Myanmar, Rohingyas have been denied their right for Myanmar citizenship for years. Minority communities and particularly Rohingyas were excluded from the voting process and were denied the right to vote, raising once more concerns over the Rohingya people's fundamental freedoms and rights across the country.

7. #DontBombSyria: In November, after the ISIS attacks in Paris, Russia and France following United States' example, increased their air-strikes and bombings against Syria. The strikes have raised concerns over civilians' deaths and have been intensively criticized by the international community.

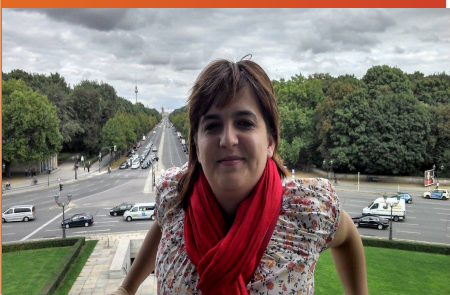
Contact us:



Interviewing PATRICIA PAPUC

Human Rights activist &
President of ISSUES
WITHOUT BORDERS
(IWB)

By Athanasia Zagorianou
CRW Researcher & Content
Editor of 'Citizens Voices'
nassia@citizensrw.org



1. Ms. Papuc, you are the founder and President of Issues without Borders (IWB), non-governmental organization which is based in Romania. What does the organization stand for and what is its mission?

Issues Without Borders is a youth organisation that focuses on human rights and encourages and empowers individuals to take action. Generally speaking, the mission of IWB is to offer an online platform that empowers its users to take on personal and societal injustices and supports them in their actions. For those in need of more information, insight or confidence to take action, IWB offers an online information portal and network that supports its users to participate as active citizens. IWB aims to provide serious and crosscutting information, based on the knowledge and experience of its users. In order to achieve this, users are encouraged to produce their own research and bring original solutions to issues around the world.

The vision of IWB is to be an online platform for discussion and learning, that enables its users to think outside the box and work towards self-development. IWB believes that independent, individual and inventive thinking is indispensable for any society to be free from inequality and human rights violations.

IWB constantly strives to break down traditional frames and constraints by encouraging its users to directly contribute, share and discuss their knowledge, experiences and insights. The organisation's goal is to make meaningful contribution to forming a societal mind-set which is independent, open minded, generous and has the courage to question its beliefs. The organisation works towards this vision on the basis of our four core values:

- independence and freedom in thought and action,
- respect for diversity of cultures and different points of view,
- a fair and objective attitude towards all issues, and
- promoting real and effective action in our societies.

2. When did you start working on human rights and what was your inspiration that made you want to work on this field?

I don't recall a specific moment when my human rights journey started. I have always been a human rights defender because after all, everyday life is a struggle in which we try to defend our rights, help people in a way or another. But from a more objective point of view, from 2007 to 2011 I was volunteering for the Red Cross, I volunteered for the Romanian Refugee Camp in Bucharest as an undergraduate student, during my master's programme I was a volunteer for Aiesec the biggest student run organization in the world and I also volunteered for an NGO in Copenhagen which focused on helping migrants navigate through the Danish system. My inspiration probably came from my family education, background, life experiences, people I have met, the environment I have been living in. I think that working in this sphere of human rights is very rewarding and helps you grow both personally and professionally.

3. There is a huge ongoing refugee crisis in Europe at the moment. What is your opinion on this and how do you feel about the situation? Could you comment on the International community's response on the refugee crisis?

I feel very sad for what is now happening in Europe. I think that people are misinformed about the refugee crisis as far as I have seen in social media, some newspapers, TV, etc. It is hard to have an opinion about the conduct of the international community since it differs from country to country but I disagree with the xenophobic, racist attitude towards refugees. I also think that more can be done in order to try to solve this crisis or at least improve the lives of so many refugees.

Interviewing PATRICIA PAPUC

Human Rights activist &
President of ISSUES
WITHOUT BORDERS
(IWB)

By **Athanasia Zagorianou**
CRW Researcher & Content
Editor of 'Citizens Voices'



4. In 2015, you started the” IWB Refugee Project”. Would you like to share with us a few words about the project and its aims?

Sure, my pleasure. Based on a set of guidelines, having more than 70 researchers we will analyze and present on our website (www.issueswithoutborders.com) the refugee issue in every single EU member state (from a economic, political, social, legal, cultural point of view, presenting the way in which media is depicting it and by also creating a big database of interviews with refugees).

Once this research is done and we will have 28 reports on the site, our researchers will work together in order to create a new European legislation which will change the life of refugees in Europe. This provision which we are invoking represents the milestone of our project and it is „The Citizens Initiative” provision brought by the Lisbon Treaty. So, if you have a petition you have to register it at the European Commission, raise 1 million signatures needed and then it will be sent to the European Parliament where the members of the Parliament will have to vote. If it is a positive vote then it will become a new EU Directive and our members will also be part of the implementation process.

5. Why did you decide the IWB project should focus on refugees?

A couple of years ago, I volunteered for the refugee camp in Bucharest thus I had the opportunity to hear a lot of cases concerning refugees, injustices and really sad life stories. I felt very bad for their wellbeing. This is why after many years when my colleagues Adina Loredana Nistor, vice president of Issues Without Borders had the idea of creating a database of interviews with refugees from across Europe I loved the idea from the first moment. I was thinking then, why not actually create meaningful change for refugees, change the EU legislation? Because I was aware of the “Citizens Initiative” provision and then I decided that it is time to take the organization to a different level.

6. What is the current state of refugees in your home country?

The current state of refugees in my home country changed now with the European crisis. Before, not that many people were talking about it, since number of refugees coming to Romania wasn't that big. Now with ISIS growing, the terrorist attacks, the fence built by the Hungarian government the state of refugees in Romania has changed. Many people that are aware of the problem are against it and the government has also declined to accept the quota established by the EU for Romania. As a consequence the problem is still pending. I expect that more meetings will take place at the highest level. And when this will happen, then the future of refugees in Romania will also be decided.

7. Lately, the use of the words “refugee” and “immigrant” became a controversial issue among the media, human right defenders and scholars. Referring to the current European refugee crisis, many argued that the use of word “immigrants” in this case is not appropriate since it implies that these people are leaving their country of origin by choice. We all know that there are millions of people, that are fleeing war and persecution, which under the Geneva Conventions should be classified as refugees and hence enjoy a special protection under international law. What is your opinion on this?

I think it is very important to make a difference between the two concepts.

The Geneva Convention explains clearly the conditions that one must fulfill to be granted the refugee status in a country, so if you are not persecuted or your life is not in danger but you are just moving to a different country you are simply an immigrant. These are normally seen as economic immigrants because they normally leave their countries for better life conditions.



EDUARD POPA proposed
European Union, the Paris terrorist attacks
and the refugee crisis

Last night's terrorist attacks in France left an entire country in chaos and the whole world in fear. Official sources say that 128 people were killed and over 300 injured. The fact that the seven strikes were coordinated shows that the authors of these horrific events were not refugees. Most probably they were French citizens [...]

Interviewing PATRICIA PAPUC

Human Rights activist &
President of ISSUES
WITHOUT BORDERS
(IWB)

By **Athanasia Zagorianou**
CRW Researcher & Content
Editor of 'Citizens Voices'

**CITIZENS
RIGHTS WATCH**
Our voices joined become stronger...

8. How can we and other people, who are interested in IWB Refugee Project, participate or contribute to the project and who should we contact?

Issues Without Borders is an organization open to everyone, as the name clearly states: any issue without any borders. For those who would like to join our project please email us your CV & cover letter at: issues.w.borders@gmail.com. They can help us in many ways: by being part of IWB refugee project, peer reviewing our articles, conducting research, promoting our project/ platform via social media but most importantly next year they can help us raise those 1 000 000 signatures to have our petition debated in the European Parliament. Be the change you want to see in the world, joining us in our human rights journey is one of our mottos.

9. What change do you hope/wish to bring to the world through this project?

I hope that refugee rights will be considered human rights in Europe not only by some countries but by all countries. I hope that the EU member states will work towards helping the people in need and refugees will be able to start a new life. After all, EU's motto is: "Unity in diversity". So, I believe that it is time to fully embrace this principle. Also, Europe should start coordinating with countries from the Economical Area as well as with other continents because Europe cannot guest all the refugees coming now from Syria and other countries in conflict alone. It can try to start thinking outside the box! After all, it is no longer a European crisis but a humanitarian crisis.

SERENA ROMEO proposed

Should the European States Receive Waves of Refugees (Debate)

On October 13, at Petru Maior University in Targu Mures, Romania, the local European Law Students Association (ELSA) held an interesting debate about the current European refugee crisis; this debate was themed: Should the European states receive waves of refugees? Despite setting a certain tone and appearing as presenting view on the current crisis, this [...]

Thank you very much
for this great conversation
Ms. Papuc



Issues Without Borders - IWB

Issues Without Borders is freedom in thought and action. Innovative and young, it is a platform that shares the power of knowledge and empowers unheard voices towards action. Built on the inventiveness and diversity of individuals, IWB believes in equal rights for everyone. You can join now, be a part and make a difference.

TPP: What and why?

By **Miguel Rodriguez
Glaudemans**

Lawyer, and CRW human
rights activist/researcher



TPP stands for “Transpacific Partnership”, which is portrayed as an international free trade deal, currently being negotiated between the governments of the following countries: Japan, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

The TPP has been discussed in private non-disclosed meetings between the aforementioned governments, and have drawn attention mainly because of their secrecy and the consulted groups to make inputs. The text of the TPP was not officially disclosed, but has been target of leaks since last year. What is reportedly peculiar of the TPP is how immersive it is and how it may affect citizens of the member-to-be countries.

During the last decade corporations have been pushing governments towards stricter copyright laws, and harsh sanctions against internet users who infringed them. These have had a lot of criticism of public activists and groups because they were not correctly measured, and allowed Internet Service Providers and government authorities as well as law enforcement to perform overly immersive roles, infringing various privacy principles. These copyright laws had to take some steps back after lots of pressure from activists and civil society. This has made civil rights and human rights groups particularly sensitive about a Free Trade Agreement as secretly handled, which did not initially reveal its content, and made consultations to corporate entities and multinational companies about its contents, and called them to make improvements.

There are some issues have been target of criticism;

- **Intellectual Property.** IP is always a matter of discussion and worry when governments are negotiating free trade agreements. It is not unusual that wealthier governments pressure other participating governments to adapt to their copyright and sanction projects, even when they have failed to implement them back home.

- **Digital Locks.** These are created when, for example, a particular mobile phone is locked to be used on particular providers, or different systems and code regions on DVD's, and other such locks which prevent information to travel freely, and have it follow market expectations instead.

- **Internet Privacy.** Internet privacy takes some blows, particularly as free trade deals usually put some pressure on Internet Providers, to authorize them for harsher control, and to make them liable for infractions of their users. This makes Internet Providers keener to spy and inform on their users activities.

- **Freedom of Speech.** When a formerly free user is being controlled by their government for their opinions and general private activities, such user will not speak his or her mind as usual. As law becomes harsher and is more criminalized, the possibility for governments to use copyright laws as a tool to be invasive and know citizens' opinions, internet is more prone to become a tool of control and a evidence pool for State's and Company's goals.

- **Criminal Sanctioning.** As explained before, at times international deals such as the TPP force governments to criminalize conducts which were formerly sanctioned lightly. It also allegedly would make it much easier for law enforcement to seize property at the mere suspicion of any illegal activities deriving of technological equipment, and even, at times, without having a formal complaint of a copyright holder.

Even if some of the effects may be interpreted to work or enable greater good or wellbeing of society, TPP is thought of by some as a Machiavellian trade agreement, attempting to fight copyright and enabling powerful companies to become freer, and to pay less for sale opportunities abroad.

The uproar the TPP has caused, especially in the countries where it is planned to be implemented sometime in the near future, is perhaps not based as much on actual provable facts; yet the lack of transparency, the obvious goal of the involved governments and groups of interest in the TPP has gained them spotlight when they intended the contrary.

The world and its citizens have lived through free trade agreements between countries, and always the rich nations have prevailed in these agreements, having advantages in production, better pricing and international positioning. When international human principles, such as the right to online privacy, freedom of speech, or access to an adequate and fair justice system are menaced by an invisible hand, be there a real threat or not, society and the world's citizens will manifest discomfort, worry, and express opinion. The TPP may have complications and may or may not significantly alter our everyday life, the way we use the internet and all technology, and the way we innovate. Only time will tell, if the TPP passes, what the results shall be for those parties involved. What is important is that we keep up to date, so we can have true and useful opinion and knowledge, so we can keep accessing our rights as human beings and citizens of the world.

A People without Home The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar

By **Sara Bortoluz**

Master in International Relations



Nationality is generally perceived as something natural. Since his/her birth a child automatically receives the nationality of his/her birthplace or the nationality of his/her parents. Having a nationality is a fundamental right that opens the door to a series of opportunities that most of us consider mere routine. No nationality means no identity and no place to call home. But above all, no nationality means no identity card and thus no right to travel freely, work, study and live a normal life. However, citizenship is far from being natural for millions of human beings in the world. According to the OHCHR there are at least ten million stateless people in the world. The majority of those people are not responsible for their condition. They are stateless as a result of redrawing of borders or gaps in nationality laws, but often, they are also the victims of discrimination policies against a certain ethnic, religious or cultural group. This article aims to raise awareness on the situation of stateless Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar (Burma) who are considered to be one of the most persecuted peoples in the world. Rohingyas know very well the meaning of a stateless existence. They are like phantoms whose very existence is denied by Burmese government that claims that there are no Rohingyas in Myanmar. Rohingyas are a minority group of Islamic faith that primarily live in Myanmar (mainly in the Rakhine State – former Arakan) where they constitute approximately 15% of the population with a number of around 800,000 individuals.

The first Muslims settled in Arakan during 1400s C.E. For centuries they have lived in peace welcomed by Buddhist kings that started even using Muslim titles for their court and military officials. In 1785 Buddhists from the South conquered Arakan and killed or drove out Muslims that were forced to flee to Bengal (an estimated number of 35,000 left the region). Despite the Rohingya community has been living in Myanmar for centuries, they are stateless in their own country. In fact, they have been denied citizenship as a result of 1982 Citizenship Law that randomly classified all of them as Bengali immigrants. This classification was applied without considering their history or how long their families had been living in Burma. According to the United Nations, Burmese government has condemned to statelessness over a million Rohingyas making of this ethnic group world's largest stateless community building up 10% of world total stateless people. The first seeds of ethnic conflict in Burma in recent times were planted in 1826 when the British took control over Arakan.

However, the moment when ethnic tensions broke out in violent conflict was when the British left Arakan with World War II. Since Myanmar's independence Rohingyas have been persecuted by successive governments and in 1982 the Burmese Citizenship Law officially denied them citizenship relegating them to a life at the margins of society. In recent years attacks against Rohingyas have intensified and they are subject to all forms of discrimination and violence aiming at weakening them both from a psychological and physical point of view.

Their movements and actions are strictly controlled and they are not free to perform simple activities (work, study, travel, marry) without government's permission. But the life of Rohingyas is not only made harsh by discrimination and restrictions. It is also plagued by episodes of intentional violence. In recent years the situation is worsening and waves of violence against Muslims are spreading throughout Rakhine. 140,000 Rohingyas are now forced to live in segregation camps where they have been transferred in 2012 after the deliberate destruction of their villages by Buddhists. This is maybe the episode that best symbolizes Rohingyas' ongoing sorrows leaving no doubt about Burmese government's attitude toward this minority. From the legislative point of view, Burmese authorities have not only plagued Rohingyas with statelessness, they are also promoting new discriminatory laws such as the recent "population control" law targeting them and more generally Muslims. The strategy of Burmese authorities is that of denying Rohingya history and presence in Myanmar prohibiting the use of the term "Rohingya". This way they claim to depict Rohingya Muslims as illegal migrants from Bangladesh that deserve no rights. Despite UN officials tend to minimize the situation in Myanmar, Rohingyas still continue to be one of the most oppressed peoples in the world. In recent years tens of thousands of Rohingyas have been fleeing on boats to escape Burma's persecutions. Many of them cross the Andaman Sea to reach Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia or flee to neighbouring Bangladesh while the most courageous try to reach Australia. Everyday they try to flee Burma's persecutions on boats. However, fleeing is very often not a solution to their suffering. After a desperate & dangerous sea journey, their hope for a better life often vanishes in detention centres or transforms into fear of being brought back again to the violence of Burmese persecution.

Rejected by their country and neglected by neighbouring states Rohingyas are a people with no identity and no home. Their conditions will change only if the international community will adopt effective measures to force Myanmar to change direction.

The Challenges of Fully Autonomous Weapons for the civilians in the context of armed conflicts

By **Maria Koutrolikou**

Lawyer & Human Rights Activist,
LLM International Law & Security,



Over the past years technology seems to have reached to unprecedented developments considering the artificial intelligence. That is deeply impeded, and rightly, with the development and deployment of the well-known fully autonomous weapons, namely those means of warfare that once operated can select and engage targets without further human intervention. Potentially, that could change completely the theatre of the war as we do know it at the moment by launching high-tech hostilities with humans out of the loop. The issue, though, remains really controversial dividing academics and rising heated discussions regarding the legality of these weapons systems and particularly whether they could comply with the requirements of international humanitarian law (IHL) without challenging the fundamental human rights, such as the right to life and the right to human dignity.

Under Article 36 of GC Additional Protocol I, States parties have to review the legality of a new launched weapon under the umbrella of IHL and any other applicable international regulation. However the article remains quite blurred regarding the manner under which a review could take place. A formal mechanism is the most widespread mean of examination, however it has been only adopted by a low number of states and further issues of transparency could challenge the authority of the reviews.

It is doubtful whether fully autonomous weapons could comply with the rules of IHL and specifically if they could follow the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity. According to the Article 51 (4) AP I, the first one requires from the military personnel to distinguish between civilians and combatants addressing the most difficult obstacle to be overcome. The disputed borders between states, the grey zones of international and internal conflicts and the transfer of battles to more urban environments manifest themselves that distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants is getting increasingly challenging. On the other hand a disproportional attack could drive to excessive damage in comparison with the anticipated military advantage.

That apparently requires for a human coherent judgement and it cannot be rested to the machines even if they are equipped with the most advanced technology such as artificial intelligence.

Balancing between human lives and military advantage is not a mere decision and includes the subjective analysis of a situation in order a safe result to be provided. Finally, an additional difference between the fully autonomous weapons and human judgement is that the second could anticipate intentions and feelings such as sympathy and consider a fighting response as unnecessary. For instance if a combatant has surrendered or has become hors de combat, that demands human assessment, especially when certain signs are absent.

Even if the fully autonomous weapons might potentially assimilate all that bulk of complicated information, it seems rather impossible to reach the intelligence of human beings. As a result, they might drive to arbitrary killings violating *pe se* the right to life. Whether they are meant to be used in armed conflicts or law-enforcement operations, moral and social concerns arise considering whether the machines should meet decisions about death and life issues. This is also deeply embedded with the right to dignity, which is recognized by several international and regional instruments and particularly by ICCPR and UNDH. According to UN Special Rapporteur Christof Heyns, that issue constitutes an “overriding consideration” and the lack of morality of fully autonomous weapons make them not applicable even if they reach to a perfect technical level.

The rapid developments in technology make the deployment of fully autonomous weapons inevitable in the coming decades and as a result states have to take feasible measures in order to prohibit the deployment of such weapon systems well in advance. A comprehensive legally binding treaty would be the footstep towards such a direction, as it could provide a preemptive ban like as it has already been made with other weapon systems i.e. cluster munitions or chemical weapons.

Bibliography

- Amnesty International, Autonomous Weapons Systems, five key human rights issues for consideration, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/1401/2015/en>
- Arkin R., Governing Lethal Behavior in Autonomous Robots, CRCP. 2009
- Galliot J. and Lotz M., Super Soldiers: The Ethical, Legal and Social Implications, Ashgate 2015
- Hitoshi Nasu, Robert McLaughlin, New technologies and the law of armed conflict, T.M.C. Asser Press 2014



Due to extreme poverty and the high rates of unemployment, many citizens do not have access to education. This is used as a very powerful tool by traffickers in these criminal schemes. Underage victims, coming from an unstable environment, are easier targets of trafficking. Children can be easily manipulated and unwittingly endanger their own integrity. This phenomenon can also be a result of domestic violence, internal conflict or war, social discrimination and lack of human rights. All of these factors are widely spread within the Southeastern - European countries. Not surprisingly, most of the victims of human trafficking originate from these countries. According to the last UN Global Trafficking in Persons Report (2014), almost one third of detected victims are trafficked from South – Eastern Europe.

Human trafficking is a result of poverty, unemployment and lack of education, but also a cause for even higher rate of poverty and unemployment. Consequently increases the number of uneducated people that again results in emerging the phenomenon of human trafficking. Thus, there is a positive correlation between human trafficking and the rates of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. Human trafficking has negative impact on the economic growth and development. Therefore, this problem requires intensive efforts and actions by each country and the entire international community. To achieve effective outcomes, everyone needs to contribute equally to the prevention and fight against human trafficking.

Human Rights Activist,
Founder of 'RIGHT TO A STATE'.

Climate stateless or what...? These questions need in-depth analysis since nothing is yet clear, and all and sundry must be wary of applying them a premature label of statelessness since this may have negative impacts on them.

The current crisis of refugees in Europe and some human rights considerations

By Olga Fernández Sixto



Asylum-seekers are nothing new to Europe, but during the last few months the constant flow of Syrian people trying to reach our borders has become a great concern for the European countries. Many governments have been fighting against the recent economic crisis for the last few years, making painful cuts in their social policy budgets, and drastically reducing economic and social rights of their nationals. Daily news on newspapers and TV showing the flow of refugees through our borders have generated serious resilience among an already fearful European population: how are we going to deal with all this foreigners? What are they going to live out of if our unemployment rate is already unbearable?

It is nearly impossible for our nationals to accede to public benefits, but they will get subsidies that are paid with our taxes. And let's not even talk about their culture/religion.

Of course, as usual, we have not been lacking of politicians, journalists, and other public figures that, making use of their customary demagogy, have taken advantage of these fears. Luckily, and once again, most of European nationals have shown high levels of humanity, solidarity and understanding before the tragedy. For instance, whereas the Icelandic government affirmed to be able to only offer asylum to 50 refugees per year, an Icelandic people's initiative has made the government reconsider to raise its cap, since more than 11,000 families offered their homes to Syrian refugees.

In my humble opinion, if there is resistance, doubts and fear to accept refugees it is due to two deeply-interconnected main reasons. First, a lack of education in human rights, essentially due to a deficiency in its promotion along the schooling period. And second, a general misunderstanding of the situation, position and rights of the refugee. Such misunderstanding is due to two factors: an incapacity to empathize with refugees –that could have been sorted out with that education in human rights and humanity values mentioned above-, and a complete ignorance of the legal system. For I cannot sort out that lack of education here and now, let me at least explain a bit the position of a refugee in Europe. As for some people there is nothing more frightful than the unknown, maybe this way we will calm their fears, and they will decide to change their approach to the recent refugee crisis.

First, it is not necessary to say that refugees are not tourists. But it does seem necessary to remind that they are not even migrants looking for better job opportunities. In most cases, they have a job, a life, a social status already built in their home countries and the last thing they want is to renounce to it. Thus, they do not leave their country willingly. They do it because their lives are at stake. Indeed, the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted in the country of his nationality for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Hence, a refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they have suffered, or are at a serious risk of suffering, human rights abuses, and their own government cannot or will not protect them, and so they are forced to seek international protection. Second, nobody enjoys the refugee status automatically. To qualify as refugees, those fleeing their own country have to go through a strict process and during that time they have no other legal status but that of asylum-seekers. So, all that people that we see every day in the news, are not refugees, despite the press naming them as such. They are asylum-seekers, whose catalogue of rights is extremely limited: they must be allowed to enter a country to seek asylum, to access to fair and effective asylum procedures, to not be returned to a country where they would be at risk, and if they are returned it must be done safely and with dignity. Thus, only a small percentage of those people, after going through meticulous procedures will acquire the legal status of refugee and enjoy their rights, including their right to stay safe in the host country and their rights to citizenship, employment, housing and education. No national or international law or policy measure ever known by the author of this article gives them any advantage over national citizens to access those work, house and education.

So, my fearful European friend, you can keep calm because from that people crossing your border only a few will remain and, at most, they will have the same rights as you. They will enjoy the same unemployment rate, denials to access public benefits and difficulties to accede to affordable housing. They could not legally 'steal' anything from you even if that was their aim, which is clearly not. They come here with the only goal of preserving their personal safety, physical and moral integrity and, ultimately, their right to life.

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. That is right. All human beings because of simply being ones regardless their cultural background. However, despite the fact that human rights are universally recognized regardless of cultural differences, their practical implementation demands sensitivity to culture. Of course a certain limitation of the ambit on which international consensus is possible is in present as culture cannot become an excuse to violate human rights standards. For example, despite the fact that female genital mutilation is a long lasting custom and deeply rooted in some countries’ culture it has to be banned as it strictly violates international human rights standards.

Societies by themselves look at those norms suspiciously and critically because why to change something what has been within the culture for ages? People do not even realize that some of their common practices everywhere else in the world might count as human rights violations therefore, never even thought of abolishing it. The most common example could be women rights in terms of equality with men.

and development of societies which support human rights. v

Human Rights (un)practices: The case of the 15 prisoners of conscience in Angola

By **Ines Valerio**

Master in International Relations.



Luanda, 20th June 2015. Thirteen local activists are gathered in a bookstore when the police enter and arrest all of them. According to the Interior Ministry of Angola, “they were caught red-handed as they prepared to carry out rebellion acts aimed at disrupting public order and security in the country”. This group of activists has organized a number of protests in the country against the government since 2011. It has been the systematic target of police brutality ever since. But in that day of June they met to discuss governance issues and pacific ways of combating dictatorships, based on a book analysis of Gene Sharp’s *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (1993). They usually met to discuss political and civic intervention, sometimes even as workshops. They were peacefully exercising their rights to discussion, freedom of expression, association and assembly when they were arrested by the National Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DNIC) and the national police, which also carried out searches without warrants and seized computers, photographic material, agendas, magazines and documents of their residences. Among the arrested was Henrique Luaty da Silva Beirão, an Angolan-Portuguese activist and musician, also known as Ikonoklasta, who’s emerged as a leader of the movement, and Manuel Chivonde (Nito Alves), who was once imprisoned with the early age of seventeen for printing t-shirts with words deemed to be offensive to the President.

The other detainees are Nuno Álvaro Dala, Afonso Mahenda Matias (Mbanza Hanza), Nelson Dibango Mendes dos Santos, Itler Jessy Chivonde (Itler Samussuko), Albano Evaristo Bingocabingo, Sedrick Domingos de Carvalho, Fernando António Tomás (Nicolas, o Radical), Arante Kivuvu Italiano Lopes, Benedito Jeremias, José Gomes Hata (Cheick Hata) and Inocêncio António de Brito. Some of the arrested weren’t at the meeting, but were also accused of participating in it. The journalist Domingos José da Cruz was arrested on 21st June and Osvaldo Sérgio Correia Caholo was also arrested three days later. The activists were distributed throughout different prisons in Luanda: Calomboloca, São Paulo, Kakila, Comarca de Luanda and Hospital Psiquiátrico. The fifteen were formally charged on 16th September 2015. Three months after their arrest, the accusation finally presented its arguments: after the dismissal of state institutions legitimately established, the accused planned to form what they have called “Government of National Salvation” and create a “new constitution”, as read in the indictment. In other words, they were preparing a rebellion and a coup d’état against the President José Eduardo dos Santos. The fifteen activists denied all the accusations. The activists were only officially informed of the charges, referring to crimes against the security of the state, after the 90 days of pre-trial detention expired (the maximum period permitted by law). And there was no chance for the presumption of their innocence. Since they are still in prison, without a trial, the arrest is now an illegal procedure.

Protests have been made by some of the prisoners within prison’s walls. Luaty Beirão was the first to start a hunger strike, in 20th September. This protest against his illegal detention continued for the next 36 days. Meanwhile, 7 other prisoners decided to start the same form of protest. By 19th October, the lawyers of the 15 activists were notified that the trial would take place between 16th & 20th November 2015, at the Luanda Provincial Tribunal. After a petition created by Amnesty International (already with more than 39,000 of signatures), demonstrations, almost daily vigils & calls from the international community, Luaty Beirão, whose health was already in a critical condition, decided to end his hunger strike. Because its purpose was reached: to expose what is really happening in Angola in terms of human rights & social justice. Why have they been seen as a menace? & why is there so much discontent towards the Angolan government?

Angola won its independence from Portugal forty years ago, in 11th November 1975. Then the country lived a 27 year civil war, started immediately after the independence, between MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) & UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola). José Eduardo dos Santos (MPLA) has been president for the last 36 years. Amnesty International’s Report 2014/15 stated that freedom of association & assembly continues to be suppressed. In 2011, Dos Santos banned demonstrations in Luanda. Angola might be one of the richest countries in Africa, but half of its population still lives under \$2 per day. The government has rebuilt a lucrative relationship with Portugal (where the elite maintain especially close ties), Brazil & even China, but the gap between the rich & the poor is still high. Authorities have also carried out housing rights violations, as forced evictions on a larger scale. Thousands of families (near 4,000) had their homes demolished & were forcibly evicted in Luanda & also Cabinda province. At least 700 of these families were left without adequate housing.

It is believed that many of these evictions are used to make way for the construction of several hotels. This regular “cleaning” measure is described by the government as the “war against chaotic urbanization” (or poor neighborhoods). Many other measures known as human rights violations have been reported by Amnesty International, from arbitrary detentions, to torture, enforced disappearances & extrajudicial killings. The freedom of expression & assembly is actually enshrined in Angola’s constitution, as well as in several international treaties that the country has signed & ratified, but for those who challenge the government the violations of these civil rights continue to occur, with impunity. As for the most recent case of the fifteen prisoners of conscience, Amnesty International is campaigning on behalf of the group & created a petition calling for their immediate & unconditional release. The organization says the situation is a shocking example of how far the authorities are willing to go to suppress a peaceful dissent. It is an affront to the right to free expression, Justice & freedom of all.

By Amidu Kalokoh
Community Safety Volunteer
(Supervisor/Monitor);
Centre for Development
& Security Analysis
(Research Assistant)



The above quotation is Article 23 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which the international community and individual countries are striving to uphold in order to better the lives of people through employment. By its interpretation, work is a right and not a chance; there is choice to employment with favourable conditions to promote employees' standard of living; as well as protection against unemployment. While this is true, it is equally right to say that these arrangements are greatly challenged by employers in Sierra Leone, capitalizing on the country's growing unemployment rate.

Sierra Leone is a small country situated in the extreme of West Africa with a population of over five million people. Regardless of the fact that the country is blessed with high deposit of natural resources such as diamond, gold, bauxite and ore, it is strongly grappling with inadequate job opportunities for its growing population. The country could not provide jobs to match the growing number of employable population, especially the youths. Even unskilled labour which is known to be common is difficult to attain due to the demand it command in the labour market. Even graduates who are thought to be confident of getting jobs are finding it harder to secure even volunteer placement within the public and private sectors. It is common to see graduates sit three to four years without a job. The scramble for jobs in the country is widespread, including both skill and unskilled labour. For instance, a job that requires one or two persons would attract hundreds of applications.

This places considerable uncertainty of getting a job, thereby distorting people's consideration of right to employment. However, there is no choice to employment where the chance of getting a job is out of individuals' hands. Getting a job becomes a whole employment for individuals. However, two factors are worth considering while searching for job in Sierra Leone: official and unofficial requirements to job opportunities.

The former encompasses criteria put on paper in the form of advertisement, while the latter depends on multiple factors such as individual acquaintance with the providers; your level of connections; lobbying skills; and the individual's willingness to submit to any other demands to ensure that he/she is recruited.

However, measures which are set to regulate employment conditions in the country are proving ineffective as they lack the force of implementation required to ensure that rights to employment and workers rights are promoted as wide as required by international standards. Private institutions' terms to employment are unfriendly to human development.

They are very harsh to say the least. Unregulated recruitments across board means that workers are forced to accept certain conditions; failing to abide by such conditions has resulted to termination of contracts. There is little or no security to employment. While some employees are exposed to high risks in certain places of work with nothing to show for it, others are often sacked with impunity, thus adding to unemployment rate. In some places of work maternal or sick leave is equivalent to resignation of post; right to speech and association are also trampled upon in work places; health allowances are in remission where they are available; and workers are compelled to work beyond stipulated time without pay.

Disappointingly, government's stipulated minimum salary is more or less effective in the public sector than in the private sector which to a large extent has inconsistent recruitment policies and receives minimum checks from government. In some of these institutions employees received lesser salaries than what they usually signed for; but could not seek their rights for fear of being sacked. In fact, while some of these issues had led to civil disobedience and violence in some establishments, authorities could not hold managers accountable for their actions.

Signs of change remain doubtful while the idle hands are the devil's workshop and the idle lips are his mouthpiece.

Legal and social complications of Surrogacy: A case of Nepal

By **Prasun Singh**
Content Writer &
Communications Officer at
Medair, Nepal Office.



This August and September Nepal was in national and international news mainly of the new constitution it promulgated on 20th of September. Ongoing Socio-political unrest (indefinite strikes) in the Tarai (Southern plains adjoining India) and unofficial blockade at borders by India, following the issuance of the statute, rendered the much awaited constitution a euphoria. Amid these upheavals, media reports on rampant practice of illegal surrogacy drew my attention to write this particular piece on because it concerns human rights of both surrogate mothers and children born from them.

In 2010, Nepal weekly, in its December Issue, published a cover story titled 'Bhadaama Khokh' meaning 'womb on rent'. The in-depth story shows how surrogacy was slowly gaining its foot in Nepal targeting childless couple. Moreover, it shed light on how women reeling under poverty chose to meet the desire of such couple in lieu of negotiated money.

Five years down the line, the issue of surrogacy once again made headlines in Nepali media. The country has allegedly become a hub for surrogacy after the ban of commercial surrogacy for foreigners in India in 2013 and Thailand in February 2015. Reports showing nexus among hospitals, high-profile politicians, legal practitioners, medical mafias and few state agencies in this covert practice is alarming indeed.

Nepal has no law on surrogacy. Service providers or rather profiteering mafias have been alluring foreigners taking advantage of policy loopholes. The National Health Policy, 2014 directs government to adopt surrogacy laws for helping out Nepalese couples with infertility. Subsequently, the Cabinet made a decision on September 18, 2014 to draft an action plan on surrogacy services for foreigners to promote 'Medical Tourism'. The mafia, supposedly misrepresented this particular decision to their prospective clients as 'legalization' of commercial surrogacy in the country. Online profile of fake surrogate mothers and call for egg donors and surrogate mothers have also been found in this regard.

There is no accurate data available on the number of clients and surrogate babies delivered in Nepal hitherto. Unofficial records at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Consular Section show majority of the service seekers are Israeli nationals, chiefly same-sex couples and single parents. Other clients include Americans and Australians. Surrogate mothers are mostly from India and Bangladesh. Of late, Nepali women have also been found offering surrogacy services. They say they find it "dignified" than prostitution; a source of money that no other job could get them so quick. All this is happening without any legal guard for the surrogate mothers.

The major point to worry here is husbands forcing their spouses to carry surrogate babies in a bid to escape acute poverty. Likewise, mafias keep vigil on them often keeping them in a common house and restricting their interaction with outsiders. This can affect the psychological health of the surrogate mothers having to constantly worry about public attention that could lead to disclosure of the truth.

Absence of law to regulate surrogacy practices in Nepal leave the following questions unanswered:

- Who can seek surrogacy services?
- What is the fees?
- What are the legal rights and duties of a surrogate mother?
- What is the status and rights of a surrogate baby?
- What are the required hygiene standards?
- What are the standards on medical expertise?
- What ethics should fertility clinics abide by?
- Who has the Jurisdiction to investigate on malpractices?
- What is the nature of penalty for forced surrogacy?
- What if the client denies to accept a child on grounds of disability?
- Who will take responsibility of abandoned surrogate babies?
- How will maternal mortality in these cases be addressed?

In August 2015, a writ petition was filed at the Supreme Court demanding curb of illegal surrogacy practice thriving in Nepal. It cited that such practice lured impoverished women into carrying babies for monetary gains and could result in human trafficking. Issuing an interim order on August 25, the court asked the government to enact necessary law to address surrogacy. Likewise it required hospitals to halt the 'service' till the law came into force.

The concept behind surrogacy was that a woman voluntarily helps a childless couple have a baby without any vested interest. However, of late this essence has been overshadowed by financial interests of profiteering mafia. Moreover, they are the ones who influence the decision making of a surrogate mother.

This is a grave violation of a woman's free will. Therefore, it is high time the state manages the ongoing surrogacy malpractices through proper law and monitoring mechanism.

Sources: www.swasthyakhabar.com; Dr. Ramesh Parajuli "Surrogacy in Nepal: Threat to reproductive right" The Himalayan Times, August 18, 2015; www.ekantipur.com, Nepal Health Policy 2014.

"Opinions expressed in this article are solely my own and do not express the views and opinions of my employer."

A labyrinth of woes : Life as an elderly in India

By Dev Tyagi

Content writer & Contributor
to What's Up Life,
Sportskeeda, & Trendmantra .

123

They are our heart-line. They have produced and nurtured us and support our very lives. Till the end of it all. Be it financial resources or emotional nurturing, intellectual mentation or counseling for every intricate part of our development, our elders have been there for us at every stage. To speak of the elderly in Indian society and the impact that they play in development of our lives would be akin to counting raindrops from a torrential rainfall.

There is no calculator in any part of the globe that can assimilate their contribution lent by senior citizens in today's democratized civil society.

Old that is gold: as defined by irony and ignorance. Yet, what happens to the old and those on the wrong side of 60 couldn't sadder! Examining a simple question would can provide unbridled truth to their lives. Are they lent the necessary support that they so richly deserve? In India, world's largest democracy, bludgeoning on a rich vein of entrepreneurship and infrastructural development, the condition of its senior citizens in most cases, unless they are under direct care and supervision of a loving family atmosphere paints a sad picture, a bit too often. In real life, one witnesses a lack of inclusion of the "elder or senior citizens of our country" as far as serving them from the folds of compassion and belonging is concerned.

Dwelling deep: If you delve deeper into the agonizing ironies that lie on grounds, you would notice a bubbling paradox. While there's heavy influx of revenues that our engines of economic growth produce on one hand, there lie enormous existential crisis on the other. Crimes against women and children, social stigmas associated with caste intolerances and bitter poverty make the situation morose.

One finds that beneath the veneer of development the Elderly are often dumped into retirement homes, often marred by lack of relevant support infrastructure.

Statistics emanating from major Indian Government body reveal, (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India) that there are 90 million senior citizens in India out of which, 30 million live alone. The figure is expected to increase manifold to 173 million in 2026, which is perhaps twenty times the population of an Israel or Tanzania if you compare in hindsight.

The figure is further expected to rise to 198 million by 2030.

The complexity of being an elderly in India as with any democracy where there constraints run parallel with developments, our senior citizens often languish under financially struggling backgrounds. In the hinterland or the non developed parts that frequently lag behind in basic tenets of physical infrastructure comprising of water, sanitation, electricity, hygiene etc, the ground realities leave a lot to be desired despite regular government intervention.

But, those living in an Urban India, such as Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore, suffer from a different sort of crisis; lack of moral support and personal care for those who cannot look after themselves.

You can call it ignorance on part of the country's legislature system, state policies or what have you but this is a blithe on India that deserves to be corrected.

Startling stats

Crimes against the elderly, that only add insult to injury are defined as "neglect, violation of human, legal and medical rights and deprivation of the elderly". In the last 12 months, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, there have been over 18, 600 separate incidents of crimes committed against the elderly. Flag bearers of economic change, Delhi and Mumbai since 2014, have alone accounted for nearly 6000 cases of volatile incidents. Fundamentally, in both Delhi (our political capital) and Mumbai (the economic nerve center of India) the types of crimes being committed against the elderly lend themselves to: a) Murder for robbery; b) Armed robbery cases that go unsolved. In most cases. These are harsh realities that one has to awaken to if some peace is to be restored. In Delhi alone, the level of crime (according to www.numbeo.com) is around 70.15 % high as compared to the last year. In last three years, crime rates have increased 73 percent without seeing south even for a fraction in a month. The saving grace amidst such disintegration is the stat suggests, in Delhi chances of being mugged through armed robbery by assailants are around only 58%. Is that going to make the city's elderly breathe easy? Globally, people aged over 60 years make up an ever greater percentage of the world population. Today, 760 million people are over 60 around the world; by 2050, that number will have risen to two billion. Older people already outnumber young children (aged 0-4) and will outnumber children under 15 by 2050.

What lies ahead? The Ministry of Social Justice, Government of India calls for fair and equitable treatment to the elderly in the context of social equality, exploitation, discrimination and injustice. But, unfortunately, in none of the aforementioned dimensions has India put up a magnificent statistic. Some major causes that have been identified by national observers and social commentators state the following reasons for crimes against the elderly.

Increasing Urbanization

Excuses such as increasing urbanization in India leading to an increase in crime against our senior citizens have led to certain anomalies in the structure of policing and protecting the civil safety of those who can no longer care for themselves. Nuclear families emanating from joint family systems in India from proving emotional support to financial upbringing, the elderly nurture us into being what we must in our best capacity. So the least one could do in a bid to give back to parents who spend an entire life working tirelessly for us would be their rightful place amidst our lives, isn't it? Our old who were once young and capable parents, in their old age are often left to fend for themselves. In many cases, disintegration of strong family structures that lead to a sporadic reduction in family by members, either leads to acrimony or bitterness over the collapse of family structure, hampering the emotional strength of the elders the most. In other cases: a) Career choices of youngsters that see the young and the mid aged moving to prominent urban centers for livelihood often results in leaving behind parents at hometowns, which could be tier two cities, also known as semi-metro centers of India.

a) Elders part of prominent families, parents once left astray by children are often abandoned. In absence of no financial influx of money, most elderly citizens are either straight away sent to Old Age Centers seldom or never visited by their children.

An earnest appeal to my fellow Indians

Cry all you want, complain all you can, but you can never shy away from truth. The answer lies in restoring parity between compassion and love for the elderly if you are to make India a better country. As the line from a popular Indian movie goes (in context of nationalism)- No country is perfect. It has to be made perfect. It is time we acted for those who have spent their lives perfecting their "next generation".

The death of Chilean General Manuel Contreras.

By **Miguel Rodriguez Glaudemans**

Lawyer / human rights activist / researcher



There is a saying in Spanish which - in a humble attempt - translates “Justice usually takes its time, but ends up appearing”. The death of Former Chileans Secret Police General Manuel Contreras on August 7th may perhaps not be the best example of this popular – Hispanic – sentence, although some groups gathered outside of the military hospital where General Contreras passed, and did toast his death with champagne and drank from paper cups.

General Manuel Contreras commanded the “secret police” of the Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet (1915 – 2006). General Contreras was serving a 526 years sentence in military prison and later was later transferred to a military police when his health diminished.

Among Latin America’s most significant historic scars are the hurtful memories related to the dictatorships which took control of different governments in the mid-seventies, especially in South America, which left significant number of deaths, disappearances and kidnappings of citizens, activists, and regime opponents. Usually these regimes were directly related with the military and supported –unofficially- by the United States, the CIA and other third parties which held an economic interest in such regimes and secretly sponsored them.

General Augusto Pinochet assumed power of the Chilean government in 1973, after a coup d’état -allegedly backed by the United States of America- against the elected president Salvador Allende. Pinochet remained in office until 1990. Reportedly during his first two years between 1800 and 3200 people were killed, another 10.000 reportedly disappeared and over 80.000 arrests made where people were interned in illegal detention centers and to divisions of the army settlements. Also, 30.000 Chileans have reportedly been tortured during Pinochet’s rule. This military government suppressed and dissident opinion of the regime.

Economic free market reforms took place during the regime of General Pinochet; privatization of state controlled economic activities was one of the peculiarities of this movement. Fiscal conservative policies were adopted. The national healthcare system and the Chilean pension system were both also privatized, as was Superior Education. during the 90’s stood out from other South American economies. But the human costs had been high.

The consequences of such actions were mainly the vertical drop of the expenses the government made towards the wellbeing of its citizens, opposed to the massive increases of the Chilean military forces. The military spending of Chile increased 120% between 1974 and 1979.

In 1980 a new Constitution was adopted resulting of a referendum. One of the proposed changes was to forbid left-wing parties for good in Chile and to enable General Pinochet for another 8 years in office. In 1982 in face of the world economy recession he re-nationalized many privatized state services, and fired the team in charge of making the neoliberal reforms. After the crises of 1982, in 1985 he privatized some nationalized government managed companies once more, and the new finance minister put in new regulation for financial institutions, and reduces corporate tax, leading to a booming economy, which, General Contreras had been in charge of Operation Condor, which aimed to find and eliminate all regime opponents, were it inside of Chile, or on an International level, as some neighbor countries shared this plan. According to publication of Mexico, around 60.000 deaths are attributed to execution this operation, and a great many of them attributed to the effectiveness and loyalty to the regime of General Contreras.

At the beginning of August -2015- a left winged Chilean congressman noted that, despite the military law determines that in case of proven imprisonment of someone with a military grade such person would be degraded, this procedure had never been applied to General Contreras, who still held his military title, as a symbolic expression of the Chilean Army. This had been noted on different occasions by varied parties. General Contreras died some days later still holding his military grade. This was called to be a shame of the Chilean Army, but no comments were officially made by this Chilean institution. Contreras was serving 526 years of imprisonment, result of 59 court sentences, and he still had over 20 proceedings at the time of his death.

General Augusto Pinochet was arrested in 1998 in London, due to a request of a Spanish judge, but he was released back to Chile by the British government, which had always endorsed him. In Chile he was given immune status by a Chilean Court, but this was removed in 2004. General Pinochet died in 2006, without ever having faced trial or court.



CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

An Independent Tool for
THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Sex-work in India: Human rights perspective

By Divyendu jha, 2015 <http://www.citizensrw.org/newsdetails.php?id=19ca14e7ea6328a42e0eb13d585e4c22>

European Migrant & Refugee Crisis: How Many Have To Die?

Athanasia Zagorionou, 2015 <http://www.citizensrw.org/newsdetails.php?id=3416a75f4cea9109507cacd8e2f2aefc>

UN Report Reveals Gross Human Rights Violations in Eritrea

Athanasia Zagorianou, 2015. <http://www.citizensrw.org/newsdetails.php?id=e369853df766fa44e1ed0ff613f563bd>

Contact us:



**CITIZENS
RIGHTS WATCH**

Our voices joined become stronger...

Write an article on a human rights issue and email it to us at: newsletter@citizensrw.org

*This is a triannual publication, the deadline for sending your article, or opinion, for the next newsletter, is the **15th of March 2016**. Thank you!

We support & collaborate with the following NGOs, and we are open to collaborations with any human rights organization. In solidarity!

CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

Our voices united become stronger...

Editing team

& Authors

Dr. Zoi Aliozi
 Athanasia Zagorianou
 Miguel A, Rodriguez
 Dr. Sudha Menu
 Helen Mitchell
 Ahmed Juma Alhosani
 Pablo Deheza
 Sara Bortoluz
 Elena Iacovou
 Divyendu Jha
 Alice Boutzia
 Dimitra Messini
 Dev Tyagi
 Prasun Singh
 Lorena Perez Garcia Esther
 Janaina Cardoso de Mello
 Hildênia Santos de Oliveira
 Maria Koutrolidou
 Ivana Vuchkova
 Olga Fernández Sixto
 Jacques Gbehrou
 Rita Jonusaite
 Ines Valerio
 Amidu Kalokoh



<http://www.globoeducationmagazine.com/>



<http://www.colombiancaravana.org.uk/>



<http://www.peacebrigades.org/>



<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/>



<http://justicewomen.com/>



<http://www.womenonwaves.org/>



<http://www.climateemergencyinstitute.com/>



<http://www.teni.ie/>



<http://www.alhaq.org/>



<http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/>

Write an article on a human rights issue and email it to us at: newsletter@citizensrw.org

*This is a triannual publication, the deadline for sending your article, or opinion, for the next newsletter, is the **15th of March 2016**. Thank you!