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CITIZENS VOICES IS A DIGITAL HUMAN RIGHTS MAGAZINE, CREATED BY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, AND SERVES AS A PLATFORM FOR EVERY CITIZEN OF OUR WORLD THAT WANT TO PROMOTE A CAUSE, HIGHLIGHT AN INJUSTICE, MAKE A COMPLAINT, AND RAISE AWARENESS OF CITIZENS RIGHTS, AND JUSTICE.



EDITORIAL

Dr. Zoi Aliozi

Human rights professor/lawyer/activist/CRW's SG

You are reading the 12th edition of Citizens Voices. [Citizens Voices](#) is an online human rights magazine, which serves as a platform for raising human rights awareness.

Every citizen around the world can become a human rights defender by simply raising their voices against injustices.

Citizens Voices No 12 is the first volume of our triennial human rights magazine for 2019, and it includes articles written by human rights advocates, defenders, activists, academics, lawyers, and concerned citizens around the globe, on a variety of human rights issues.

You are all invited to put your pen in the service of human rights, and submit an article for the next Citizens Voices. More info [here](#).

2018 is coming to an end as I write this editorial, and although there have been many issues worth mentioning, my mind is set on how this year has been instrumental in the way the international human rights community is viewing climate change and its relationship to human rights.

So, this editorial will focus on climate change and human rights, and become a small contribution in raising awareness of this fountain of urgent human rights injustices.

Civil society, academia, research, and even pioneering politicians like Mary Robinson, and the president of the Maldives, has advocated for years about the necessity to save humanity from the human-made catastrophes on the environment, however, there is still room for climate change deniers to undermine this process. First of all, it needs to be made clear, that:

climate change has implications for the full enjoyment of human rights.

The United Nations on 2008, (Human Rights Council Resolution 7/23 on human rights and climate change), for the first time openly recognized their actual inter-connected and mutually reinforcing relationship.



It is a fact today, that climate change is undermining the fulfillment of a number of internationally protected human rights, like the: rights to health and life; rights to food, water, shelter and property; rights associated with livelihood and culture; with migration and resettlement; and with personal security in the event of conflict , to name but a few.

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It should be stressed that the worst effects of climate change are likely to be felt by those individuals and groups whose rights protections are already insufficient, so it is again the most vulnerable that will need to be sacrificed before the UN and the leaders of our world take real action.

Climate change's links to the human rights regime, rise from the simple fact that human-made climate change affects the human rights of all.



According to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, 'everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which [their] rights and freedoms ... can be fully realized'.

Climate change interrupts this process and the realization of fundamental basic human rights.

However as some scholars argue, maybe the times of emergency arrived, that no compromises are allowed, in the sense that now is the time to design the international and social order of which the writers of the Universal Declaration envisaged.

Intergenerational justice and the rights of the future generations are earning ground in the human rights legal regime, and these cannot be ensured without safeguarding a habitable environment and a healthy planet, is as simple as that.

While human rights law, has a crucial role to play in the further evolvement of climate justice, it is notable, that even human rights law does not have a complete universal enforceability. The sovereignty of the States, the multi-cultural element, and many other factors add to the seemingly impossible task of an actual and real global enforcement of human rights.

While this is an obstacle that is a matter of time for international law to overcome; it is however a reality and it would be hypocritical to present human rights law as the ideal piece of international law – from theory to practice.

Law from theory to practice has a long journey and many obstacles to overcome.

A human rights based approach demands, that the exercise of climate policies, the choice of strategies, allocation of resources, assessments, as well as further amendments of the climate change's legal framework – would have as a starting point the human rights – the chief and principal standards for acquiring an official international 'green light' to realize these climate justice's policies, and to act lawfully and not ultra vires, would be the human rights regime's canons, principles and rules.

So the human rights ideally should be the protagonist.



In this line of reasoning it would be illuminating to highlight the UNFCCC Article 4.1(f) which demands from signatory States to:

“Take climate change considerations into account, to the extent feasible, in their relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions...”



The future of Climate Justice depends on the inclusion of human rights within its workings.

We all need to acknowledge the duty imposed upon all of us, into assisting the Climate Justice field of study and the Climate Change actions, and hopefully to witness a reversal of the unjustifiably inactive, or better put, weak current state of the international institutional negotiations, and likewise, to fuel actions and not just further dialogues on these matters.

Turning a blind eye on the effects of Climate Change in spreading unfairness, human rights violations and crimes against humanity, is not an option.

The time for putting the plans into action is now.

This is a call for global justice to

fulfill her promise.

The time is now for humanity to work together in tackling the catastrophic consequences that human-made Climate Change brings.

This is not an action science fiction film, it is real life, our earth is threatened by our own mismanagement, disrespect, and exploitation of natural resources. The future of our children and of our planet is proven by solid scientific facts that is uncertain.

The peoples and global civil society has also a role to play in this historic and defining for humankind's survival threat.

We all share responsibility for our home's well-being, sustainable management, our planet's survival and for the right to life of future generations. As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said:

“human rights defenders give voice to the voiceless and shield the powerless against injustice. They work to empower people through education, and help to protect other human rights defenders from harassment, intimidation or arrest.”

This is what we try to do through our work for human rights.

In Citizens Rights Watch-CRW, we aim in raising awareness of human rights, collaborating and supporting human rights defenders all around the globe.

Our main focus is on digital activism, and through the use of new technologies, internet, and social media, we aim in publicizing injustices, mobilizing citizens to demand their rights, and throwing light in

practices that need to become fairer.

What we do here in CRW, is to advocate for human rights through a citizens rights prism. We aim into employing digital tools in raising human rights awareness, which fortunately have little cost, and demand less time to function in reaching our goals.

When there are no tools available, we work on creating these tools, like for example by creating our [digital mobile app](#), which can foster the involvement of citizens with human rights issues that are neglected by the mainstream media.



Our dedicated to citizens happiness, human rights advocacy and monitoring [CRW's Mobile App](#), offers a platform to human rights activists for highlighting rights violations, inform the public about urgent human rights issues, mobilize civil society, and push governments into keeping their promises for human rights protection by monitoring their human rights policies.

Join us in our work for human rights and become a citizen activist, and remember that "You don't have to wait for others to save humanity and the planet.

Join the global movement by taking everyday [#ClimateAction](#)", [#StandUp4HumanRights](#), and know your rights.

**In solidarity,
Z.A.**

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2. See: European Council Doc. 7249/08 Annex, Climate Change and International Security, Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council (March 2008).
3. Ultra vires: Latin for, beyond the powers. Describing an act that goes beyond the limits of the powers conferred on it. Ultra vires acts or laws are invalid. See: Martin, Elizabeth A., 'A Dictionary of Law', Fifth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 513.
4. See: https://www.climateemergencyinstitute.com/uploads/Zoi_UNFCCC_Art_4_-_Human_Rights_-Nov_2013.pdf



CRW OVERVIEW

Athanasia Zagorianou

CRW Researcher & Content Editor of Citizens' Voices



Myanmar: Rohingya Crisis

Following the latest violent events against the Rohingyas in Myanmar in August 2017, hundreds of people have fled to Bangladesh seeking safety.

The camps of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, that have now become home to almost a million Rohingya people who have fled their country to avoid violence and prosecution by Myanmar, are now considered the largest refugee settlement globally (UN news, 2018). Even though Rohingyas have been residing in the Rakhine state, western of Myanmar, for generations they have been denied their rights and Myanmar citizenship since the enforcement of the 1982 Citizenship Law.

Plans for the repatriation of Rohingyas by Bangladesh and Myanmar have faced setbacks with Rohingyas being unwilling to return due to fear of extreme violence and prosecution against them. This does not come as a surprise considering the latest [United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar](#) report's findings revealing extreme and arbitrary violence and atrocities against the Rohingya people including rape, murder and other gross human rights' violations that according to the report can be amounted to crimes against humanity.

[Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) asked for the Bangladesh government to stop any repatriation plans due to the unsafe situation in Myanmar for

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Rohingyas, noting that such plans are against international laws, violating the principle of non-refoulement as it is guaranteed in [Article 33 \(1\) of the 1951 Refugee Convention](#).

Bachelet [noted](#) that “with an almost complete lack of accountability [...] returning Rohingya refugees to Myanmar at this point effectively means throwing them back into the cycle of human rights violations that this community has been suffering for decades”, calling for collective action to stop the cycle of violence against the Rohingyas.

Philippines: Duterte's Drug War Has Killed Thousands



President Duterte who took office in June 2016 has been heavily criticised and condemned for his unlawful and cruel methods to fight drugs and crime across the Philippines.

In 2016, Duterte clearly stated his intention to eliminate anyone who is potentially involved with drugs comparing himself to the infamous and horrific dictator, Hitler.

“Hitler massacred three million Jews ... there's three million drug addicts. There are. I'd be happy to slaughter them” Duterte said to public, raising international condemnation (Holmes, 2016).

In February 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened an [preliminary](#)

[investigation](#) aiming to examine reports of extrajudicial killings. President Duterte responded with a [written withdrawal notification](#) from the Rome Statute of the ICC, stating further that the ICC “has no jurisdiction nor will it acquire jurisdiction” (Ghani, 2018). Duterte continues to provoke with his inflammatory statements in support of his illicit drug war and killings, [the latest one admitting as his “only sin is extrajudicial killings”](#). In the meantime, his so called “drug war” has cost thousands of lives.

China: Human Rights Record on the Spot

In November 2018, [China's human rights record](#) went through the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) which takes place every four and half years, reviewing the human rights record of each UN member state by other member-states, engaging them in a dialogue to improve human rights and providing recommendations.

This is the third review that China has underwent, after the latest review in 2013 resulting in the [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review](#) which highlighted numerous human rights violations. In response, China defended its record and rejected most of these claims.

Last year, Nobel Prize laureate and prominent democracy activist Liu Xiaobo who was sentenced for 11 years in prison for participating in the writing of a manifesto entitled Charter 08 that was calling for human rights and political reforms in China, passed away in custody from liver cancer.



Despite Xiaobo's and international requests to receive treatment abroad, he was not allowed to it. His treatment and death have been treated with extreme secrecy, raising questions over the conditions of his treatment.

In December 2018, Wang Quanzhang, human rights lawyer who was arrested in 2015 during the "709 crackdown" against human rights activists and lawyers by President Xi Jinping, was put on trial for inciting subversion of state power after being suspiciously and secretly detained for three years (Buckley, 2018).

These are not the only incidents; Xi Jinping's presidency and the government of China have been at the spotlight for targeting and silencing activists, lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders. Numerous human rights violations including unlawful and arbitrary detentions, operation of internment camps for Uighur Muslims, and many others have been reported, raising serious concerns over the deterioration of China's human rights record.

Mediterranean: A Death Trap

The European refugee and immigrant crisis started in 2015 and thousands of people have lost their lives since in the effort to cross the Mediterranean and reach Europe in hope for a better and safer future. This year was marked by the lowest number of arrivals in Europe seeking for asylum and protection.

Despite this, a recent UNHCR report suggests that the death toll continues to rise. Pascale Moreau, the UNHCR Director of the Bureau for Europe noted that "with the number of people arriving on European shores falling, this is no longer a test of whether Europe can manage the numbers, but whether Europe can muster the humanity to save lives." According to the report, the first few months of 2018 have been marked with the death of more than one thousands refugees and immigrants with most of them speculated to have died at sea.

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HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION IN THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Jack Frank Sigman

MA, Buckingham Institute for Human Rights and Genocide Studies

The 21st century, less than a decade old, has seen humanitarian crises with massive violations of human rights that the collective international community swore 73 years ago would never occur again.

The slave labor camps of North Korea, the ethnic cleansing (genocide?) of Darfur by Sudan, the ethnic cleansing (genocide?) of the Rohingya by Myanmar, the enslavement of Yazidi women by ISIS, and the civil wars in Yemen and Syria are just a few of the events that have and are occurring.

The international community, through the United Nations (UN), appears deadlocked and thus powerless to address these issues. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), an organization that should be the premier investigator and prime mover to act against these human rights crises, appears preoccupied with condemning Israel for, on a global scale, misdemeanor violations of human rights.

In light of the repeated failure of the international community to unite and fight to stop these heinous violations of human rights, is it morally defensible for a major power to unilaterally intervene, violating a state's sovereignty, in order to save a segment of the population?



In a rare turn from realism to idealism, an iconic realist United States (US) president, Theodore Roosevelt (Walker & Schaffer 2007, 747), in his 1904 State of the Union Address, declared that the US must be prepared to militarily intervene in the affairs of sovereign states to halt mass atrocities, if the people have the will and the strength of arms to do so (Bass 2008, 1).

Almost 100 years later, Kofi Annan, at the time UN Secretary General opined, "Is it legitimate for an organization to intervene without a UN mandate or without such, is it legitimate to allow genocide to occur (Merriam 2001, 113)?"

Hugo Grotius, the 17th political philosopher and "father" of international law, while considering such intervention an example of "just war," also believed the concept would more than likely be exploited by those who sought the resources of that state, thus utilizing the circumstances to justify a war for conquest (Goodman 2006, 107).



As seen above, intervention to secure human rights is not a recent discussion.

In the early 1800s an episode of humanitarian intervention occurred.

Narrating one of the oldest episodes of such in modern history, the British intervention that ended the white slavery trade in the Barbary Pirate regencies of Algeria, Tunis, and Tripoli, Oded Löwenheim, a Professor in international relations, offers that the Barbary pirates were not enslaving British nationals, neither were they molesting.

Additionally, Britain benefitted by trade with the Barbary states. Clearly, there was no material benefit to be gained by Great Britain by this humanitarian intervention (2003, 24).

Löwenheim (2003, 25) gives three reasons for intervention in the realist viewpoint; intervention as cover for expansion, intervention as response to a threat to national interest, and intervention in order to secure favorable world or regional opinion.

It seems that there was no desire to expand into the area, although Gott (2003) indicates that while Great Britain's appetite for colonies was close to insatiable, and there was no great national interest involved wherein Great Britain would extend considerable military power to end the trade, although Löwenheim's assertion that British nationals were not enslaved is disputed by Freeman (2005).

That leaves the third reason; intervention to secure favorable opinion.

It appears that, at the same time, Great Britain was undergoing a campaign to eradicate the African slave trade. However, there were accusations of hypocrisy in that this crusade was being undertaken without addressing the issue of white slavery.

In order to maintain the moral high ground

in its campaign to end African slavery, during which time Great Britain intervened several times into the affairs of other states, Great Britain needed to act to resolve the issue of white slavery in northern Africa (Bass 2008, 17-19).



In order to enforce its political will, Britain acted in a manner that seems to belie its national interests, a supposedly sure sign of strict humanitarian interest (Bass 2008, 19).

However, Löwenheim (2003, 28) disagrees, claiming that such activity is based on realism in that the action taken reflects the moral values upon which the state builds its identity.

In this there was overwhelming support within the British public as well as the Parliament. Indeed, Chas Freeman, former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Fellow at the US Institute of Peace, considers such concerns to be based on "tactical interests" and "national values," behaviors that reflect the national judgment of right and wrong, decent and abhorrent (Freeman 1997, 12).

A champion of conservative realism, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State Colin Powell's doctrine for utilizing military force agrees with Löwenheim. While much stricter in finding purpose for usage, he does deem "overwhelming congressional and public support" (Desch 2001) as a base requirement for humanitarian intervention.

[#HumanitarianIntervention](#) [#HumanRights](#)



In the liberal point of view, a major purpose of the state's existence is to "protect and secure human rights" (Teson 2003, 93).

Michael Desch, a professor of government and public service, offers that individual rights trump national interest, that norms are more important than power, and that "military force should only be used in our pursuit of altruistic objectives" (2001).

Therefore, violating, or ignoring the major purpose of the state should place the state outside the protection of international law.

Additionally, Tenson (2003, 93) insists that sovereignty serves the people, and those that violate that policy cannot hide behind the shield of sovereignty. That being said, it appears, in the liberal point of view, that humanitarian intervention is justified when it is undertaken to secure human rights.

The debate over humanitarian intervention will continue as long as the UN can be deadlocked over actual action to end human rights crises. However, as seen in the aftermath of such unauthorized action in East Pakistan by India, Cambodia by Vietnam, Uganda by Tanzania, and Kosovo by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, such intervention will continue to occur as long as international opinion does not overly condemn such and the cost of such intervention is not onerous.

In that regard, even Henry Kissinger, a US secretary of state and Nobel Laureate, who portrayed the US as against such in 1996, pro-

fessed that "humane convictions are so integral a part of the American tradition that both treasure and, in the extreme, lives must be risked to vindicate them anywhere in the world" (2001, 253).

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU-TURKEY STATEMENT OF MARCH 2016

Ismini Kefala

LLM in Human Rights Law, Human rights / asylum lawyer October 2018, Lesvos, Greece

It is been more than two years since the Members of the European Council held a meeting on 18 March 2016 with their Turkish counterpart, in order to address the so-called ‘migration crisis’¹.

More specifically, their aim was to put a stop to the irregular migration from Turkey to the European Union².



In the Statement³ that was released following this meeting, under action point 1 referring to the irregularly arriving migrants in the Greek islands from Turkey, it was decided that;

[‘All new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey.’](#)

This will take place in full accordance with EU and international law, thus excluding any kind of collective expulsion.

All migrants will be protected in accordance

with the relevant international standards and in respect of the principle of non-refoulement.

It will be a temporary and extraordinary measure which is necessary to end the human suffering and restore public order.

Migrants arriving in the Greek islands will be duly registered and any application for asylum will be processed individually by the Greek authorities in accordance with the Asylum Procedures Directive⁴, in cooperation with UNHCR.

[“ Migrants not applying for asylum or whose application has been found unfounded or inadmissible in accordance with the said directive will be returned to Turkey”⁵ \(emphasis added\).](#)

In accordance with the APD, Member States may consider an application for international protection as inadmissible under Article 33 APD and return the asylum applicants to a third country, namely a non EU Member State, when the country in question qualifies as a ‘first country of asylum’⁶ or a ‘safe third country’⁷.

Closely following the Statement, Greece and Turkey both passed legislation in order to set in place the legal framework needed for the Statement to come into effect.

On 3 April 2016, Greece adopted a law⁸ which specifically set out the concepts of safe third country and safe first country of asylum.

On 6 April 2016, Turkey adopted legislation⁹ to clarify that Syrian nationals readmitted to Turkey under the provisions of the Statement may request and be granted temporary protection.

Turkey also provided diplomatic assurances by letter of 12 April 2016 that all returned Syrians will be granted temporary protection upon return¹⁰.

It is not clear whether the ‘temporary protection scheme’ provided for the Syrians in Turkey constitutes ‘sufficient protection’ under article 35 of the APD and whether it is equal to ‘the protection in accordance with the Geneva Convention’, provided for under article 38 of the APD. This controversy was somewhat put to an end on 22 September 2017, when the Highest Administrative Court of Greece (the Council of the State) upheld the decisions issued by



the second instance Appeals Committees in the case of two Syrian applicants, declaring that the safe third country principle in relation to Turkey could be applied in their cases¹¹.

More than two years after the Statement was released, the practice on the islands of the Aegean Sea stands as follows; The first stage of the examination of an application for international protection determines - after individual assessment - whether the application is admissible in accordance with the ‘first country of asylum’ or ‘safe third country’ principles in relation to Turkey.

To that end, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)¹² conducts a personal interview with the applicant, after which, an Opinion is issued regarding the admissibility of the application.

If the applicant is found to belong to a vulnerable group¹³ or is eligible for family reunification under Dublin Regulation, he or she is excluded from the borders procedure and their application is examined outside of the scope of the Statement.

Subsequently, the Greek Asylum Service issues a decision on whether Turkey is considered to be ‘a first country of asylum’ or ‘a safe third country’.

If the decision declares the application admissible, EASO issues a further Opinion, this time on the eligibility of the application, i.e., on whether the applicant should be recognized as being in need of international protection. The Greek Asylum Service issues a decision on the merits, declaring the applicant a refugee or in need of subsidiary protection, otherwise it rejects the application.

The experience¹⁴ so far has shown that only ‘non-vulnerable’ Syrian nationals on the islands have their applications for international protection declared inadmissible. So, in practice, if a Syrian asylum seeker lodges an application in Lesbos or Chios or Samos for example, his/her ‘only chance’ of getting recognized as a refugee in Greece is to be recognized first as ‘vulnerable’.

In accordance with Article 20 para 1 of L. 4540/2018, vulnerable persons are;

‘minors, whether unaccompanied or not, separated minors, disabled persons, persons with mental disorders or incurable or serious illnesses, elderly people, pregnant women or women who have recently given birth, single parent families with minor children, persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation, victims of female genital mutilation and victims of human trafficking’.



It is sadly a wonder that there are any Syrian nationals, former residents of Syria who – in the light of the atrocities of the war there that is still ongoing- do not fall under any of the abovementioned categories.

Let it be noted that this procedure applies only in the Greek islands, thus, a Syrian asylum seeker who enters the Greek territory from the Northeastern land border in Evros, has his/hers international protection application examined directly regarding its eligibility and is 99% of the time recognized as a refugee.

The conclusion is that if you are a Syrian asylum seeker, in order to be certain you will be allowed to apply for asylum in Greece and not 'be threatened' with readmission to Turkey, you need to come from the northern land border. Do not come from the sea.

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6. APD Articles 33(2)(b) and 35
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8. Law 4375/2016.
9. Turkey adopted Temporary Protection Regulation no 2014/6883 and Regulation no 2016/8722 to clarify that Syrian nationals returning under the new arrangements may request and be granted temporary protection: European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the EU Parliament, the European Council and the Council, First Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU- Turkey Statement, COM(2016) 231 final, 20 April 2016, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposals-implementation-package/docs/20160420/report_implementation_eu-turkey_agreement_nr_01_en.pdf accessed on 27 April 2016.
10. available at <http://asylo.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Turkey-EU-Agreement-documents.pdf> accessed on 13 October 2018 .
11. Council of State (**ΣΤΕ Ολομ**). 2348/2017.
12. In accordance with L. 4540/2018 .
13. In accordance with L.4375/2016 and L. 4540/2018
14. Here I am drawing on my own experience as a lawyer working with asylum seekers in Lesbos since August 2016, as well as that of other colleagues active on the ground .

Freedom for Carlos Ghosn



To the President of Human Rights Watch,

As it looks now after over a month, that Carlos Ghosn is not detained by the Japanese Prosecutors rather kidnapped. The false accusations fabricated are to destroy the legacy and the reputation of the savior of Nissan, the Japanese economy and the thousands of jobs. All the accusations are based on false information, egoism, jealousy and fears.

**SIGN THE
PETITION**



#TakeAction #Petition #StandUp4HumanRights

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR IMPACTING OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES IN A POSITIVE WAY

Melissa Griffiths

Transgender Advocate

Throughout the last few years, I have always wondered whether eventually all the work I have done will be recognized at some point or whether it will at least receive some sort of acknowledgement.

I know from my experience that quite often we think we are championing a particular cause or leading the way in human rights in some way that we are alone. We sometimes think that all our hard work to make a positive difference in the world doesn't seem to be recognised or is making a huge difference when in fact the opposite is true

Well, for me the last few years have been quite a journey doing things I have never done before in my life.

I started sharing my story to raise awareness about gender identity, the issues transgender people face and to make workplaces more inclusive last year through social media. Then, I did my first article with thrive global talking about myself and the foundation I wanted to setup. From there I did more interviews and wrote articles or blog posts for various organisations or online websites. As I progressed

along, I found myself becoming better at sharing my story through various mediums.

I also started talking on radio here and in the USA as well as being on television and writing for the Guardian this year about bullying and expanding to represent the transgender community by being a Flexible Working Day Ambassador. So, by continuing down this path and also starting to speak at various events either as a keynote speaker or as part of a panel discussion I began to realise that I could really make a positive difference in the world, making it easier for current and future transgender people.



In more recent times, I have spoken at Vic Roads about my journey and my experience when I transitioned from male to female.

I have also spoken to students at Brace Education talking about my journey and answering questions around gender identity and mental health issues.

[#TakeAction](#) [#Petition](#) [#StandUp4HumanRights](#)

Because of all the work outside work raising awareness and my contribution to the LGBTI Steering committee at work I was nominated by one of my colleagues for the Agenda Setter of the Year Award in the Women's Agenda Leadership Awards.

It was great to be nominated and whilst waiting to find out if nomination would be good



enough I wondered if Women's Agenda would recognise me as being worthy enough to being a finalist.

To my surprise I was selected as one of the finalists. I was delighted about this and was over the moon about it. I had to go to Sydney for judging and the awards ceremony. I was advised that I would be flown there from Melbourne where I am normally based by one of the Awards' partners Jetstar. So, a few days ago I finished packing everything, cocktail dress and gown for the Award Ceremony. It would seem to the neutral observer that 'I was going on a month-long holiday with all the clothes I packed away.

The morning finally arrived, I must be crazy I thought getting up at 3:00am in the morning to get ready so I could be at airport by 5:30am to check in for my flight to Sydney. A few hours later all dolled up I said goodbye to my flatmate and hopped into the Uber heading off to the airport. On the way to the airport I felt myself thinking "Well, this is it Melissa!

It was quite dark that morning but with clear skies and little traffic at that time of the morning. My journey was relatively quick.

Once I had checked in, I headed for the nearest café where I relaxed and had a frothy cappuccino waiting for the clock to tick around to boarding time for my flight. My plane was late so my flight was delayed due to the inclement weather in Sydney with rain and gusty winds. When I finally arrived that morning, it was still raining. "Is this a bad omen?" I thought as I got off the plane, only time would tell.

After getting to my hotel in the CBD and checking in I practiced a few things that I wanted to mention later on that day at judging. A few hours later, I headed off in the rain with my umbrella to judging for the Award. Once arriving at EY building I only had to wait about 15 minutes before it was my turn. I went in and there were 3 judges on my panel. It was tough! They asked a lot of questions about what I do, how and if I thought society has shifted when it comes to transgender people which I answered. It was only 22 minutes of my life but it felt like a lifetime under pressure.

Near the end, I found myself rambling a bit, nerves, I guess.

"Well, that is over, I am done with this!" I thought as I wondered back to my hotel to get ready for the cocktail party that evening which was held at Haicenda Sydney, an elegant bar part of the Grand Pullman Hotel in Circular Quay right next to Sydney Harbour with great views of Sydney Harbour Bridge. I wore an elegant red cocktail dress with matching red heels for the event.

Whilst the rain had eased off a bit, it was still a beautiful night and I met a lot of the other finalists for the Women's Agenda Leadership Awards.

You are on your way!", wondering how the day would unfold.



As I walked home later that night, I wondered what tomorrow would bring.

Finally, the day for the Awards Ceremony lunch event being held at Sofitel Hotel in Sydney arrived. "The moment of truth impending" I thought as I put on my mauve dress with blush heels to wear to the event. My makeup artist Kiri Denning arrived and did a superb job, making me look glamorous and sexy for the event. It still brings a tear to my eye until today to think back about that day, how hot I looked and being able to accept this.

I arrived at the event in style, in a classy taxi, dreaming of arriving in my own limousine with my name on it. Kind of oxymoronic when you think about it, taxi and classy generally don't go together well or at all. I was at table 24 with a lot of other people. The fish I had for lunch was superb and I only had 1 glass of wine as other award winners were announced. Naturally, as the script goes my award category was the last one.

Waiting until the end to find out if you have won an Award is probably one of the most nerve-racking things I have ever gone through. It was a relief in a way when my Award category finally came up. They announced all the finalists and made us stand up to the applause of everyone else attending the Awards. Then, the moment to announce the winner finally arrived. Anticipation was building inside me...With no expectations I stood near my table in the waiting room and the winner is..... Tracey Spicer.

So, I didn't win, I sat down and reflected that it was still a great achievement to be part of such an amazing group of women not only in the Agenda Setter of the Year Award category but also all the other women who were finalists in other categories. You don't realise sometimes till you are at an event like this that there are other women doing great things in their respective fields whether that is in business, human rights, medicine, running a not for profit organisation, public sector or science. It also

makes you realise that sometimes if you do the right things for the right reasons then it does pay off. You may not win the award you are finalist for but you do get the privilege of being acknowledged and recognised for all the good work you have done.

So, if you are sitting there wondering if you will ever be recognised for all the good things you have done in life to make the world a better place, just remember that even if only one person recognises your work, you have already made an impact.

They will remember you for the rest of their lives telling other people that you have made a difference in their lives. In effect you create a ripple effect by helping one person which could potentially over a lifetime impact upon so many lives. So, keep going, never give up and remember to always make an impact!

Melissa's work for the LGBTI community and diversity has received wide attention and acknowledgement. Her work with the LGBTI network at work was recently honoured with the Diversity Award. She also successfully completed the first ever LGBTI Leadership program run by Leadership Victoria.

On 26 January 2019, Melissa received the Australian Day Award for her work in the community. She has been recently nominated for the LGBTI Hero Award in the 2019 Australian LGBTI Awards which will be announced on 1st March 2019 in Sydney, Australia and she is currently preparing to deliver the keynote opening address for International Women's Day at the RMIT University on Thursday 7th March 2019.

You can follow Melissa's work here:

Website: <http://www.melissagriffiths.com.au>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/melissagriffithsgga/>

Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/melissachloegriffiths/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/melissaracing>

[#TakeAction](#) [#Petition](#) [#StandUp4HumanRights](#)

Stop the detention of people with autism & learning disabilities in ATU's

Too many people with Autism and learning disabilities are detained in Assessment and Treatment Units (ATUs), some end up being put in seclusion units, this needs to stop.

People with Autism & learning disabilities need appropriate support and care and not be detained in units that cannot appropriately support them.

[Sign this petition](#)

21,743 signatures

100,000



#TakeAction #Petition #StandUp4HumanRights

HOW WAS 2018 FOR WOMEN IN INDIA?

Devdeep Tyagi

Chief Point Maker, www.caughtatpoint.com & Content Driver, www.rapidleaks.com

Yet another year is coming to an end. How quickly do the changing vagaries of time put an end to a year whilst unfolding another right in front of us, isn't it?

A thing all crave for amid a climate of change is for a factor of consistency; for something to not change and remain stable.

And if you were to place this very context in the sphere of human rights, particularly in a developing country like India, you would probably be left wondering about the condition of women in India.

You would be then, maybe guided to address a central query, a dominant discourse of the 21st century.

Are women in nations like India- increasingly being determined by economic power, yet defined by strong social and cultural undercurrents- safe? Can they expect a general atmosphere of safety and experience a habitat that offers them congeniality and care without encroaching up their personal sense of freedom?

And having said that, if one were to really narrow it down to a measureable benchmark, then, perhaps raising a pertinent question- how safe were women in 2018 in India- might not seem like an awful idea to build on or address.

But nothing even close to being significant can be gauged without taking into consideration some ground-level truths.

Some factors one can't simply ignore!

In the India of 2012, an earth-shattering, nearly heart-stopping incidence concerning a young girl's menacing gang rape came to light.

Never before had the country observed such a feisty incident that would shake up the very fundamental of the Indian democracy and affect an essential part of its culture that's built on the sensitivity, upkeep, and integrity of women.

The years immediately after 2012's Delhi Gang-rape saga weren't as caustic when it came to the safety of girls but probably so only since the wounds of 2012 were still fresh in the minds of a country that had both reeled in pain felt by the late victim and understood the gravity of the situation.



Yet, India continues to be, well after the infamous 2012 saga, a place that very much needs to take the concept of women's safety- out from fancy PowerPoints, expensive advertising messages laced with catchy feminist captions- into the real world .

So how well did 2018 adapt to this idea spurred to create a lasting meaning for India's women? Well, heartbreaking, as it may sound, in the Northern-Central state of Uttar Pradesh alone, as many as 76,000 cases of crime against

[#WomenRights](#) [#India](#)

women were identified, instead of the 46,000 in 2016.

August 2018 was a time that was largely about embracing a hard cold reality; that shelter homes for the children of India often act as places that offer anything but shelter; and that more often than not, the abuse of young girls begins from places that are established to serve and protect them.

Implicit in the above is a rather mind-numbing statistic.

From the onset of March 16 and June 30, as many as 76,416 cases of abuse, were reported.

Do you think that's all?

In only three months, one learnt of as many as 17249 cases where the 'the modesty of a woman' was outraged, challenged and ripped apart.

For a country that under Raja Ram Mohan Roy, abolished Sati, one that seeks a delight in addressing itself as a 'motherland,' where do such deplorable statistics leave India, one wonders?

A big area for improvement, it appears, is the abject failure on part of the state police to explain the occurrences of so many crimes against women.

Having said that, what you've read so far is only one half of the picture.

It appears that a leading US-base survey found India to be the most dangerous country where it comes to being a 'woman.'

Could 2018's hurtful realities in different parts of the country have had something to do with it?

This is a possibility that cannot be entirely ruled out.

For a nation where many startup organizations are being spurred by the intellectual and cre-

ative prowess of women (entrepreneurs) leading from the front on one hand, it really doesn't paint an inspiring picture of India to realize that practices like female genital mutilation, human trafficking for domestic work, sexual slavery, forced marriages still mushroom in different parts of the country.

Despite the central government working cohesively in the immediate aftermath of post-2012 gang-rape case- resulting in an increase in penalties for sexual molestation, rape, sexual abuse- women in India, still very much, grapple with a climate of uncertainty where it comes to their freedom of movement and their personal sense of liberty.

To that end, the findings by the revered National Crime Records Bureau- 100 sexual assaults being reported to police on every single day, on an average- point to a rather grim picture.

Do they not?

Having said the above, what did, in fact, emerge as a welcoming light amid times marked by incessant duress was a fire starter of sorts: the epic [#MeToo](#) campaign.

As more women actively took part in a coup-de-tat to bring down the morally debauched responsible for threatening their individual liberty, [#MeToo](#) proved not just a successful social media campaign. But, in fact, it proved to be a voice of reason, and one of great resonance for a gender that's sadly been saddled with pain and humiliation when it deserves nothing but pure peace.



CONTESTED HISTORIES, INTANGIBLE HERITAGE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE GERMAN OCCUPATION MEMORIAL AND ELEVEN EMLEKMŰ (ELEVEN ME- MORIAL) IN BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Paul V. Dudman

Archivist, University of East London.

Budapest is perhaps one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, containing a certain duality which becomes most evident at night when the city seems to take on a mystic aura as it lights up under a myriad of lights.

Much of the ancient cities of Buda and Pest, separated by the banks of the Danube River, are listed as cultural landmarks on the UNESCO World Heritage List, including the both Castle Hill and Gellért Hill. Equally the Hungarian Parliament Building (Országház) seems to come alive at night bathed in rich orange light reflected by the Danube river itself.

August 2017 was to be my first trip to Budapest to attend a workshop at the Central European University (CEU) about Erasmus + OLIVE course.

OLIVE is a collaboration between the University of East London (UEL) in partnership with the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, University of Vienna and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) with the aim and purpose of supporting refugees and people seeking asylum who are interesting in accessing higher education.

The course has now received a new round of Erasmus+ funding allowing it to continue into 2020 and further details can be found on the UEL OLIVE Course website at <https://www.uel.ac.uk/schools/social-sciences/olive>.

Originally separate cities, Buda and Pest, together with Óbuda, united in 1873 to form what is now Budapest.



Central Budapest is well known for a number of famous buildings and monuments with the Hungarian Parliament (Országház), Buda Castle, Fisherman's Bastion, Gresham Palace, Széchenyi Chain Bridge, Matthias Church, St.

Stephen's Basilica, and the Liberty Statue. The history of Budapest dates to the Romans and the Celts prior to 1 AD and given its location straddling the Danube River, the city has continued to develop over time. During our brief evening tour of the first evening, we could take in the Hungarian Parliament building, Gresham Palace and Szabadság Square.

The architecture of the city is truly stunning and encourages further exploration. There is a legacy of empire within the architecture of the city and a sense of former glories still lingers as you walk around the City, with the River Danube flowing endlessly through its centre, made accessible by the famous Széchenyi Chain Bridge and flanked by the stunning Buda Castle.

Budapest is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and UNESCO has played an important role in promoting, documenting and preserving intangible cultural heritage, which can be defined as practices, processes and skills which communities and organisations deem to be core to their own community cultural heritage.

One of the more controversial landmarks is the Memorial to the Victims of the German Invasion. Located in Szabadság tér (Freedom Square), the monument has been designed to be a memorial to the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, however it has caused controversy as Hungary was one of the first allies of Nazi Germany at the start of the Second World War and this angered many people who see this as an attempt by the Hungarian Government to rewrite history and as a travesty of truth.

We could see the both the monument and the ongoing street protest situated adjacent to the monument during our brief evening tour of the city.

The Living Memorial located in Szabadság tér (Freedom Square) situated near to the centre of Budapest is represented by items donated by survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants.

The memorial is located directly opposite the statute commemorating Hungary's time under the rule of the Nazi Party. Memorials that are traditionally built to mark a particular event are often designed as an act of honouring

a particular tragedy and as an act of remembrance for those who have lost their lives. They can also be seen as a means of supporting public reflection on the tragedies of the past and acting as a means of teaching the generations that follow in the hope of ensuring that lessons of history are learnt in the hope that history will not repeat itself.

Constructed under the cover darkness overnight and under heavy armed guard on the 20th July 2014, the statue depicts an angel being attacked by a German eagle. Designed by the Hungarian sculptor, Peter Parkanyi Raab, the statue, in the:

“middle of the monument is archangel Gabriel (representing an “innocent Hungary”) who stands on a column with an orb in his right hand (representing the power of the state). A bronze eagle with a ring on its leg reads, “1944”, soars above Gabriel as a representation of Nazi Germany. Above the column it reads, “A német megszállás áldozatainak emlékműve: Memorial to the Victims of the German Invasion.” (Kruegar, 2015b)

This was a design which critics say overlooks Hungary's active involvement in supporting Nazi Germany in helping to deport many thousands of Hungarian Jews to concentration camps like Auschwitz.

The statute was commissioned and constructed by the Hungarian centre-right party of Prime Minister Victor Orban who argue that the figure is representative of all victims of fascism and not just those in the Hungarian state.

However, the statute has been criticised by many Jewish groups and others in Hungary as it has been seen to downplay Hungary's involvement in the deportation of over 430,000 Hungarian Jews to concentration camps following Germany's invasion and occupation of Hungary during 1944.



The politics behind the construction of the statue also raised questions about the motives of the centre-right Orban government. In the build-up the Hungarian General Elections in the Spring of 2014, Orban had responded to correspondence from the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities or Magyarországi Zsidó Hitközségek Szövetsége, or MAZSIHISZ asking for cooperation and reconsideration of the plans for the statue.

In a skilful piece of political duplicity, Orban promised continued discussions with MAZSIHISZ after the Easter public holidays.

However, the sudden arrival of workmen on the 8 April highlighted that the Orban government had no plans to delay the installation of the statue as MAZSIHISZ and their supporters had believed and after his success in the elections, Orban was comfortable in his remit to plough ahead with the construction of what is known as The German Occupation Memorial.

Those in favour of the memorial argue it is designed to act as a means of reconciliation between Jewish and non-Jewish Hungarians, however this has not prevented continued protests against the memorial in what many Hungarians see as a “[forgery of history](#).” (Kruegar, 2015b).

It is felt by many in Hungary that the German Occupation Memorial is an attempt to undermine Hungary’s role as a collaborator and also a contributor to the mass deportation of Hungarian Jews and essentially absolving itself of responsibility.

There had been a history of Anti-Semitism in Hungary with evidence of pogroms, mass killings and forced labour camps (Dunai, 2014) which pre-dated the Second World War and the Nazi invasion in 1944, which resulted in the deportation of approximately 437,000 Jews.

Whilst the official discourse from Viktor Orban was to use the monument as a basis for fostering understanding and cooperation amongst different communities within the country, the Hungarian historian Laszlo Karsai reflected that the official monument only tells a partial story. “[People like to hear the lie that that Hungary, the Hungarian people, were always innocent.](#)” (Dunai, 2014).

Since my initial attempts at writing this article, the political and human rights situation in Hungary has continued to deteriorate.

The government of Viktor Orban over the past year has banned the teaching of Gender Studies courses in Hungary, on the basis that “[an ideology, not a science](#),” according to Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjen. (Oppenheim, 2018).

Orban’s government has also passed legislation directly targeting NGO’s and organisations that either gain funding for abroad or work directly with refugee and migration issues.

This has been reflective of the growth of far-right politics within Hungary as well as more widely across international politics. In her article and film documenting the rise of the Far Right in Hungary, the filmmaker Theopi Skarlatos reflects:

“[By banning liberal universities and NGO’s that aid refugees, by creating a hate campaign against Jewish investor George Soros, by creating an atmosphere where Hungarians feel they must constantly defend against an invisible evil, Orban is creating a world that is ripe for the return of fascism.](#)” (2018).

In her film, *Prejudice and Pride in Hungary*, Skarlatos discusses the impact of the rise of far-right nationalism on Hungarian society with the rise of far-right wing and neo-Nazi movements, such as the Highwaymen’s Army (Betyársereg) and the wider implications of the nationalist movement of Viktor Orban’s Fidesz party.

[#History](#) [#memorials](#) [#Budapest](#) [#Culture](#) [#HumanRights](#)

It is in this political context that we must place the controversy around the German Occupation Memorial. The memorial has quickly become an emblematic symbol of the right-wing nationalistic politics of the Orban government, seeking as opponents see it, to present a one-sided version of history which reduced the culpability of the Hungarian regime to the role of victim in the face of the Nazi occupation.

Almost overnight, opponents of the official monument established The Eleven Emlekmű (Eleven Memorial) as a counter-monument representing a very individual and personal counter-narrative and a living memorial to the sacrifices of the Holocaust.

The Eleven Memorial is a very thought provoking and personal experience as it records the very personal experiences and memories of those who lost their lives during the Holocaust as well as from those who survived.



Through “momentos that include toys, shoes, placed stones, and letters with the names on them” (Kruegar, 2015b), the living memory is a very poignant way of giving a voice back to the voiceless and as means of representing a more inclusive history of Hungary’s involvement in the Second World War.

Thereby acting to defy “the legitimacy of the official conception of victimhood by direct references to the suffering of the Hungarian Jews” (Eross, p.237) during this period.

Eleven Emlekmű began as a flashmob and Facebook group entitled “Eleven Emlekmű - az

én történelmem (Eleven Monument - My History)” on the 23rd March 2014 with an invitation on Facebook for people “to bring their own personal items and place their own sacred symbols – a symbol of willingness to repent and forgive – onto this unsought graveyard of our history.” (quoted in Eross, p. 247).

Eleven Emlekmű quickly developed into a living counter-narrative to the official monument, documenting an ever-changing and developing narrative of real people and real lives, for many of whom their voices were lost to history in the tragic events following the occupation of Germany during the War.

It has become “an ever-evolving composition made up of personal relics, like family photos, hand-written family stories, eviction notices, personal belongings, stones (some indicating the date and place when and from where the given person/family were transported to concentration camp).” (Eross, p.248).

These materials provide invaluable contribution to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage as a human right for both individuals and communities.

As evidenced first hand with an exhibition undertaken back in January 2018 at the Refugee Council Archive, University of East London documenting the art of Chilean political prisoners as a means of passively challenging the oppressive military regime in Chile (Dudman, 2018) during the 1970’s and 1980’s, personal objects can help define and tell a counter narrative in unique and very personal way.

Equally these are often the only representations of such a counter narrative to have survived and therefore became essential to the preservation of a legacy of human rights resistance which is fundamental to the cultural and community



identity for those directly affected by the events in question.

The debate surrounding this monument and Hungary's involvement in the Second World War reflect debates on how governments and institutions can wield power over the shape and direction of historical scholarship, collective memory and national identity, and how we know ourselves as individuals, groups and societies. The "post-colonial heritage" theory suggests that individuals belonging to a national community have different experiences to a shared past and do not share identical relationships to the same spaces, places and events and therefore conceive their heritage through multiple forms of reference.



The development of the Eleven Emlekmű as a means of challenging the perceived attempt at re-writing of Hungarian history offers a very

prominent insight "into resistance and protest as geospatial features of the politics of public memory." (Eross, p.237).

Public monuments are increasingly being researched and discussed as part of a wider analysis of the politics of commemoration and how these are used as a means of inducing public remembrance of specific events or people.

Eross highlights in her article on "In Memory of Victims": Monument and counter-monument in Liberty Square, Budapest,' now the construction of monuments is almost inevitably linked to concepts of nationalism and the development of public history in support of a nationalist approach to remembrance.

She indicates that "monuments – next to other tools, for instance, (re)naming streets – are applied by power to occupy public space in order to inscribe its specific narrative about the past, in many cases justifying its authority in the present." (Eross, p.239).

Human rights have become an important aspect if the study and development of understanding in relation to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage and "the right of access to, and enjoyment of cultural heritage" has become a key component of the work of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

In her blog posting on the Hungarian memorial, Marian Krueger (2015b) concluded with a quotation from American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead, who stated that "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Maybe this is the biggest compliment we can give to the organisers of Eleven Emlekmű, and we can only hope that this approach to keeping the human rights of our cultural heritage alive continues in the face of nationalistic approaches to memorial commemoration.

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CITIZENS COMPLAINT

Dear Sir or Madam,

We would like to draw your attention to a serious case of the violation of human rights of two key women, who are both elected representatives, in the Republic of Bulgaria.

This appeal is for the freedom and rescue from political repression of Dessislava Ivancheva and Bilyana Petrova – Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Mladost district of Sofia, Bulgaria municipality.

On April 17, 2018, Ms Dessislava Ivancheva and Ms Bilyana Petrova, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Mladost Municipal District (one of the largest districts in Sofia, Bulgaria), were arrested at a busy central intersection, Sofia, Bulgaria.

They were handcuffed and held on the street for more than 6 hours in conditions humiliating to their human dignity and harmful to their health:

Their hands were cuffed behind them, they were physically prevented from speaking, prevented from calling for legal representation, prevented from drinking water, prevented from using the toilet. In the service car they traveled with, the police found 56,000 euro - marked banknotes, and later they were accused of requesting and taking bribes.

The Legal representatives of Ms Ivancheva and Ms Petrova state, many times, that there exists no evidence against them - both for requesting and for taking a bribe. The sum of 56,000 euro found on the back seat of their service car was thrown there without their knowledge by the former mayor of Mladost district from the ruling GERB party Petko Dyuлгерov, known for his abuses of office as mayor. The indictment is



based solely on the testimony of the so-called “mediator” Petko Dyuлгерov and those of the construction contractor Alexander Vaklin, who provided the money.

There is no evidence such as Ivancheva and Petrova’s prints on the banknotes, there are no pictures of the money distribution, as the Specialized Prosecutor’s Office asserts at her press conference on 18 April, no recordings or testimony for Ms. Ivancheva or Ms. Petrova asking money for them. Even Alexander Vaklin himself testified to the court that neither Ms Ivancheva nor Ms. Petrova had asked him for money for themselves.

We understand that both women have been placed under severe duress in order to obtain false confessions that could involve draconian sentences of many decades.

This case of Human Rights violation is all the more serious as it involves democratically elected representatives. Ms Dessislava Ivancheva is

the elected Mayor of Mladost, a municipality with more than 100,000 inhabitants. She is the only non-partisan mayor of a district in Sofia. Ivancheva closely followed a policy against overbuilding, and repeatedly entered into open controversy with representatives of the ruling party in Bulgaria. Ivancheva and her team meticulously followed the fight against illegal activities related to new constructions, and repeatedly sent notices about falsified construction works documents. Perhaps, due to this, at times they have been drawn into policy conflict with certain representatives of Bulgaria's ruling party.

The Mayor is also Chair of the Initiative Committee For Green Mladost, which has initiated a lawsuit against the refusal of Sofia Municipality to hold local referendum regards new construction on green areas in Mladost.

Before her arrested, the Mayor has repeatedly requested the Mayor of Sofia Municipality (Mrs Yordanka Fandakova), and Sofia Municipality Chief Architect (Mr Zdravko Zdravkov) to investigate potentially suspicious cases of de facto privatisation of property, but has as yet received no response to her formal request.



During the first court hearing in the Specialised Criminal Court on April 20th 2018, Mayor Ivancheva and Deputy Mayor Petrova were kept in a glass and soundproof armoured cell designed for the most dangerous criminals and terrorists. We believe that they were arraigned in this appalling condition in order to prevent them speaking to the media and press about either the charges laid against them, the degrading and dangerous conditions of their detention, and their concerns about potentially deeply suspicious property developments.

Further, contrary to Art. 6, para. 2 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, according to which “Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law”, the Prosecutor's Office has carried out a sustained campaign to discredit the detainees in order to infer a presumption of guilt.

The Head of the Special Prosecutor's Office, Mr Ivan Geshev (second from the left on the above photo), also cast defamatory aspersions on the personal life of the Mayor: At the press conference held on April 18th, organised by the Prosecutor's Office and the CCCFUAP (Commission for Countering Corruption and Forfeiture of Unlawfully Acquired Property) he made the false and defamatory accusation that the Mayor had what he described as “a vibrant nightlife”. These words became the cause of humiliating false publications in the yellow press.

Meanwhile, an independent study by Gallup International, screened on Bulgarian national television bTV, April 27th, revealed that a majority of those polled concluded that the arrest of the Mayor and her Deputy was ‘contrived’.

For seven months the Mayor and her Deputy have been imprisoned in Sofia jail under inhumane conditions. Their jailers routinely verbally abuse them.

They are locked in an unhygienic cell with raw sewage water leaking from cracked pipes leaks through the roof of their cell. They are only allowed access to daylight for only one hour per day, with consequent irreparable damage to their eye-sight. Their mental and physical condition has rapidly deteriorated. For prolonged period they have been denied access to a doctor or basic medical help.

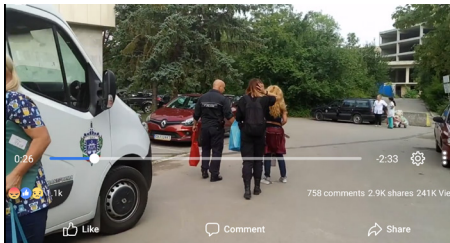


No complaint about the unhealthy and inhuman conditions that the Mayor and her Deputy are exposed to in the detention facility has been legally reviewed.

There is no question but that attempts have been made to intimidate them while in custody in order to force them to write false testimony.

The Specialised Criminal Court has unlawfully discharged both the Mayor and her Deputy from office, in direct contravention of the laws of the Republic of Bulgaria. This action represents a clear and present denial of democracy.

On July 31st and August 1st, Bilyana Petrova and Dessislava Ivancheva were taken to a hospital treatment, with their legs chained, with hands cuffed and chained to a thick leather belt tied around the waist.



Link to the video with Ms Ivancheva - <https://facebook.com/DIvancheva/videos/551283081954416>

In summary, we strongly maintain that key rights and values of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union have been violated here, including: Article 1: Human dignity Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected.

Article 3: Right to integrity of the person, para. 1 Everyone has the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity.

Article 4: Prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment No one

shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Human Rights in the EU are an indissoluble.

When basic Human Rights are denied to two responsible, engaged, democratically elected women, then hard questions should and must be asked by our European partners.

Without your help and support, we fear that justice will not triumph. That they will languish in jail, subject to severe mistreatment.

We rely on you to assist in giving our case publicity, in letting everything that you read herein to be heard beyond the borders of our country and to request justice for Ms. Dessislava Ivancheva and Ms. Bilyana Petrova.

Bulgaria is part of the EU. As such, the EU has a clear responsibility regarding Human Rights violations in a Member State.

We rely on you to provide diplomatic, civic, media, and press support for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Ms Dessislava Ivancheva and Ms Bilyana Petrova in their hour of need.

With respect,
Citizens of "Mladost" District, the city of Sofia and the Republic of Bulgaria

<http://freethemayors.com>
<https://www.facebook.com/DIvancheva>

#Mladost Bulgaria Mayor #FreeTheMayors #CitizensComplaint

BRITISH COLUMBIA MINING LINKED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR ALASKA TRIBAL NATIONS

Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission submits human rights petition to Inter-American Commission



Stikine River near Wrangell, Southeast Alaska.

DECEMBER 5, 2018

Juneau, AK — Tribal nations of Southeast Alaska have called on an international body to take action in preventing human rights violations related to the ability to practice their culture and maintain their livelihoods, stemming from six hard-rock mines in British Columbia.

[continue reading](#)

TAKE ACTION



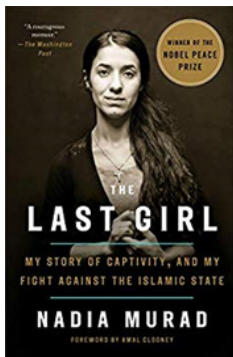
[#TakeAction](#) [#Petition](#) [#StandUp4HumanRights](#)



ON THE SHELF...

HUMAN RIGHTS BOOK SELF

HUMAN RIGHTS BOOKS RECCOMENDATION



THE LAST GIRL

My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State

NADIA MURAD

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PEACE
PRIZE

In this intimate memoir of survival, a former captive of the Islamic State tells her harrowing and ultimately inspiring story.

Nadia Murad was born and raised in Kocho, a small village of farmers and shepherds in northern Iraq. A member of the Yazidi community, she and her brothers and sisters lived a quiet life. Nadia had dreams of becoming a history teacher or opening her own beauty salon.

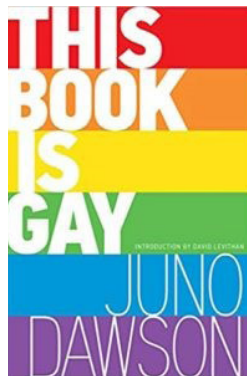
On August 15th, 2014, when Nadia was just twenty-one years old, this life ended. Islamic State militants massacred the people of her village, executing men who refused to convert

to Islam and women too old to become sex slaves. Six of Nadia's brothers were killed, and her mother soon after, their bodies swept into mass graves. Nadia was taken to Mosul and forced, along with thousands of other Yazidi girls, into the ISIS slave trade.

Nadia would be held captive by several militants and repeatedly raped and beaten.

Finally, she managed a narrow escape through the streets of Mosul, finding shelter in the home of a Sunni Muslim family whose eldest son risked his life to smuggle her to safety.

Today, Nadia's story—as a witness to the Islamic State's brutality, a survivor of rape, a refugee, a Yazidi—has forced the world to pay attention to an ongoing genocide.



THIS BOOK IS GAY

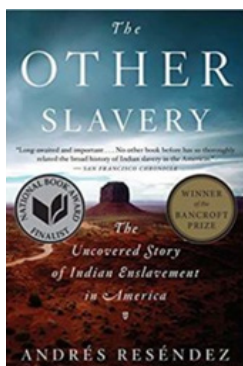
JUNO DAWSON

“The book every LGBT person would have killed for as a teenager, told in the voice of a wise best friend. Frank, warm, funny, usefull.”

[#HumanRightsBooks](#) [#ReadHumanRights](#) [#BookSuggestions](#) [#Ontheshef](#)

--Patrick Ness, bestselling author Lesbian. Bi-sexual. Queer. Transgender. Straight. Curious. This book is for everyone, regardless of gender or sexual preference. This book is for anyone who's ever dared to wonder. This book is for YOU.

There's a long-running joke that, after "coming out," a lesbian, gay guy, bisexual, or trans person should receive a membership card and instruction manual. **THIS IS THAT INSTRUCTION MANUAL.** You're welcome.



THE OTHER SLAVERY

THE UNCOVERED STORY OF INDIAN ENSLAVEMENT IN AMERICA

ANDRES RESENDEZ

"Long-awaited and important . . . No other book before has so thoroughly related the broad history of Indian slavery in the Americas."--San Francisco Chronicle
"A necessary work . . . [Reséndez's] reportage will likely surprise you."--NPR
"One of the most profound contributions to North American history."--Los Angeles Times

Since the time of Columbus, Indian slavery was illegal in much of the American continent. Yet, as Andrés Reséndez illuminates in his myth-shattering *The Other Slavery*, it was practiced for centuries as an open secret. There was no abolitionist movement to pro-

tect the tens of thousands of Natives who were kidnapped and enslaved by the conquistadors.

Reséndez builds the incisive case that it was mass slavery--more than epidemics--that decimated Indian populations across North America.

Through riveting new evidence, including testimonies of courageous priests, rapacious merchants, and Indian captives, *The Other Slavery* reveals nothing less than a key missing piece of American history.

For over two centuries we have fought over, abolished, and tried to come to grips with African American slavery.

It is time for the West to confront an entirely separate, equally devastating enslavement we have long failed truly to see.

"Beautifully written . . . A tour de force." *Chronicle of Higher Education*

For more books on human rights check out this link:

<https://www.hongkongfpom/2018/12/16/best-human-rights-books-october-december-2018/>

Thank you!
In solidarity,
CRW team



HUMAN RIGHTS CINEMA

WATCHING HUMAN RIGHTS:

Because human rights films can change the world!



Cinema amongst other things, is a unique language for communicating through emotional triggers. The storytelling power of a film knows no boundaries.

In the following section we have chosen some must watch films that every citizen will profit by watching.

We want to inspire you into using films for organizing events for human rights issues. For example, you can screen a film in a theatre, a cafe, a school class, or in any place you can think of, and initiate a discussion about issues that are relevant to your community. We are here to help you out in this process! Contact us and we will provide you with all the know- how, advice, resources and support to make this happen.

For this Human Rights Cinema section we chose the following films:

Human Flow

Director: Weiwei Ai (2017).

Human Flow is director and artist Ai Weiwei's detailed and heartbreaking exploration into the global refugee crisis.



[#HumanRightsCinema](#) [#HumanRightsFilms](#) [#WatchHumanRights](#) [#Cinema](#) [#film](#)

‘Being a refugee...is the most pervasive kind of cruelty that can be exercised against a human being.’

The opening remark of the trailer for Ai Weiwei’s new documentary about migrants seeking safety is a poignant reminder of the fact that right now, tens of millions of men, women and children have been displaced from their homes – and that we must do more to help them.

Watch the trailer here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVZGyTdk_BY

13th

Director: Ava DuVernay (2016).

An in-depth look at the prison system in the United States and how it reveals the nation’s history of racial inequality.



This critically-acclaimed documentary derives its title from the 13th Amendment, which banned slavery except as punishment for a crime. (Seriously, it’s right there in the Constitution.)

From there, Ava DuVernay enlists the expertise of scholars, activists, ex convicts, and politicians to connect the dots straight to today’s mass incarceration system, which disproportionately criminalizes African-Americans. This is a lesson you can get right on Netflix.

Watch the trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V66F3WU2CKk>

Stopping Traffic

Director: Sathvi Siddhali Shree (2017).



Documentary

Join the Campaign: <http://stoppingtraffic-film.com>

STOPPING TRAFFIC explores the pervasive reach of sex trafficking, especially of children in the U.S., Mexico, and Asia.



Through commentary by victims and activists and investigations into practices in the U.S. and worldwide, the film traces insidious links among child sexual exploitation, pornography, social media, and sex trafficking.

It calls on the viewer to join the movement to end sex trafficking. Featured Cast (in order of appearance): Dr. John A. King, Dolph Lundgren, Carolina Douthit, Karla Jacinto, Sadhvi Siddhali Shree, Dr. Ben Wright, Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, Lotta Sylwander, Dr. Susanne Dietzel, Kristen Renton, Dr. Robert Sanborn, Acharya Shree Yogeesh, Rosi Orozco, Mario Garfias, Jeannie Mai, Governor Eruviel Villegas.

Watch the trailer here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxhVIXAiDU4>

Human

MUST SEE!

Director: Yann Arthus-Bertrand (2017).



What is it that makes us human? Is it the ability to love? Is it because we are able to show different emotions and express different feelings? Is it how we join religious groups and how we fight for the ideologies that we believe?

Filmmaker Yann Arthus-Bertrand wanted to understand why humans are different to other living beings, so he spent three years collecting stories from thousands of men and women from 60 different parts of the world.

The stories capture the realities of life: sexual identity, anger, poverty, war, love, happiness, and the plethora of emotions that human beings experience.

[Watch it now, by clicking here.](#)

CARTOONS

Aseem Trivedi

Aseem Trivedi is a political cartoonist and free speech activist. His website was blocked and he was arrested for his anti corruption cartoons in 2012. He seeks to support writers, artists and others facing injustice, tries to create awareness and mobilize social media users to participate in campaigns demanding the end of injustice. You can contact him about the cases you think should be supported through his cartoons and see more of his work at his website, <http://www.bandw.in/p/about.html>

ISTANBUL 10

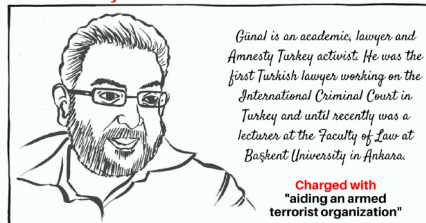
Veli Acu

#Istanbul10



Günel Kurşun

#Istanbul10



On 5 July 2017, eight human rights defenders, along with two consultants, were detained on Buyukada island, off the coast of Istanbul in Turkey. Nalan Erkem, Seyhmuз Ozbekli, Ozlem Dalkiran, Idil Eser, Veli Acu, Gunal Kursun, Ilknur Ustun and Nejat Tastan were all arrested as they attended a workshop. Two consultants, Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner, were also detained.

On 18 July 2017, Nalan Erkem, Seyhmuз Ozbekli, Ozlem Dalkiran, Idil Eser, Veli Acu, Gunal Kursun, Ilknur Ustun, Nejat Tastan, Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner were charged with “aiding an armed terrorist organisation”.

Six of the human rights defenders, including Ozlem Dalkiran, Idil Eser, Veli Acu, Gunal Kursun, Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner are being kept in pre-trial detention while Nalan Erkem, Seyhmuз Ozbekli, Ilknur Ustun, Nejat Tastan have been released but are under a travel ban and other judicial restrictions. Ozlem Dalkiran and Idil Eser are being held in Bakirkoy prison, Ali Gharavi and Peter Steudtner in Maltepe prison and Veli Acu and Gunal Kursun in Metris prison of Istanbul.



Peter Steudtner

#Istanbul10



Peter is a German trainer, coach, photographer and documentary film maker with 20 years experience of supporting peace workers and human rights defenders through trainings on non-violent action and conflict transformation.

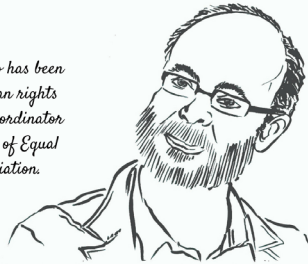
**Charged with
"aiding an armed
terrorist organization"**

Nejat Taştan

#Istanbul10

Nejat is an activist who has been campaigning for human rights since 1986. He is the coordinator and founding member of Equal Rights Watch Association.

**Charged with
"aiding an armed
terrorist organization"**



Şeyhmuz Özbekli

#Istanbul10

Şeyhmuz is a newly qualified lawyer. He has been actively involved in human rights for the last four years. He is a member of the Rights Initiative and works in the Human Rights Unit of Diyarbakir Bar Association.

**Charged with
"aiding an armed terrorist
organization"**



Özlem Dalkiran

#Istanbul10



Özlem is a long standing and prominent human rights campaigner. She is a founding member and former chair for of Amnesty International Turkey.

**Charged with
"aiding an armed
terrorist organization"**

İlknur Üstün

#Istanbul10



*İlknur is head of
Ankara KADER
(Women's Association),
Turkey Coordinator for the
European Women's Lobby
and the Coordinator of the
Women's Coalition.*

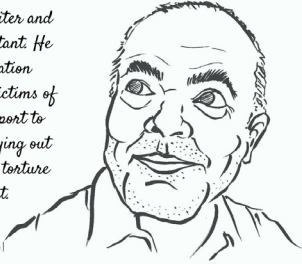
**Charged with
"aiding an armed
terrorist organization"**

Ali Gharavi

#Istanbul10

*Ali is an Iranian-Swedish writer and
information technology consultant. He
worked as head of Information
Technology at the Center for Victims of
Torture providing direct support to
survivors of torture and carrying out
international advocacy to end torture
and inhumane treatment.*

**Charged with
"aiding an armed
terrorist organization"**



Nalan Erkem

#Istanbul10

*Nalan is a campaigner against
torture and violence against women.
She was a member of the board
of directors of the İzmir Bar
Association between 2002-2004.*

**Charged with
"aiding an armed terrorist
organization"**



İdil Eser

#Istanbul10

*İdil is the Director of Amnesty
International Turkey and has held
various managerial positions in non-
governmental organizations Helsinki
Citizens' Assembly and Doctors Without
Borders.*

**Charged with
"aiding an armed
terrorist organization"**



CALL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ARTICLES

Citizens Voices | Newsletter No. 13

Who we are

Citizens' Rights Watch (CRW) is an international human rights' NGO, working to promote spontaneous collective political and social action leading to the improvement of human rights and citizens' life quality, the end of injustices and human rights abuses. We focus on raising human rights' awareness through the monitoring, research and analysis of human rights, in respect to democracy and the rule of law at both national and international levels.

Our Mission

Our Mission is to give voice to citizens' demands for basic human rights, monitor governments' compliance to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) with focus on Economic and Social rights of every UN member state's citizen and contribute to the progressive realization of human rights around the world.

We call everyone with relevant experience or a keen interest on human rights to write for our next Newsletter No. 13!

We particularly welcome volunteers, activists, academics, students, groups, NGOs, academic institutions and others to share their expertise, views, thoughts and experiences with us! Authors are free to choose their topic - Write about any human rights issue you would like to discuss, address or raise awareness about. Articles should be between 500 - 1500 words.

All submissions must be original, and exclusive to Citizens Rights Watch (CRW). We will not consider articles that have already been published (in print or online). CRW also accepts letters for publication, including citizens' complaints! Letters/complaints should preferably be between 120 - 200 words.

Articles may be submitted in Word Format directly to the CRW Content Editor, Athanasia Zagorianou (newsletter@citizensrw.org) by 15th of March 2019. Please include your full name, email address, the title of your article and a short bio (max. 50 words) at the top of the first page. For submission guidelines, please click [HERE](#)

Submission Deadline: 15th March 2019

For further information, please contact: newsletter@citizensrw.org

Thank you for reading. Feel free to circulate!

CRW Editing Team

JOIN US! OUR VOICES UNITED BECOME STRONGER

Want to become our human rights activist?

Sign up on our website www.citizensrw.org

Want to write an article for our next newsletter?

Email us at newsletter@citizensrw.org

Want to initiate a campaign?

Contact us at info@citizensrw.org

Want to apply for an internship?

Apply at internships@citizensrw.org

Are you an NGO and want to collaborate with us?

Contact us at zoi@citizensrw.org

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT AND HELP!



CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

is an international human rights NGO which is comprised by human rights activists from around the globe. Citizens Rights Watch is utilising new technologies, and through online activism and digital advocacy, is raising awareness of human rights, focuses on educating the people about their rights & on inspiring citizens to become activists, while advocates through all media possible for citizens' rights internationally.

Join us by signing in our [Website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or connect with us on [Facebook](#), stay informed & take action with us!

Join our fights for human rights for all, everywhere & forever!

OUR VOICES UNITED BECOME STRONGER



[#JoinUs](#) [#StandUp4HumanRights](#) [#RaiseUrVoice](#) [#TakeAction](#) [#BeTheChange](#)

DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP AND BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER!



CRW's Mobile App, is developed as a first App of its kind, in order to offer a digital advocacy tool to every citizen around the globe with access to a mobile phone, to participate in evaluating their country of citizenship, their Civil Rights standards, and contribute in monitoring human rights protection. The system is programmed to auto calculate without bias or personal interests, and by using smart formulas to rank all countries based on citizens voting averages.

The App gives the chance to EVERY-BODY to participate without limitations..

Here are the downloadable links for both IOS and Android mobile phones..

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.citizensrw.crw>

IOS: <https://itunes.apple.com/ae/app/citizens-happiness/id1434380855?mt=8>



#DigitalTool #MobileApp #FreeDownload #CitizensHappinessApp #CRWapp

EDITING TEAM AND AUTHORS

Dr Zoi Aliozi,

Athanasia Zagorianou

Paul V. Dudman

Jack Frank Sigman

Devdeep Tyagi

Melissa Griffiths

Ismeni Kefala

Aseem Trivedi

Graphic Design [Ghada Mesmeh](#)

Cover image: [Ali Ferzat](#)

Photography: Jose Alonso

Samantha Sophia

Natanael Melchor

Robert Hickerson

Peter Hershey

Carl Sahley

Mayur Joshi

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



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CITIZENS RIGHTS PARTNERS

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

In solidarity!



#CRWpartners #Partners #WeSupport #Collaborations