

CITIZENS VOICES

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- 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

CITIZENS VOICES 13 – EDITORIAL

Dr. Zoi Aliozi

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

You are reading the 13th edition of Citizens Voices – a digital human rights magazine, created by the editorial team of [Citizens Rights Watch](#), and is freely accessible online. The main scope of this human rights magazine is to raise awareness of citizens' rights issues – while serving as an open platform available to all citizens as an advocacy tool. Any citizen around the world can become a human rights defender by simply raising your voice against injustices, and communicating these cases with the world through our online magazine [CITIZENS VOICES](#). Citizens Voices No. 13 is the 2nd volume of our triennial publication for 2019; and it includes articles on a variety of human rights issues, written by human rights advocates, activists, academics, lawyers, students, professors, artists, and concerned citizens from all walks of life from around the globe. You are all invited to put your pen in the service of human rights, and submit an article for the next Citizens Voices. You can find more information [here](#).

This editorial has been inspired by a recent [video](#) featuring the former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. You can access: **"I Will Not Stay Silent. Our Leaders Are Failing Human Rights"** through [this link](#)!

In this honest and much needed commentary, the former UN human rights chief, exposes



Former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini warns about the moral collapse of global leadership. The New York Times

the **truth of the human rights' world**, and shares it in an accessible and well-presented way with the world. The truth that human rights workers know well and choose to work towards positively changing, through small but steady steps of activism that hopefully lead to larger positive social changes. Allow me to point out that this is the same philosophy that motivates us, as human rights activists, here in Citizens Rights Watch.

What it is being highlighted through his confession, is the **obvious truth that our leaders are failing human rights**, due to the fact that they are incompetent, serve secret interests that are not in favor of citizens' rights or in most cases our political leaders are just "morally weak, shortsighted, and mediocre". By reflecting on what a former UN human rights chief has to say, I need to highlight the importance of civil society in bringing balance in this frame – a civil society

within which every human rights activist belongs and acts. In this naturally coming to the human condition 'blame game', we need to realize that civil society has an instrumental role to play, for example through monitoring the protection of human rights within the policies and strategies employed by our governments. However, this it is not an easy game of who has the blame, and by pointing the finger to our political leaders we escape responsibility. Because one could argue that the burden of this continuing failure to protect human rights, falls equally if not more on the shoulders of the UN's human rights chief as well! At the same time – as long as we live in basic democracies, with our basic citizens' rights protected and ensured, then the blame for the incompetent public servants falls on us as well, since it is us, the citizens of our countries, that we choose our leaders, and we give them power by voting for them. The discussion can go on and on, since one can argue for and against the power of voters, especially when one brings in the frame the propagandistic tools that politics employ for manipulating public opinion and for convincing citizens to actively support the political candidates that express better what the people of each geographical location want to hear. That can serve as the first side of the coin however the other side of the coin should be formed by other balancing powers and this is where citizens-activists, human rights groups, and civil society have a role to play.

For example, here in CRW, we focus on raising awareness of citizens' rights, through the dissemination of information, digital advocacy, and global projects of international activists. Our group of activists, serve many roles, but one of them is to monitor the protection of citizens' rights in a global scale, and creatively produce advocacy strategies by employing digital activism and mobilizing activists in different parts of our world. For instance, we have made available a mobile app which is destined to collect information directly from citizens ranking their own countries citizens' rights enjoyment.



This fun and interactive mobile app is easy to use and can succeed in providing a first glance to the protection of citizens' rights globally. You can access and download our mobile app 'Citizens Happiness' in Google Play [here for Android](#), or click [here for the Apple Store](#) IOS.

In the human rights world we focus on the rights discourse, and we tend to fail to articulate the duties that citizens ought to respect and fulfil. Duties, in reality coexist



in every citizen's right demand. In order to protect citizens rights and human rights, the "saviors" of the human rights idea need to promote and raise awareness of the duties of citizens as well, so that a balance can be achieved between rights and duties of citizens world-widely, and so that citizens' rights do not become empty vessels, that belong in fairy tales and utopic societies. It is as simple as that. It is the simple laws of nature that may be able to show us the way to create our world of justice, peace, equal opportunities, rule of law, and dignity. Following that train of thought, one could take the argument a bit further and argue that in many ways the focus of the human rights promoters on raising human rights awareness may be useless, if we do not invest time in educating all citizens of our duties within our societies, by keeping in mind the cultural relativism, religious customs, and respecting the historical background of each society.

Today, we are undoubtedly living in an unfair capitalist world that puts profit before people, full of social and economic paradoxes like extreme poverty next to extreme wealth, or stereotyping discriminations still going strong producing more injustices, and with climate change being denied for the shake of greedy interests. Reflecting on the former's UN human rights chief message, is obvious that we as the human family, we've learned too little from our common tragic bloodsheds, and dark history, since, instead of abolishing armed conflicts, weapons of mass destruction, rhetoric of hate, or of building walls to separate us, we are continuing walking in the same dead-end alleys in our journey for self-destruction, which will either happen through actions we took or allowed to happen – or by our failed omissions to act when was demanded, just like in the case of climate change.

As human rights defenders we have a duty to contribute in creating a culture of informed citizens, or of what here in Citizens Rights

Watch call citizens-activists. By definition a citizen has a duty to be active within hers or his political communities, to know her rights and stay informed of the issues that matter in our polities.

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, is right to restate the obvious: Trump and some Western leaders have become lax (hence, complicit) in not condemning human rights abuses, and in failing to deliver the protection of their citizens' rights, that their political role by definition is mandated to provide. Let me be clear however, that is one thing promoting and mobilizing in a neutral way citizens-activists, and is another to promote specific political theories or interests. However, we have reached consensus within the UN member States assembly that Democracy is the political structure that works best for a just society that respects human rights, protects the dignity of citizens and strives for their happiness.

Allow me to describe how the human rights



world is designed, in order to clarify the role of politics in the international protection of human rights. For example, human rights, are considered the child of politics with law. One could argue, that as soon as a human right is put on paper, then it automatically becomes a human right that everyone is entitled to. This should be the case in an ideal world, but it is not the reality we are faced with. Since even if the legal experts advocate for the inclusion of a right to the list of basic human rights,

then we will still need the political will to sign and ratify this law, and make it a law of their country, with the appropriate justice system to provide all the necessary mechanisms of law.

Take for example the climate change arena, which can represent what I am trying to point out in a better way.

So, the scientific community has produced reports that say that we need to act now, to save what we can from our planet and life on this planet. Then, human rights experts we came together and we reached agreement, that climate change is posing the worst violation of human rights that human beings have ever faced. We have the law, we have the justifications, we have the plans for action, but what we lack is the political will to make the radical changes that are required in order to make a real shift away from destroying our home. The interests, economically and politically speaking are so great, that they can delay the implementation of policies even if they are meant for the common good. The history of human kind on this planet is a story full of exploitation, violence, greed and stupidity, and sadly we continue repeating collectively the same mistakes of our past, by fueling conflicts, extreme ideologies, right-wing propaganda, and by building walls. It is not just our leaders that are failing human rights, it is all of us that we are failing human rights. Every last one of us that we are part of the same human family. The fact that we prefer to build walls rather than bridges says it all. Or the fact that we view the differences in our brothers and sisters as having negative burdens, or for example the fact that we still focus on our rights by silencing our duties.

The freedom that we are lucky enough to live within, or the illusion for that manufactured freedom in Europe, USA, and other self-proclaimed democratic geopolitically speaking regions, is more fragile than we can imagine.

In Citizens Rights Watch, we aim in raising awareness of human rights, collaborating and supporting human rights defenders all around the globe with the hope that the reason and justice will always prevail at the end. 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 mobile app, which can make the involvement of citizens more effective and direct. CRW offers a platform to human rights activists to highlight 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."

In solidarity,

Z.A.



CRW HUMAN RIGHTS OVERVIEW

Athanasia Zagorianou

CRW researcher & content editor of "Citizens Voices"



Myanmar: Rohingya Crisis

Rohingya people have been a target of discrimination and enormous human rights violations by Myanmar for years. Almost a million people have fled to Bangladesh to avoid violence and persecution (UN, 2019). Even though Rohingyas have been residing in the Rakhine state, Western of Myanmar, for generations, they have been denied their rights and Myanmar citizenship, facing constant violence, discrimination and persecution. Repatriation plans for Rohingya refugees have currently been halted with Rohingya people expressing fear and unwillingness to return. Despite the numerous allegations for genocide and crimes against humanity, little action has been taken by the government of Myanmar and the United Nations to end it.

As an independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, established by the Human Rights Council, noted in its 2018

report, "While Myanmar was repeatedly identified as a crisis situation requiring a human rights-driven response by the "whole of the United Nations", this approach was rarely, if ever, taken. Rather, many United Nations agencies have continued to prioritize development goals, humanitarian access and quiet diplomacy. That approach has demonstrably failed; and the United Nations as a whole has failed adequately to address human rights concerns in Myanmar". Please see the full report [here](#).

CRW urges the UN and the government of Myanmar to take immediate action for the protection of Rohingyas' rights.

#ProtectRohingya



Iran: Free Nasrin Sotoudeh

Human rights lawyer, Nasrin Sotoudeh was arrested in June 2018 and sentenced

to 38 years in prison and 148 lashes for campaigning for women's rights in Iran.

This is not the first time that Nasrin has been sentenced for fighting for human rights. In 2011, she served time for conspiracy and propaganda charges against the state. Nasrin has been often a target of threats due to her work on human rights as she noted when talking about her experiences (Tisdal, 2014).

"Worrying patterns of intimidation, arrest, prosecution, and ill-treatment of human rights defenders, lawyers, and labour rights activists signal an increasingly severe State response. [...] The prominent women human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh was reportedly convicted of charges relating to her work and could face a lengthy prison sentence." said [Javaid Rehman, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran at the UN human rights council in March](#) when Nasrin's case was first raised. If you'd like to help Nasrin, please sign the petition [here](#).

CRW calls the government of Iran to free Nasrin immediately and urges the UN to protect activists' rights!

#FreeNasrinSotoudeh



Venezuela Crisis

Venezuela has been facing an enormous socioeconomic and political crisis that has led the country to shortages in food, medicine and other basic necessities and a rise in crime and violence rates within the country (UN News, 2019).

The [crisis](#) first started in 2010 under President Chávez's "economic war" and escalated in 2015 under the presidency of Maduro (O'Grady, 2019). In 2016, the National Assembly declared a "health humanitarian crisis" which Maduro ignored by refusing to accept its very existence, leading further to blockages in any efforts for humanitarian aid.

In 2018, President Maduro who has been harshly criticised "for [grossly mismanaging the economy and plunging the country into](#)



a [deep humanitarian crisis](#)" was re-elected after calling for early presidential elections. In 2019, the National Assembly noted Maduro's reelection as invalid, declaring Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's acting president which was described as a coup attempt by Maduro suggesting the United States' involvement (Sanchez & Chavez, 2019). Russia, China, Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Cuba have supported the presidency of Maduro while the US, many Latin American countries and many European countries consider Guaidó as the legitimate president (Sanchez & Chavez, 2019).

In the meantime, the United Nations has reported that many have fled the country due to the massive scale of violence, crime and food and medical insecurity and shortages. "We estimate that the total number of Venezuelans outside the country will exceed 5 million by the end of the year," said Eduardo Stein, the Joint Special Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for Venezuelan refugees and migrants (UN News, 2019).

Earlier this May, [UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Marta Hurtado expressed concerns](#) over "excessive use of force security forces against demonstrators across Venezuela", urging "all sides to show maximum restraint and on the authorities to respect the right to peaceful assembly."

CRW calls for collective action to be taken, allowing humanitarian aid within the country and ensuring citizens' rights protection!

#VenezuelaCrisis



Philippines: Duterte's Drug War

On 30 June 2016, Rodrigo Duterte took office as President of the Philippines and almost immediately declared war on drugs. Since his inauguration, thousands have lost their lives over President Duterte's so called "war on drugs", raising global human rights concerns. In February 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened a [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).

In June 2018, during the 38th session of the UN Human Rights Council in a [joint statement 38](#) states called the government of the Philippines to give an end to war drugs' killings "and cooperate with the international community to investigate all related deaths and hold perpetrators accountable". In 2019, Philippines' officially withdrew from the ICC but in [her statement Fatou Bensouda](#), ICC prosecutor said that they can and will continue investigating into the situation despite Philippines' withdrawal.

"Pursuant to Article 127.2 of the Statute and based on prior ICC judicial ruling in the situation in Burundi, the Court retains its jurisdiction over crimes committed during the time in which the State was party to the

Statute and may exercise this jurisdiction even after the withdrawal becomes effective," [explained Ms. Bensouda](#).

Early in March 2019, [Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) raised again her concerns, emphasizing that "up to 27,000 people may have been killed in the context of the campaign against illegal drugs since mid-2016".

CRW urges the government of the Philippines and President Duterte to give an end to his so called "war on drugs" and protect citizens' rights.

#PhilippinesWarOnDrugs

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"DON'T GIVE ME MORE IDEAS, I'M TOO CREATIVE!": INTERVIEW WITH POET, ARTIST AND ACTIVIST SONIA QUINTERO.

The interview was conducted by Paul Dudman

CRW Activist & Researcher, Archivist at the University of East London,
Convenor of the Oral History Society Migration Special Interest Group

[#HUMANRIGHTS](#) [#SONIAQUINTERO](#) [#POETRY](#)

“The poet is a healer of this sick society; is a revolutionary that transforms suffering, loneliness and hurt into paper, brush and truth. For this reason, we write poetry, to repair our wounds.”

-Sonia Quintero.

The use of creative approaches to issues of reconciliation, dialogue and exploring ways of repairing our own wounds whilst taking a revolutionary stand against the heart of social injustice and human rights abuses are for many of us at the heart of what we would like to achieve through our own activism and work. For the artist, poet and activist Sonia Quintero, these core beliefs are represented throughout her artistic and poetic endeavours, reflected by her inclusion in two events during March and April 2019 on the themes of refuge and diasporic communities. The first, "Artistic and creative strategies/

methods in refugee projects," organised by UEL's Centre for Narrative Research and held at the University of East London's USS Campus in Stratford on Friday, 29th March, brought together a range of speakers to use artistic and creative methods to engage with refugee/migrant participants, and to help enable opportunities for the participants to creatively tell their stories about their past and present experiences, their journeys and their lives in the countries of settlement. Sonia's presentation on "Poetry creates bridges where people build walls" can provide opportunities to help validate diverse voices and establishes the foundation of a community, whilst how poetry as a creative practice helps to build up bridges between languages and borders.

The second event on Thursday 25th April, 2019, follows The truth, memory and reconciliation commission of Colombian women in the diaspora held the UK book launch for a new compilation of poetry reflecting on the experiences of Colombian women living in diasporic communities away



Image source: [A Medium Corporation](#)

from Colombia. The book, 'Poetic Memories of the Colombian Women in the Diaspora', has been designed as a tribute of women affected by the Colombian conflict and represents over five years for the truth, memory and reconciliation of Colombian women in the United Kingdom.

We are very excited and honoured to be able to discuss this book with one of the contributors, Sonia Quintero, with the and learn more about the background to this work and the importance of poetry in making a stand for social justice and, healing and reconciliation. Sonia Quintero is a Colombian poet, artist and photographer living in London. Sonia's art expresses her own passion for creativity through the mediums of sculpture, photography, drawing and poetry. Sonia is the founder of Newham Poetry Group and has experience of running poetry workshops with diverse communities in East London and beyond.

Sonia is an activist and has been an active member of DIASPORA WOMAN, for the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation of Colombian Women in the diaspora - UK, an initiative to empower women in the diaspora to become agents of change in the Colombian peace process and in their host countries. Issues of healing and reconciliation feature strongly in Sonia's art and poetry.

Sonia has published several books of poetry both in her native Spanish and in English. These include: Metaforas de dos mundos, Retazos (Spanish); Words are Not Enough (English) and Poetic Memories of Women in the Colombian Diaspora (just published in English and Spanish).

"The process of creating a poem not only demonstrates the inherent characteristics of the imaginative experience

but, when it is written and shared in a supportive group, validates diverse voices and establishes the foundation of a community."



Sonia Quintero and Paul Dudman

Questions

Sonia, you are a very inspirational character for everyone that knows you, what are your inspirations?

R: The easier answer would be; People. "Anonymous" people. Ones that in their anonymity, still work hard and with passion for the things they love. It is easier to do things when you have the support and recognition. And I feel privilege for having found in my path people who fight for the things they love, without any expectation. They are my inspiration. Colombia has so many anonymous heroes, amazing people who dream and work for a better place to live. Community leaders who work for equality and justice, they are my inspiration.

A lot of your poetry reflects your commitment to social issues, can poetry be the Trojan horse by which we are able to challenge social inequality?

R: I truly believe it! Words are powerful, and poetry gives voice and empowers people to say what has not been said yet. Poets, artists, creative minds, critical thinkers must occupy spaces and slip into this society to change the roots of inequality and intolerance. I love the metaphor of the Trojan Horse, because I can imagine a horse full of poets "invading" every single space, making people imagine a better world. I am a dreamer but I try to keep my ground. I know every single grain of sand is important.

The just published collection of poems, Poetic Memories of the Colombian Diaspora, includes some of your poems, and reflects your work with the Woman Diaspora for the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation of Colombian Women in London movement. How has the situation in your home country influenced your engagement with issues of healing and reconciliation?

R: The worse things in Colombia, and I guess around the world, is corruption, add it with indifference and you have a dangerous combination.

Colombia has been asleep for long time and there is now a great opportunity for us as a country to do things in a different way. There would be no peace if we still deny the right of everyone to know the truth about the different actors of the conflict and their responsibility of repair the victims of the conflict. The government has failed in their duty of protection of the social leaders. The founding of the Diaspora Woman for the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation of Colombian Women organisation responded to the need of give sense to the pain that we had all suffered.

We must use all forms of expression to heal the wounds that the conflict has left in all of us.

Your work has highlighted a very strong commitment to the local community, has re-connecting with the community you are based in always been important for you and is poetry a good way of encouraging communities to engage?

R: I am aware I cannot change the world, but I want to do all I can, from the bottom of my heart, to make the place I live in a better place for everyone. Newham is a very diverse borough, in terms of language, culture and so on. For me this is the best place to demonstrate that our differences make us stronger and wiser. Community is quite wide and subjective concept, I would prefer to think that my community is every single person I meet on the street, at the library, at the GP, at community's centres. Community for me is not only an abstract -academic concept, community is people.

Poetry helps us to see beyond us. Poetry humanises abstract concepts and help us see other alternatives, create new concepts and archetypes. Using poetry, or any other art expression, we start from questioning your own narrow mind and then by opening our mind, we open the mind of the people around us.

What was your inspiration for founding the Newham Poetry Group and who do you feel it has inspired local people?

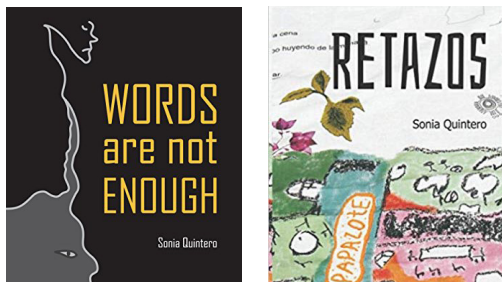
R: One day, I decided to stop complaining about life and create what I couldn't before. I love poetry and wanted a place where people can freely express themselves without judgement. I didn't want a school model, just wanted to express myself without the limitation that a second language can impose to you. So, I created what I wanted for me. Everyone with a talent is welcome in the

group, everyone with a unique understanding of what poetry is. Even a sentence or a single word is appreciated because it comes from their heart. I encourage people in the group to not just follow my instructions but their hearts. You don't inspire free-creative thinkers by asking them to blindly follow you.

I hope the group has inspired many people not only to write poems but also create connections between them. I personally find inspiration from every single person in the group. Sometimes, when I see them write, talk and share, I feel so touched. The group is a great reflection of Newham's different ages, backgrounds, languages, memories, stories...

Writing poetry in a new language. Sonia, you have published your poetry both in your native Spanish and in English, what has been your experience of writing in a new language and how has this influenced your poetry?

R: Writing in English has been such a weird experience. I still remember the first poem



I wrote in English. I wrote it and looked the paper and I was so surprised, like... "wow this is me", ... the other me. However, it has also been liberating and has helped me a lot with my confidence. It also made me questioning "who am I", and the role of language in shaping my identity. It is a permanent inner-battle. I am still in that process where the "Spanish speaker poet" doesn't want to recognise the "English speaker poet" ...

emotions are difficult to express in other languages and there is sadness when one realises that words maybe will never be enough.

The poems in Words are Not Enough seem to reflect a very personal reflective journey for you? How would define the power of poetry within your experience?

R: Each poem in that book speaks about an experience or person in the poetry group. The poems are my answer or reflection about something/someone in the group. All these experiences would be stuck in my breast if poetry wouldn't help me to express them. Since these experiences occurred in an English setting, they come to me in English naturally, I didn't translate them, they just emerged. These stories emerged from my life experiences in the UK, narrating how I dealt with them emotionally...I can't imagine writing about it in Spanish. This is a part of me that belongs to this place, the poems belong here. This is where the power of this experience lies... the liberation of talking about something that in any other way would suffocate me.

Does the work of organisations like the Poetry Translation Centre offer opportunities for poets whose native language is not English to be published and have their voices heard?

R: Translating poetry is huge! We must not only have a good knowledge of the languages but also the sensitivity of a poet. I think what Poetry Translation Centre is doing is massive. Poetry is not only what western society knows about. Syrian poetry, American native communities' poetry, Siberian, African poetry... We all use words in different ways and the poetry translation centre gives us a closer view of the different perspectives.

In addition to all of this, you have been studying Psychosocial Theory and Practice at the University of East

London and this has led to opportunities to engage with refugees and asylum seekers on the UEL OLIVE course and create a University-based poetry group focusing on archival collections. How have you responded to these new opportunities?

R: To have the opportunity to lead a poetry session with the OLIVE course has been one of the main highlights of my university experience. It is not only for the talent that people have, but being honoured to be able to hold a space for them. I have been touched from participants' trust and open hearts.

I have the opportunity to learn a lot from both my tutors and the people I have been lucky enough to work with. Every session at OLIVE makes me feel inspired to continue working for a better place for all. I want to touch as many hearts as I can. I don't want to forget that there are still many things to improve in our society, many people who still need a hand to hold.

Does poetry have a role in supporting human rights and citizen rights both locally and internationally?

R: I would not say that poetry has a role but poets do have one. It is the hand that holds the pen that can make a difference. We all have a role in supporting human rights, not only a role but a responsibility. We need as many hands as we can ... poets, writers, journalists, nurses, farmers, teachers, community leaders, drivers, and so on... I express my support to human rights through poetry, by inspiring people to think for themselves, encouraging them to question society and empower them to build a better one. I want to think that we all are in the same boat when supporting human rights, the hands of the farmer are as important as the hands of a writer.

What advice would you give to young

people who are interested in poetry and who may be inspired by your story and wish to follow your footsteps?

R: I would advise them to find and follow their passion. Our society pushes us towards being competitive with each other, consume more and more. We shouldn't let competition and money drive us. Be creative, dream a better society for all, not for few, a society where we can all have the same rights, without distinction.

Thank you so much Sonia for such an amazing, thoughtful and reflective interview for Citizens' Voices. For established and inspiring poets and anyone reading this who is interested in helping and supporting the work and activities of Newham Poetry Group's work and activities, who should we contact?

R: Thanks. I am currently working on the next project, aiming to set up a "Poetry Café" at Stratford park. We first need to refurbish the building in the middle of the park, it would be the first Poetry Café at Newham, a place where everyone is welcome... poetry workshops, poetry reading, spoken word and open mic. The refurbishing of the place has been funded by Pocket Parks Plus and I am a stakeholder. So, I am now in the process of looking for human and financial support for the project.

If you want to know more about, please email me or follow us at:

www.soniaquintero.co.uk
@sonesquin at Instagram, Twitter

www.newhampotrygroup.com
@NewhamPoetryGrp at Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COLLECTIVE RIGHT TO PROPERTY WHEN PROTECTING THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Johanna E. Villegas
Ecuadorian Human Rights Lawyer

[#HUMANRIGHTS](#) [#RIGHTTOPROPERTY](#) [#PROTECTION](#)

At the national and international level, it has been recognized that the indigenous peoples are subject to collective rights. This means that they are not protected merely as individuals, but also as members of communities with which they share particular values, traditions, backgrounds, and ways of life connected to geographical areas and territories. In this sense, authors such as Dwight G. Newman define the collective rights as those which are "held by indigenous groups per se rather than by individuals".

The "recognition of the fact that individual rights cannot be realized unless groups hold collective rights" derives from the notion that humans are social beings that belong to certain groups and communities. In the case of indigenous peoples, the collective rights gain more importance because the individual universal rights have not been enough to ensure their economic, social and cultural needs. For these reasons, it has been recognized that the indigenous and tribal peoples are holders of collective rights.

Certainly, the right to property is a great example to understand the relationship between individual rights and collective rights when indigenous and tribal communities are involved. Currently, it is well known that this right has a double dimension. On one hand, there is a traditional individual understanding of this right. On the other hand, there is a communal approach that "includes, among others, the rights of members of the indigenous communities within the framework of communal property". In this line, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has analyzed the right to property in a broad sense. Within the Inter-American System, the Court has insisted on the importance to protect the indigenous right to collective property being conscious that among the indigenous groups "there is a communitarian tradition regarding a communal form of collective property of the land, in the sense that ownership of the land is not centered on an individual but rather on the group and its community". Likewise, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has recognized that a "key characteristic for most [indigenous peoples] is that the survival



of their particular way of life depends on access and rights to their traditional lands and the natural resources thereon". From those international standards, it can be understood that the indigenous' collective right to property is related to their economic, social and cultural rights. The access and enjoyment of their collective land and natural resources are closely linked to their cultural, social and economic survival.

International organizations such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has recognized that the analysis of the property right has to take into consideration the social, economic and cultural particularities of these communities. The Court concluded that for the indigenous peoples the "lack of their traditional lands" and therefore, the violation of their right to property, affects their "cultural characteristics and practices". By recognizing the special relationship that these communities have with their territories and their cultural heritage the Court has accepted the importance of the collective property in the protection of the indigenous and tribal

peoples' right to enjoy culture. According to the Court, to guarantee "the right of indigenous peoples to communal property, it is necessary to take into account that the land is closely linked to their oral expressions and traditions, their customs and languages, their arts and rituals, their knowledge and practices in connection with nature, culinary art, customary law, dress, philosophy, and values".

In addition, in the Case of the Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku v. Ecuador the Inter-American Court linked the indigenous rights to collective property and natural resources with the right to health. The decision clearly explained how the violation of the right to property put these peoples in "poor or inhuman living conditions and increase the vulnerability to diseases and epidemics" generating conditions of extreme "vulnerability that can lead to the violation of various human rights".

In the same line, when analyzing the right to property and its relationship with the economic, social and cultural rights, the African Commission has gone beyond the Inter-American Court. This body has openly recognized that the right to property is by itself an economic, social and cultural right enshrined in the African Charter. The Commission has held that the right to property protects the individuals and peoples' right to possess material things as well as any "right which may be part of a person's patrimony. The concept [even] includes the protection of a legitimate expectation of the acquisition of property".

This wide understanding of the right to property has been used by the Commission to analyze some economic, social and cultural rights within the scope of article 14 of the African Charter. For instance, in the Case of The Social and Economic Rights Action Center and the Center for Economic and Social Rights v. Nigeria, better known as Ogoni case, the African Commission considered that the removal of people from "their homes violates Article 14 of the African Charter, as well as the right to adequate housing which, although not explicitly expressed in the African Charter, is also guaranteed by Article 14". To reach this conclusion the Commission has recognized that all human rights are interdependent and interconnected. This case analyzes the right to housing and shelter as part of the right to property, in combination with the article 16 of the same treaty which talks about the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health. Furthermore, when deciding the Case of Endorois v. Kenya, the Commission has considered the unique relationship between the right to collective property and the cultural rights of the indigenous communities. It has recognized that the indigenous peoples have a special relationship with their lands which is essential to maintain their traditions and background. The African Commission concluded that the "Lake Bogoria and

the Monchongoi Forest are central to the Endorois' way of life and without access to their ancestral land, the Endorois are unable to fully exercise their cultural and religious rights and feel disconnected from their land and ancestors".

In summary, when indigenous peoples are involved, an effective exercise of their collective right to property is a precondition to exercise other social, economic and cultural rights. In words of Ariel Dulitzky, it is important to understand the special connection between "territory and indigenous people in which this particular connectivity with the territory is precisely what gives rise to their legal recognition of property rights" and what justifies its relationship with the indigenous economic, social and cultural rights.

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CALL ON THE UN TO RECOGNIZE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MATERNAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS

SIGN THE PETITION

Sign the petition calling on UN Secretary General António Guterres to officially recognize April 11 as the International Day for Maternal Health and Rights. Together we can make comprehensive, respectful, and rights-based maternal health care available to all.



#VOLSECARCHIVES: HUMAN RIGHTS IN RECORDS AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR ARCHIVES

Paul V. Dudman

Archivist at the University of East London

[#HUMANRIGHTS](#)

[#CULTURALHERITAGE](#)

[#REFUGEES](#)



"Getting my records has filled in blanks as I had lived a life of non-existence, I had nothing of my past, nothing was there, it was empty.' (Brewis, 2017)." Voluntary sector archives are at risk' has been one of the key rallying cries of the [Campaign for Voluntary Sector Archives \(CVSA\)](#)) since its launch in October 2012. CVSA sought to bring together archivists, custodians, academics, researchers, and those with an experience of working in the voluntary sector to help not only raise

awareness of the importance of voluntary sector archives but also explore methods to help better ensure their continued survival, preservation and access. The Campaign highlighted the importance of these archives for supporting a range of activities including supporting good governance and regulatory compliance within third sector organisations; supporting the preservation of institutional corporate memory and identity; and for research. The Campaign also highlighted

the wider role these archives can play in supporting institutional engagement with wider society and the importance of such records in helping to preserve the wider societal cultural heritage, and for individual access to such records to support their own human and citizen rights. For many, this was a needed intervention on issues of voluntary sector archives as "there is still a long way to go before all voluntary organisations are convinced not only of the value of records to the current mission, but also of the value of making these accessible to researcher." (Brewis, 2012)

Here at the [University of East London \(UEL\)](#)) we have been working with the archives of voluntary sector organisations since the inception of our archive service back in November 2002. This has involved working both in collaboration with ongoing voluntary sector organisations to help support their recordkeeping functions by providing a home for their archival collections whilst also taking on responsibility for archival collections from organisations which sadly no longer exist. From our growing archival collections from refugee/migration voluntary organisations with the archives of the [Refugee Council](#) and related organisations to supporting British Olympic history through the archive of the

[British Olympic Association](#), the archives of voluntary organisation are vital to the inclusion of the voice of voluntary action.

This has been reinforced through the attendance at a recent conference hosted by the British Academy on "Voluntary organisations' archives and records: Why do they matter?" organised by colleagues from the [Digitising the Mixed Economy of Welfare in Britain](#) project. This conference brought together voluntary sector professionals, researchers, academics and archivists to discuss the importance of and the key issues around the preservation and access to voluntary sector archives. The conference sought to explore the role of voluntary sector organisations in the mixed economy of welfare in Britain and to seek to digitise key archival documents to make them accessible through an online portal.

The conference highlighted several key questions in relation to the archives of voluntary sector organisations. These included the impact and challenges of austerity on voluntary sector archives; how can archives of voluntary sector organisations be utilised to

support the current work of the organisation; and how can the records of small and non-traditional organisations be preserved for the future? (Wilkins, 2019). From a personal perspective, we have had experience of the challenges of looking to preserve the records of organisations involved in the provision of services within the refugee and migration sphere, and it is through articles like this one and conferences on these topics that we hope to raise awareness of the importance of these archives. It was a question I discussed with a colleague over lunch break, whilst many of those who attended the conference were already aware of the issues surrounding voluntary sector archives, how do we as archival professionals and researchers, reach out and engage with those voluntary sector organisations that were not in attendance or for whom the importance and relevance of the records they may have had yet to be fully realised or understood.

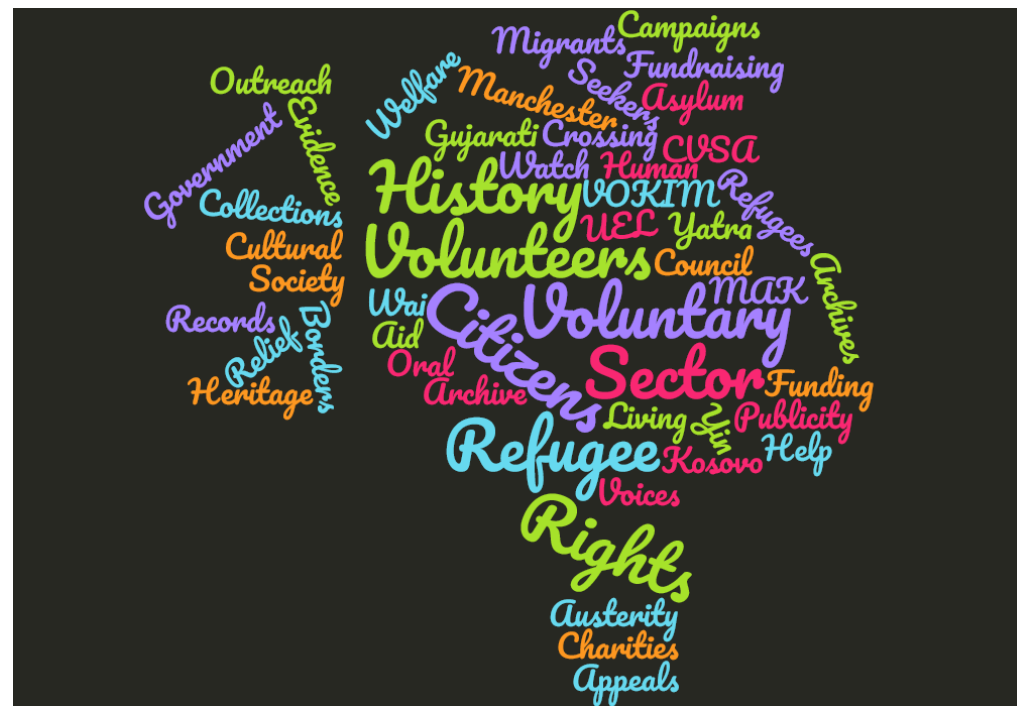
Through the projects and conferences mentioned in this article, several key pointers for voluntary sector organisations have been highlighted in relation to their records. Firstly, what does the voluntary sector organisation know about its archives? Does the voluntary sector organisation have an archive or a collection of records that could become an archive? What information do the records contain and are they well looked after, or gathering dust in a cupboard or basement? Does the institution know what to do with these records?

What are the barriers and challenges that organisations face with the managing of their records? This could cover issues of funding, staff resources; a focus on front-line service provision or a general lack of awareness around the importance of these records. Two of the biggest challenges to voluntary sector organisations in recent years followed the impact of austerity measures following the financial crisis of 2007-8 and the impact of government policy around

the new [Big Society](#) ideology introduced by the Conservative government of David Cameron, which “envisaged a recalibration of the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector.” (‘Political discourses’, 2017). This recalibration would see the voluntary sector organisations take on more responsibility for social welfare provision as state run public services were reduced whilst at the same time experiencing cuts to their own budgets, deal with increasing demand for their services and having to compete with profit-making companies for a share of any funding that was available. This led many social welfare organisations subsequently becoming financially dependent on government funding for their continued survival, leading to restructuring or mergers in some cases or some voluntary sector organisations being forced to fold altogether. With more recent changes to the provision of welfare services in the UK, with changes to both the funding and provisioning of welfare services, “the boundaries between the state and the voluntary sector are being renegotiated, to the extent that some have called it ‘a revolutionary moment.’” (olie7999, 2019)

What are the opportunities? Information located with archives of voluntary sector organisations can be used to stimulate discussion and help inform the current work of the organisation; create new publicity and outreach materials as well as supporting the organisation’s corporate identity. Archives can also be used to help demonstrate an organisation’s impact over time on a theme or community as well as their ongoing commitment to their chosen mission. Voluntary sector archives can also be used to support institutional governance and legal responsibilities.

“Above all, records are a vital asset for an organisation: they demonstrate decision-making and good governance; provide crucial evidence of past successes, learning and



impact; capture an organisation’s identity; and they can be used to demonstrate why an organisation should be valued. In a climate where trust, reputation and risk are increasingly pertinent issues, archives hold a wealth of material which organisations can use to confront present-day challenges.” (Clements, 2017)

The importance and value of the records held by voluntary sector organisations have the power to enable access to a range of narratives and points of view, different perspectives, and the opportunity to allow different voices to be heard within the archive.

Everyone has a voice and archives can be the vehicle on which these voices can be documented, preserved and made available as a corpus of materials on which future histories can be written and different communities to be heard and listened, too. However, part of the CVSA campaign has been to encourage voluntary sector organisations to enable access to their collections for study and research. As Brewis argues, there is often “a range of practice from organisations which ignore or refuse requests for access with varying degrees of politeness to those that welcome you with open arms and let you sit unsupervised with the charity’s papers, free to copy, remove, deface or pour coffee all over the institutional record.” (2012).

Archives have a vital role to play in terms of supporting both human and citizen rights, a





place where both the “official” narratives but also counter-narratives produced through activism and civic society engagement can be stored, documented and made accessible. Archives at their very heart are a collection of stories, narratives which have been developed either by organisations or individuals in the course their daily lives and work. Voluntary sector archives can help provide a counter-narrative to both official and media discourses we are sold on a daily basis, voluntary sector and community archives should be reactive to documenting the voices of the everyman, the activist on the street, the community organisation, the charity, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) and of course local communities, plural as any community is made up of a myriad of different voices. Archives can be representative of individual and collective memory, the history of the present that we want to preserve for the future generations, to tell the future of our struggles today and our hopes for the

future. Without our active engagement, these counter-narratives to those presented by governments and the media will be lost. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project on the Discourses of Voluntary Action will attempt to explore some of these issues through the examination of “discourses and narratives on the place of the voluntary sector in welfare service provision in the 1940’s and 2010s.” (‘Voluntary sector discourses’, 2017). This project will look to examine political, public and official discourses at two key points in the history of welfare provision in Britain and looking to tease out the relationships and interplays between the official, voluntary and personal narrative of welfare provision.

Voluntary sector archives as cultural heritage. Voluntary sector archives can play a very important role in documenting an organisation’s role and engagement within society. Without these archives, “histories and identities of voluntary sector groups, their

past and their role and importance may be lost in wider and public understanding [of] what welfare is” (Clements, 2015). Voluntary sector organisations are often the public face of personal interaction with the welfare system and therefore have a significant cultural heritage attached to them. At the Voluntary organisations’ archives and records conference, Tanya Muneera Williams from the Everyday Muslim project argued that “if people don’t see themselves represented in the past, they don’t feel like they have a place.” (Wilkins, 2019). This highlights the cultural heritage role that voluntary sector archives can play in supporting the inclusion of more diverse voices in our archival collections and helping to address the question of “whose histories are represented in our archives?” (Wilkins, 2019)

From our own perspective working within the field of voluntary sector support to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, I see our role now as being to support the collection and documentation of materials, in all formats, which can help to preserve the often hidden and under-represented voices of the refugee and migrant experience, as well as supporting the preservation of the voices of the voluntary sector organisations which have for so long been at the front line of working with refugees and asylums seekers in this country. We are still actively collecting materials and we are exploring ways in which we can preserve and make accessible life history narratives and stories of the migration journey. We have been fortunate to be able to engage and collaborate with both academic and external colleagues to explore new mediums of expression, whether this be poetry and creative writing; zines; photography; embroidery workshops; cartoons; graphic novels and oral history, we continue to look for new ways in which we can engage and new partnerships and connections with and beyond the academy. We are currently working with the UK Oral History Society on a [Migration Special Interest Group](#), which has

already enabled the interaction with two oral history projects and new deposits of material at the Archive. We also have the [Voices of Kosovo in Manchester \(VOKIM\)](#) oral history project produced by the [Manchester Aid to Kosovo](#) charity with the aim of recording the voices and testimonies of the Kosovar community in Manchester. [Gujarati Yatra](#) was an exhibition at the [Museum of Croydon](#) inspired by the Croydon-based [Subrang Arts](#) which told the story of individuals and communities who made the journey from their homeland in Gujarat on the west coast of India, first to Africa and then on to Britain and other countries in the West. The term ‘Yatra’ is an ancient word in Sanskrit meaning journey and the aim of the project was to facilitate the collection of stories to help ‘reveal the art, language and literature, food and religion of the Gujarati people and how these were preserved and adapted in different cultures.’ (Gujarati-Yatra, no date)

We are also working with the [Wai Yin Society](#) in Manchester on an oral history project called ‘Crossing the Borders’ focusing on the life stories of older Chinese people whose voices are often left unheard. ‘The project will focus on first generation Chinese immigrant who came over to the U.K. from China, Hong Kong, Macau, Vietnam and Malaysia,’ (Steele, 2018) and their experiences of living under different political regimes, stories of their physical journeys to a new home and subsequent settlement and adaptation to lives in a new city. The Wai Yin Society has been working to support the Chinese community in Manchester for almost thirty years and stories collected through this project will be broadcast in a radio series on [All FM Radio](#) (in Manchester) and compiled into a book. Curated documentation from the Crossing the Border project will be preserved as a permanent public research open for research at the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Resource Centre at



Manchester Public Library and with us in the Refugee Council Archive at the University of East London.

The importance of this project is noted by Wai Yin Society volunteer Wai Yeung: "With the current and next generations of Chinese people being born in the UK, a lot of Chinese heritage and history is not being passed on and preserved by parents or grandparents, even some languages or dialects are lost. This project funded and supported by the Heritage Lottery is ever more important to preserve the culture and heritage of these individuals." (Steel, 2018).

In conclusion, I hope it gives an insight into the importance of voluntary sector archives in documenting issues of both citizen and human rights. Records of both individuals and organisations can play a vital role in helping to document human rights issues both in authenticating their existence whilst also ensuring that records of campaigns, activities and support are documented and preserved to enable these often counter-narratives to be preserved and their voices to be heard. For many, "the preservation of these archives is a matter of democracy: they are a vital record of the role of civic society, past and present. We cannot understand or protect democracy without recourse to the knowledge and memory contained [with]in the archives of these organisations." (Clements, 2017)

For anyone wishing to learn more about these issues, or about refugee archives in particular, please do contact me for further information.

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PETITION TO IMPLEMENT THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

SIGN THE PETITION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the fundamental and international agreement on what human rights are, and so must be known and applied throughout the world. Make your voice heard. Make human rights education in schools and universities part of the curriculum. You can ensure human rights are learned and demanded by everyone, by signing this petition.





HELP TO FREE NASRIN SOTOUDEH

Nasrin Sotoudeh, lawyer, human and Women's rights activist has been given a new sentence; according to her husband, Reza Khandan, she was given 33 years in prison and 148 lashes.

SIGN THE PETITION

Image source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)

WHY SHOULD YOU SIGN?

Nasrin Sotoudeh has been representing opposition activist and most recently defending women prosecuted for removing their headscarf, which was known in Iran as "the girls of revolution street." She was arrested in June 2018 under charge of insulting the Supreme Leader (Ali Khamenei), propaganda against Islamic Republic of Iran.

[#HUMANRIGHTS](#)

[#PETITION](#)

[#SOTOUDEH](#)

CAN INDIA GET TO THE BOTTOM OF ITS LATEST BURNING QUESTION?

Dev Tyagi

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

[#HUMANRIGHTS](#)

[#INDIA](#)

[#JUSTICE](#)



Image source: [DNA India](#)

For For a country that happens to be the biggest democracy in the world, it must come as a shock to face the reality of its failed justice system by its own public servants. So, how much of a shock is to note that its so-called first pillar -Justice- has been rocked? And that, by a figure of eminence: someone who was entrusted with the task to uphold and protect this system in the first place, was sadly the one that sabotaged it.

If you happen to be informed about India and an event that has rocked its judiciary's cradle, then you may have heard about the saga surrounding Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mr. Ranjan Gogoi.

Have you?
So, first things first!

Mr. Ranjan Gogoi, 64, from Dibrugarh, Assam happens to be the first gentleman hailing from the northeast to be appointed as the chief justice of the honorable Supreme Court of India.

The Northeast part of India -for those who may not be aware- is identified as a cluster known as the seven-'sisterly' states of India. This besides being a land replete with cultural diversity, vivid culinary specialties; a land filled with abundance of social-entrepreneurship talent, tea plantations, and a part of India's that's about as enchantingly beautiful as it is enterprising.

Apart from housing several UNESCO-heritage sites, being an earnest abode of varied wildlife, the northeast is a major driver of tourism in India, both from a global standpoint and for intra-state travel.

So, when someone of the class and stature of Ranjan Gogoi, -the 46th current Chief Justice of India- s appointed, it was understandable that this was massive news for the country and especially for the land he hails from.

And therefore, it's not tough to gauge why this was not a small feat; and above that, certainly not an easy responsibility to carry either.

Isn't it?



So when a serious charge was leveled against the sitting Chief Justice of a country whose economic robustness has given it a global identity, hitherto restricted to just being a 'tiger' economy of Asia- reactions came in from both business and social circles and pretty much every corner of the society that treat the Supreme Court with massive respect.

So, here's what happened.

Charged with sexually molesting a woman, it's highly ironic as well as moronic- well, the adjectives can increase and differ depending on who you are and how you perceive the controversy- that a person who's to protect the dignity of women and protect India from any form of injustice is being accused of doing just the opposite.

The above told, to quote the venerable Human Rights Journal, Human Rights Watch on the aforementioned, it's worthwhile to note the following:

On April 19, a former junior assistant to Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi filed a complaint with 22 supreme court justices, accusing him of sexually harassing her in 2018. In response, Justice Gogoi convened an urgent three-judge bench on April 20 to hear the matter without notifying her. Justice Gogoi also personally presided over the hearing, reframing the complaint as an attack on judicial independence and rejecting the allegations that pointed to him as the culprit.

To add to the above, what is needed now and 'must' happen is a proper, unbiased, just judicious investigation to establish such an episode actually happened or not. Having said that, if it all it did occur, then, the poor woman- who was working in the office of the CGI- has already lost her credibility and social standing and of course, the mental turmoil that goes without saying.

But if not, then India will witness a voyage through a hell-hole, having subjected its CGI to a situation wherein one outcries, "I can no longer stand the travesty of justice."

Imagine, wouldn't that be a shame?

Now, what remains to be unfurled could be anything, quite literally speaking. One may see the man holding the highest-possible office of judiciary; importantly this being the first pillar of democracy, being stripped off his post and being subjected to a rigorous punishment, whatever's commensurate in lines with the crime, if proven.

Or, it could also be that in a country no stranger to acts of deceit and corruption, another one bites the dust.

This, it must be reminded is an India- the land of eminent personalities such as a Tagore, Gandhi, Bose, Saradar Patel, Tilak, Laxmi Bai- where heinous figures have done their bit to malign what's effectively a hotbed of culture- Yoga, Ayurveda et cetera notwithstanding.

Wondering who? Well, why would anyone want to run out of paper?

But what's important is that India must strive to get to the bottom of the saga in which Mr. Gogoi currently finds himself daggers drawn.

Here in India, as seen in the recent times, controversies surrounding the Coal Scam, CBI-versus-CBI saga (Central Bureau of Investigation), Augustawestland Chopper deal (where a former Air Chief of the Country, someone who fought 2 wars for his nation was sent to the Tihar in Delhi, along with his cousin on mere hearsay and allegations which, to this day, 6 years into rigorous investigation, haven't yet been proven- despite the Italian court exonerating the charges against a man who took the Indian Air Force to great heights) and Rafale have already rocked the foundation and the morale of the common public.

Above said, don't we think that the time has come to separate the myth from the lie; i.e., understanding a double-edged sword that could be both- wild allegations that confront a perpetrator and genuine angst leveled against one?

Because one feels that it is about time that the Dracula of injustice is brought out in the light. And hey, can we not have media trails anymore please? Let the nation know the course of the truth. To conclude, the ball now lies in the legal eagles' court.



AN INSIDE MESSAGE FROM A VENEZUELAN CITIZEN

#HUMANRIGHTS

#VENEZUELA



Our friend and Venezuelan source lives about 400km from the capital city of Venezuela (CARACAS).

"Greetings from these lands to all! (Venezuela). The least I want to do is to bother your daily activities, but it's important that you –those outside of Venezuela- know what is going on here. We already have endured a month with terrible power cuts here where I live; such cuts are between 8 and 12 hours each day and occur in two separate periods... Whenever there is electrical power, tension is below or above the electrical norms of what it should be and it has many unstable peaks. This has affected the water supply, which almost does not arrive; and the little that does get through does not seem to be completely potabilized.

Police, National Guard or any this public enforcement represses and oppresses common citizens, there are several cases that have been made public of murders, kidnappings and robberies, where the – believed to be- guilty ones, always affectionate and close to the Government, are not even judged, while the others persecute us for simply expressing our rejection in some public way.

The government knew that people would flee out of here and were not able conceal to the high numbers of people fleeing the country, so the public identification agencies and registries, have done even the unimaginable, by blocking the access of ordinary citizens to passports and identifications, as well as the process of apostilling –legalizing- foreign and

local documents. I myself am still anchored here waiting for my children's passports. And I know they'll finally come out when my passport and my wife's are expired.

My country is transformed; dark streets, old and deteriorated cars, houses without paint, and where it was not common, no supply of light bulbs and appliances, air conditioning and refrigerators are damaged. Where people have been wearing the same clothes for years and it is already noticeable, especially because now they are much looser, I myself have lost about 6 or 7 kg in the last 4 months ... Fortunately that sacrifice keeps the children healthy and well fed, but this is the exception not the rule...

Again excuse me for bothering you with these things. You are always loved and remembered by me in these times. With affection and care..."

This message was sent to an international group of South-American friends, on a non-disclosed messenger application. Miguel Rodriguez, who is proud a member of Citizens Rights Watch, happens to be in that group.

April 30, 2019

CONSERVATIONISTS FACE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN IRAN

Voice your deep concern about the capital offence charge against renowned Iranian nature conservationists. Urge the Iranian government to provide the detainees with the opportunity of a fair trial by adding your name to this Care2 petition!

On January 24 and 25, 2018, Iran security forces arrested eight nature conservationists - all members of environmental group, the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation. The group has been accused of using camera traps—intended for monitoring rare Asiatic cheetahs and other endangered wildlife—to spy on the nation's ballistic missile program.

SIGN THE PETITION



Image source: anyhopefornature.wordpress.com

CRW
CITIZENS RIGHTS
WATCH



SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE IN A WEEK

Melissa Griffiths

[#HUMANRIGHTS](#) [#INTERNATIONALWOMENSDAY](#) [#IWD](#) [#IWD2019](#) [#LGBTI_AU](#)

Life can sometimes be a whirlwind but when you are in one it doesn't quite seem that way. This was the case over the last month since getting my Australia Day Award. Preparing to speak at RMIT School of Accounting on International Women's Day (IWD) eve on 7 March this year was a challenging and interesting task. Stepping back a bit, when I started researching for the keynote speech, I realised that there is a mountain of information about gender diversity and policy on this. I concentrated on some key studies because I knew that to do otherwise would be too time consuming and may dilute the content.

As well as working on my keynote speech for IWD, I was also in the process of finalising my attendance at the Australian LGBTI Awards dinner in Sydney on March 1. It would be my first time attending these awards and attending as a finalist in the LGBTI Hero Award category. I also managed to arrange to participate in the Trans Pride Allies float for the Mardi Gras. The Annual Mardi Gras is held the day after the Australian LGBTI Awards on Saturday night which is a celebration of LGBTIQI community.

I found myself focusing strongly on finishing and tweaking my keynote in the weeks leading up to March 1st. I managed to do this, so I could re-focus for the weekend away in Sydney for the awards and the Mardi Gras. Whilst I was looking forward to attending the

awards, I was also conscious of putting my best foot forward there. I settled on wearing a red dress with matching red heels for the awards night dinner a few weeks before going to Sydney. Everyone loves a lady in red. You



can imagine on the day heading up to Sydney from Melbourne that it was quite a long and nerve-racking day having to wait till that evening to find out if you have won an award or not. Whilst waiting at the airport I posted on social media a photo of me for all of my

friends and people who have supported me over the last few years and also voted for me to win the LGBTI Hero Award. I thought this was the least I could do to return their support.

where I managed to catch up with a friend beforehand.

Then the time finally arrived for me to arrive and have photos taken on the red carpet. Imagine the bright lights, an army of photographers there to greet you as you stroll onto the red carpet and pose for the media. A moment to shine brightly whilst soaking up all the attention, and glamour of it all. Then off to pre-dinner drinks to meet some of the other finalists some of who I knew and relax before dinner and the award ceremony. I enjoyed the champagne and mingling with other guests as well as finalists and catching up with a good friend of mine Alex Blackwell former vice-captain of the Australian Women's Cricket team and now on the board of New South Wales Cricket.

As the night progressed, we moved onto dinner and the awards themselves where I was lucky enough to be seated at Star Entertainment Group's table for the awards right at the front near the stage. The prawn entrée with wasabi sauce was scrumptious followed by the salmon which was moist and cooked to perfection. I sat there only having the odd glass of wine and avoiding the glass of tequila next to me in case I had to make a speech later on. Imagine winning an award and all you can say is "Thank you" because the

Later that day, after arriving in Sydney, I couldn't but help wonder how the night would turn out and how I would react if I won the award, I was finalist for. Only time would tell. I headed off to the venue for the awards dinner at Star Entertainment Centre

tequila and bubbles have gone to your head. This would not have been a good look.

As other awards were announced I sat at my table chatting away but still nervously awaiting the outcome of my award category, so I could relax afterwards whatever the outcome was. Finally, my award category was up, and they announced all the finalists including me and there was a loud cheer at my table when my name was announced as one of them. And then there is the brief, spine-tingling moment when I was waiting with bated breath for the winner to be announced. Silence, the envelope with the winner's name is opened and announced..... The winner of this year's LGBTI Hero Award is Georgie Stone. A moment of disappointment then the realisation hits you that it is an honour to even be a finalist.

Now I could relax and enjoy the rest of the night, letting my hair down and partying on to the wee early hours of the morning. After dinner and awards finished, we headed to the after-party where in true Aussie style Espresso Martini Cocktails were served and then to Star Casino to finish off the night with a nice cold beer before heading off to bed at 2:34am in the morning.

I believe that we all can be heroes creating positive change in the world by simply talking to people and sharing our story. You can never underestimate the power of your story and how it can change lives. If we all shared our story and unleashed our inner hero, then imagine how much better the world would be.



The next day was just recovering, getting back to reality and preparing for the Mardi Gras. Off to meet the other people in Trans Pride Allies float where I got my tag and wait for the Mardi Gras to begin. After waiting around for a while and wandering around looking at the other floats I eventually linked up with Trans Pride Allies float again and at last we were off. Dancing through the streets of Sydney CBD for 30 minutes was hard work all in white with our headpiece who light up. It was amazing to see so many people out supporting the event something which I will always remember.

Afterwards I decided to call it an early night, so I walked through the streets of Sydney till I managed to get to the train station and on my way back to my accommodation. After a day of rest in Sydney I flew back to Melbourne on Monday to finish preparing for speaking on IWD Eve that coming Thursday. I had two days to practice more and go over the material again before Thursday finally arrived and as time got closer, I just remembered to breathe and concentrate on what I was about to say.

I spoke for 40 minutes about Organisational Gender Diversity Policy with questions and comments afterwards. The people who

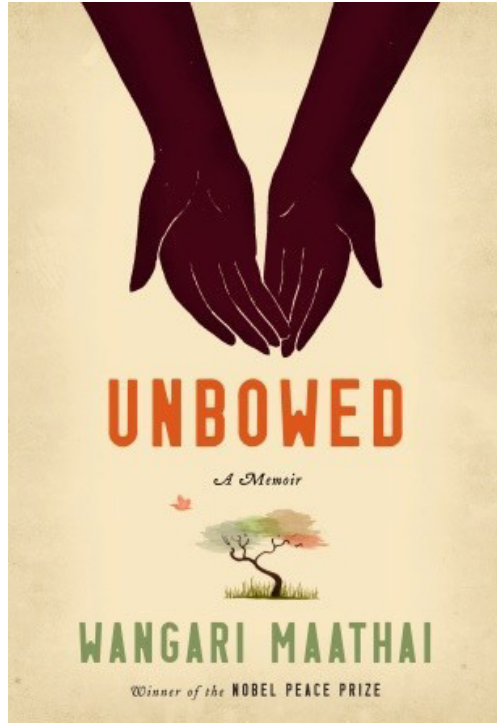
attended asked good questions and I sensed they really appreciated me being comfortable enough to walk in and be part of the crowd as I answered any questions or listened to any comments they had. This was followed by a panel discussion on this topic as well. It was the first time I have ever delivered a keynote for IWD week so was a big thing for me and an honour to do and will always be grateful to RMIT School of Accounting for giving me this opportunity.

These experiences taught me that we can all make a difference in the world if we believe in ourselves and are prepared to work at doing so while creating opportunities to do this. It also taught me that if we are organised enough then we can do a lot more than we think we can. I also learned that whilst there are times like these when life gets busy, we still have to take time out for ourselves. So, during the last month I learned to do this even more than before doing a few things for myself and keeping my batteries recharged. I found this really important in order to cope with a hectic schedule, while going from Melbourne to Sydney and back in a week.

Finally, I truly believe that if we have the courage to ask more of ourselves and others whilst standing in our power with love and compassion in our heart we can create lasting change by being different and thinking differently to others with positive intent.

ON THE SHELF: READING HUMAN RIGHTS

Here's our pick of fiction and non-fiction works for this volume that evoke a strong sense of human rights and inspiration to stand up for our rights as citizens and humans of every description.



Link [here](#)

Unbowed: A Memoir Wangari Maathai

Hugely charismatic, humble, and possessed of preternatural luminosity of spirit, Wangari Maathai, the winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and a single mother of three, recounts her extraordinary life as a political activist, feminist, and environmentalist in Kenya.

Born in a rural village in 1940, Wangari Maathai was already an iconoclast as a child, determined to get an education even though most girls were uneducated. We see her studying with Catholic missionaries, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in the United States, and becoming the first woman both to earn a PhD in East and Central Africa and to head a university department in Kenya. We witness her numerous run-ins with the brutal Moi government. She makes clear the political and personal reasons that compelled her, in 1977, to establish the Green Belt Movement, which spread from Kenya across Africa and which helps restore indigenous forests while assisting rural women by paying them to plant trees in their villages. We see how Maathai's extraordinary courage and determination helped transform Kenya's government into the democracy in which she now serves as assistant minister for the environment and as a member of Parliament. And we are with her as she accepts the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded in recognition of her "contribution to sustainable development, human rights, and peace."

In *Unbowed*, Wangari Maathai offers an inspiring message of hope and prosperity through self-sufficiency.



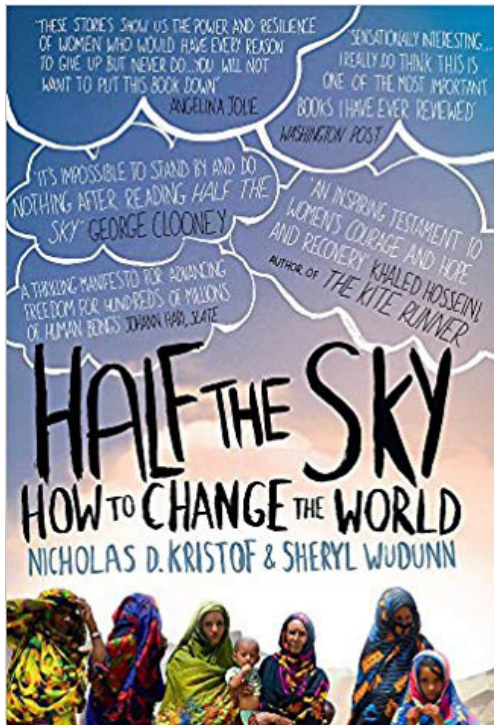
Link [here](#)

Taking a Stand: The Evolution of Human Rights

Juan E. Méndez , Marjory Wentworth

Juan Méndez has experienced human rights abuse first hand. As a result of his work with political prisoners in the late 1970s, the Argentinean military dictatorship arrested, tortured, and held him for more than a year. During that time, Amnesty International adopted him as a "Prisoner of Conscience." After his release, he moved to the United States and continued his lifelong fight for the rights of others, and the lessons he has gleaned over the decades can help us with our current struggles. Here, he sets forth an authoritative and incisive examination of torture, detention, exile, armed conflict, and genocide, whose urgency is even greater in the wake of America's recent disastrous policies. Méndez offers a new strategy for holding governments accountable for their actions, providing an essential blueprint for different human rights groups to be able to work together to effect change.

ON THE SHELF: READING HUMAN RIGHTS



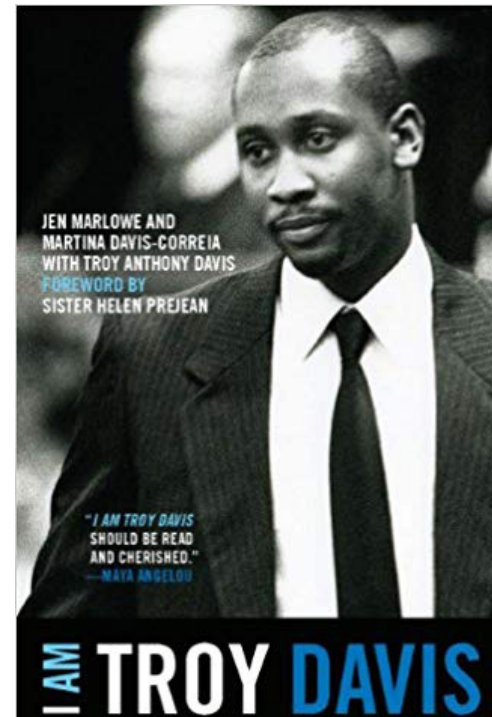
Link [here](#)

Half The Sky: How to Change the World

Nicholas D. Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn

HPulitzer Prize-winning reporting team, husband and wife Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, take us on a journey through Africa and Asia to meet an extraordinary array of exceptional women struggling against terrible circumstances. More girls have been killed in the last fifty years, precisely because they are girls, than men were killed in all the wars of the twentieth century combined. More girls are killed in this routine 'gendercide' in any one decade than people were slaughtered in all the genocides of the twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century, the central moral challenge was slavery. In the twentieth, it was totalitarianism. In the twenty-first, Kristof and WuDunn demonstrate, it will be the struggle for gender equality in the developing world. Fierce, moral, pragmatic, full of amazing stories of courage and inspiration, HALF THE SKY is essential reading for every global citizen.



Link [here](#)

I Am Troy Davis

Jen Marlowe , Martina-Correia Davis, Troy Davis

ON SEPTEMBER 21, 2011, Troy Anthony Davis was put to death by the State of Georgia. Davis's execution was protested by hundreds of thousands across the globe. How did one man capture the world's imagination and become the iconic face for the campaign to end the death penalty?

I Am Troy Davis, coauthored by Jen Marlowe and Davis's sister Martina Davis-Correia, tells the intimate story of an ordinary man caught up in an inexorable tragedy. From his childhood in racially charged Savannah; to the confused events that led to the 1989 murder of a police officer; to Davis's sudden arrest, conviction, and two-decade fight to prove his innocence; I Am Troy Davis takes us inside a broken legal system where life and death hang in the balance. It is also an inspiring testament to the unbreakable bond of family, to the resilience of love, and to how even when you reach the end of justice, voices from across the world will rise together in chorus and proclaim, "I am Troy Davis," I stand with you

HUMAN RIGHTS: CINEMA



The Killing Fields (1984)

Director: Roland Joffé

Writer: Bruce Robinson (screenplay)

Stars: Sam Waterston, Haing S. Ngor, John Malkovich (Who Fight Back)

[Sydney Schanberg](#) is a New York Times journalist covering the civil war in Cambodia. Together with the local journalist [Dith Pran](#), they cover some of the tragedy and madness of the war. When the American forces leave, Dith Pran sends his family with them, but stays behind himself to help Schanberg cover the event. As an American, Schanberg won't have any trouble leaving the country, but the situation is different for Pran; he's a local, and the Khmer Rouge are moving in. Written by [Murray Chapman](#) <muzzle@cs.uq.oz.au>

Watch trailer [here](#)



Blood Diamond (2006)

Director: Edward Zwick

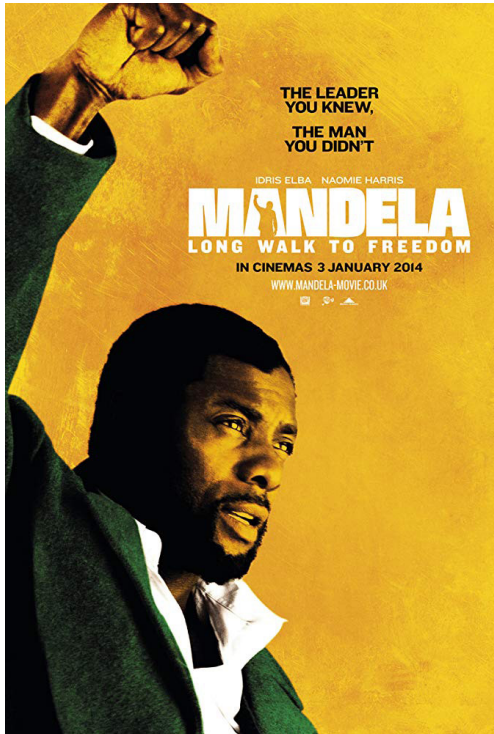
Writers: Charles Leavitt (screenplay), Charles Leavitt (story) C. Gaby Mitchell (story)

Stars: Leonardo DiCaprio, Djimon Hounsou, Jennifer Connelly

Set against the backdrop of civil war and chaos in 1990's Sierra Leone, Blood Diamond is the story of Danny Archer - an ex mercenary from Zimbabwe - and Solomon Vandy - a Mende fisherman. Both men are African, but their histories as different as any can be, until their fates become joined in a common quest to recover a rare pink diamond that can transform their lives. While in prison for smuggling, Archer learns that Solomon - who was taken from his family and forced to work in the diamond fields - has found and hidden the extraordinary rough stone. With the help of Maddy Bowen, an American journalist whose idealism is tempered by a deepening connection with Archer, the two men embark on a trek through rebel territory, a journey that could save Solomon's family and give Archer the second chance he thought he would never have.—[Production](#)

Watch trailer [here](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS: CINEMA

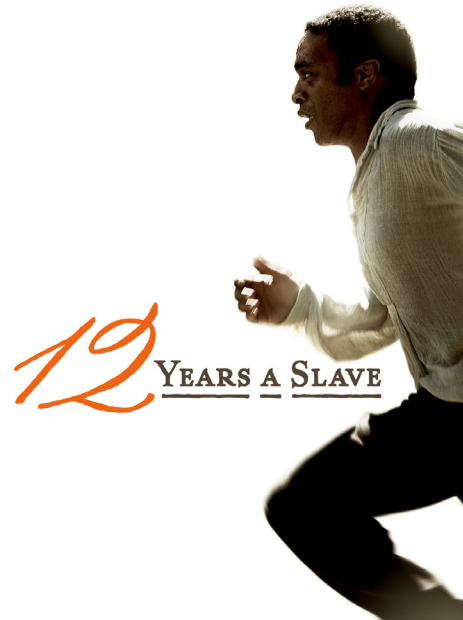


Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom (2013)

Director: Justin Chadwick
Writers: William Nicholson (screenplay),
Nelson Mandela (autobiography)
Stars: Idris Elba, Naomie Harris, Terry Pheto

Nelson Mandela is a South African lawyer who joins the African National Congress in the 1940s when the law under the Apartheid system's brutal tyranny proves useless for his people. Forced to abandon peaceful protest for armed resistance after the Sharpeville Massacre, Mandela pays the price when he and his comrades are sentenced to life imprisonment for treason while his wife, Winnie, is abused by the authorities herself. Over the decades in chains, Mandela's spirit is unbowed as his struggle goes on in and beyond his captivity to become an international cause. However, as Winnie's determination hardens over the years into a violent ruthlessness, Nelson's own stature rises until he becomes the renowned leader of his movement. That status would be put to the test as his release nears and a way must be found to win a peaceful victory that will leave his country, and all its peoples, unstained. Written by [Kenneth Chisholm](mailto:kchishol@rogers.com) (kchishol@rogers.com)

Watch trailer [here](#)



12 Years a Slave (2013)

Director: Steve McQueen
Writers: John Ridley (screenplay by),
Solomon Northup (based on "Twelve Years a Slave" by)
Stars: Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Kenneth Williams, Michael Fassbender

Based on an incredible true story of one man's fight for survival and freedom. In the pre-Civil War United States, [Solomon Northup](#), a free black man from upstate New York, is abducted and sold into slavery. Facing cruelty personified by a malevolent slave owner, as well as unexpected kindnesses, Solomon struggles not only to stay alive, but to retain his dignity. In the twelfth year of his unforgettable odyssey, Solomon's chance meeting with a Canadian abolitionist will forever alter his life. Written by [Fox Searchlight](#)

Watch trailer [here](#)

CARTOONS

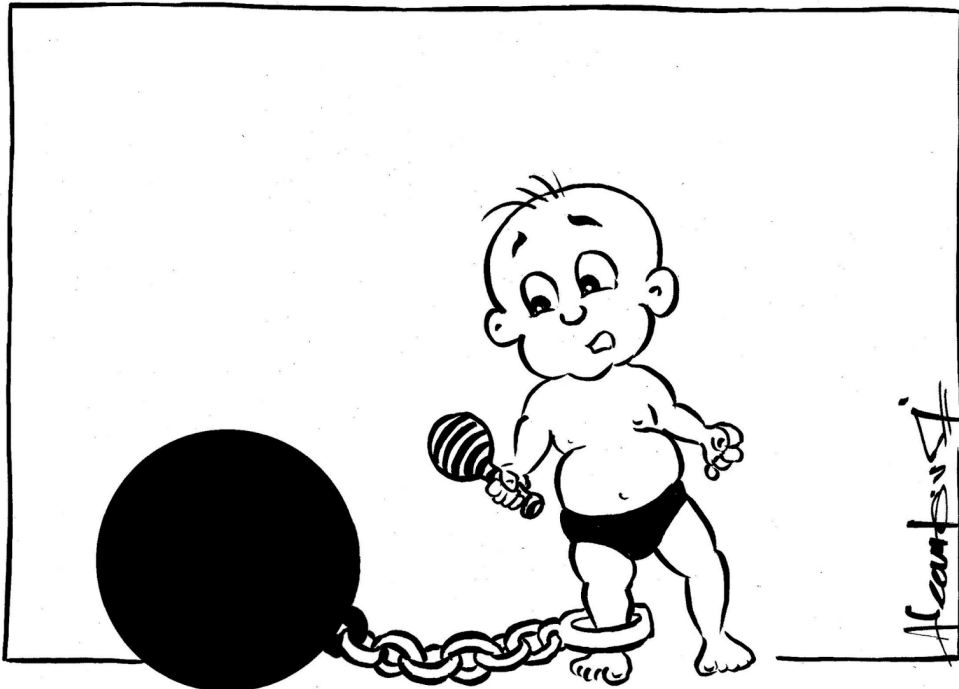
Aseem Trivedi

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](#).

668 babies are languishing with their mothers in Turkey's prisons. Along with these babies, the victims of the ongoing brutal persecution in Turkey include cancer patients, pregnant women, new mothers, men in their 80s and so forth. We will be failing in our duty as fellow human beings if we do not raise our voice against this utterly inhumane and unlawful practice of the Turkish government. The inalienable right of these babies to live a free and dignified life with their parents must be honoured. Free them now!

1. Football

#668Babies



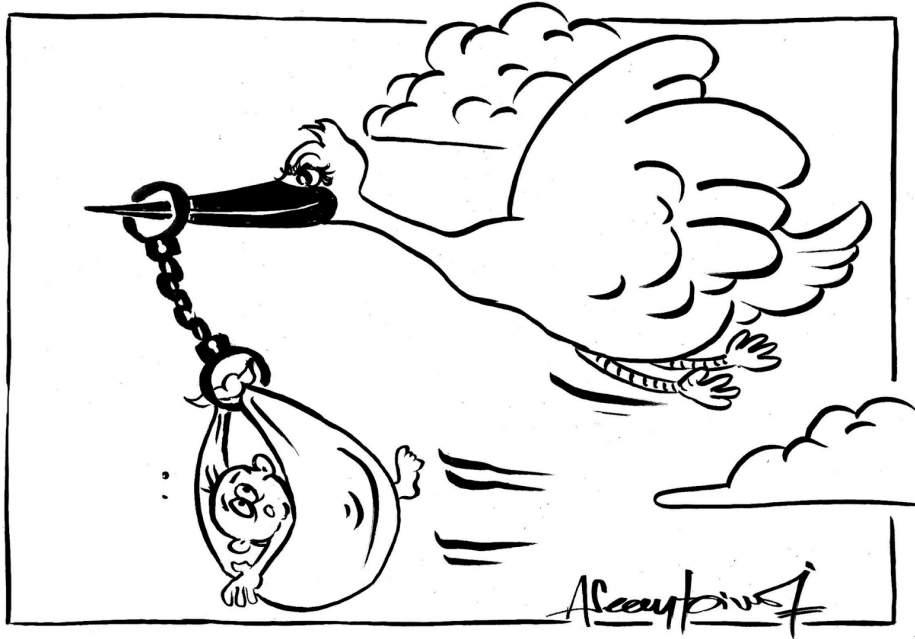
2. Newcomer

#668Babies



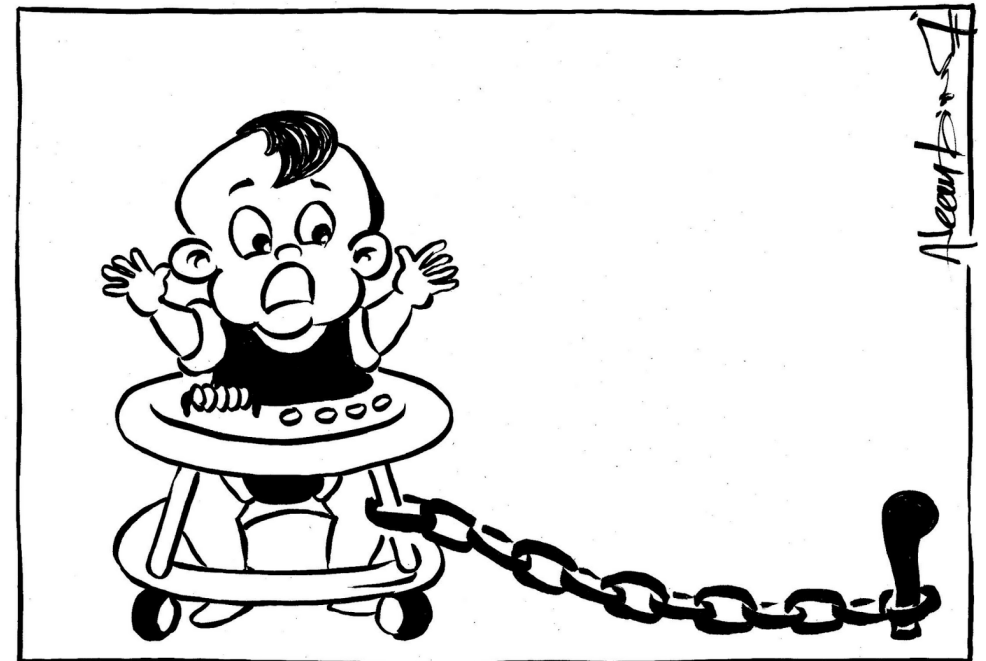
3. DESTINY

#668Babies



4. CHAINED

#668Babies



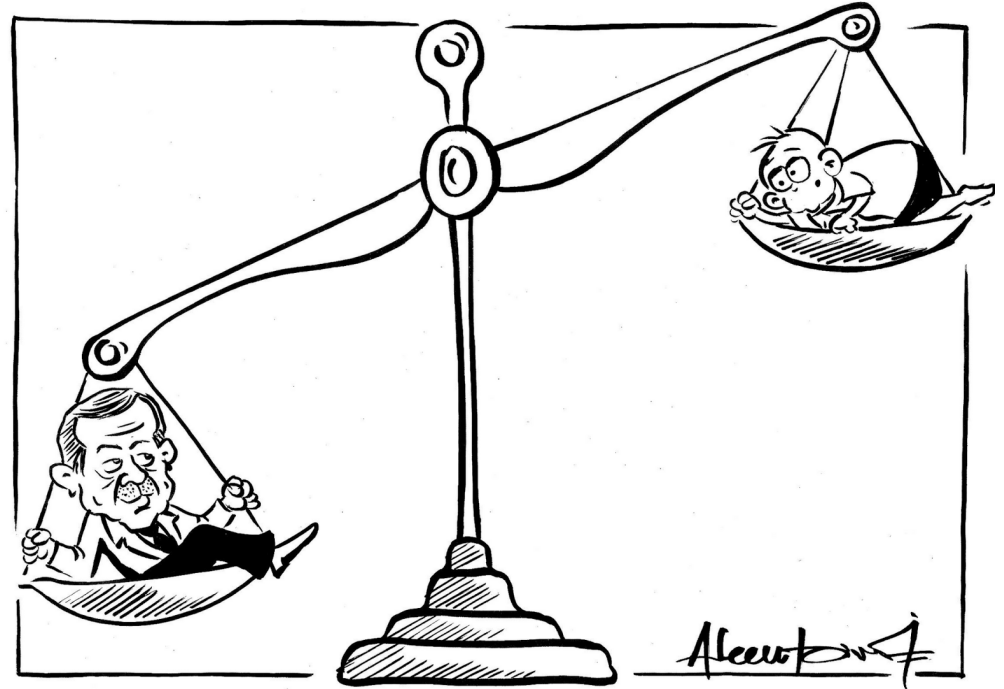
5. DOLL HOUSE

#668Babies



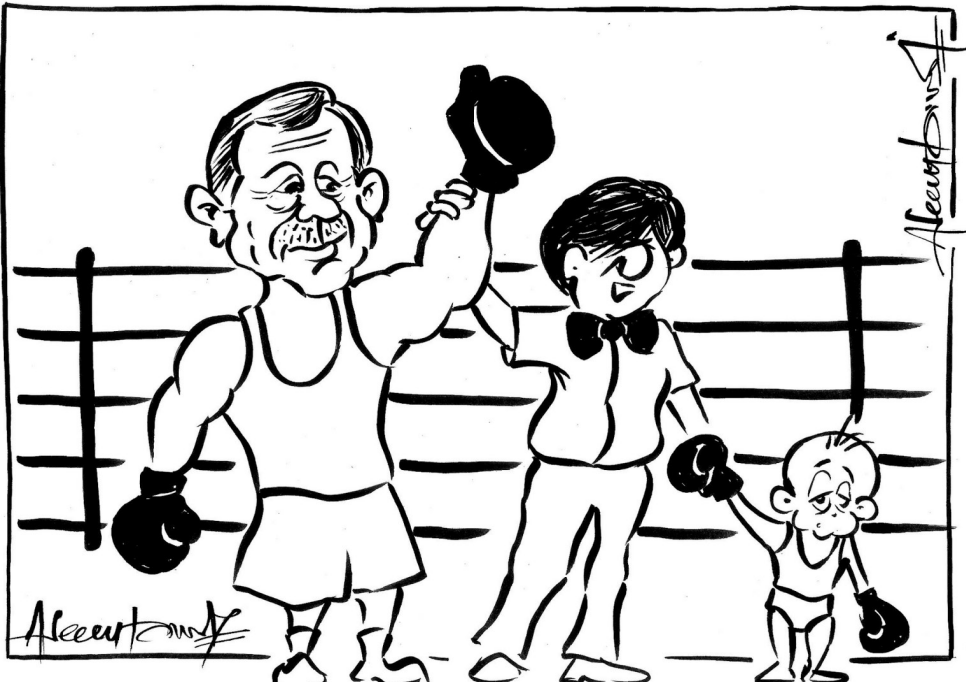
6. JUSTICE

#668Babies



7. THE WINNER

#668Babies

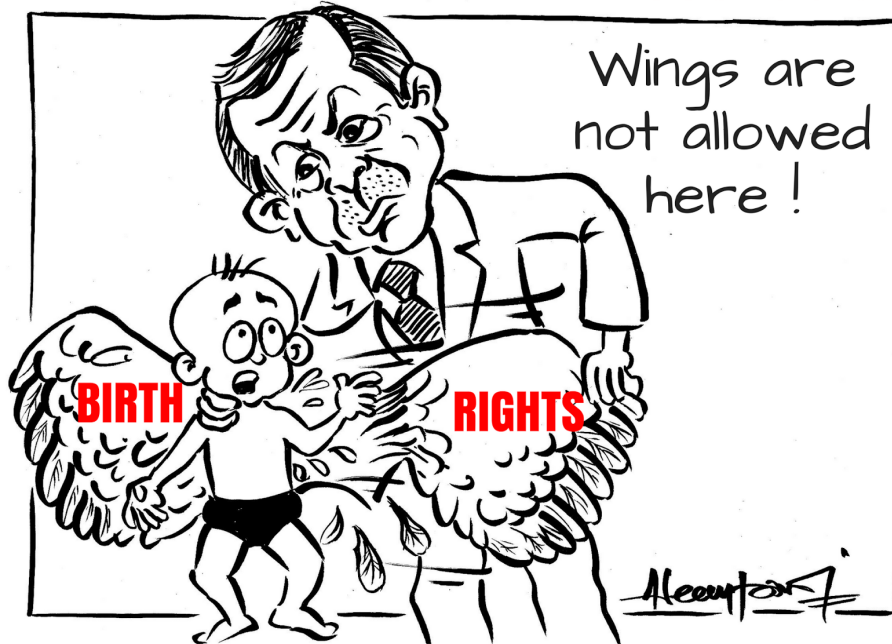


8. NEW BABY SYMBOL #668Babies



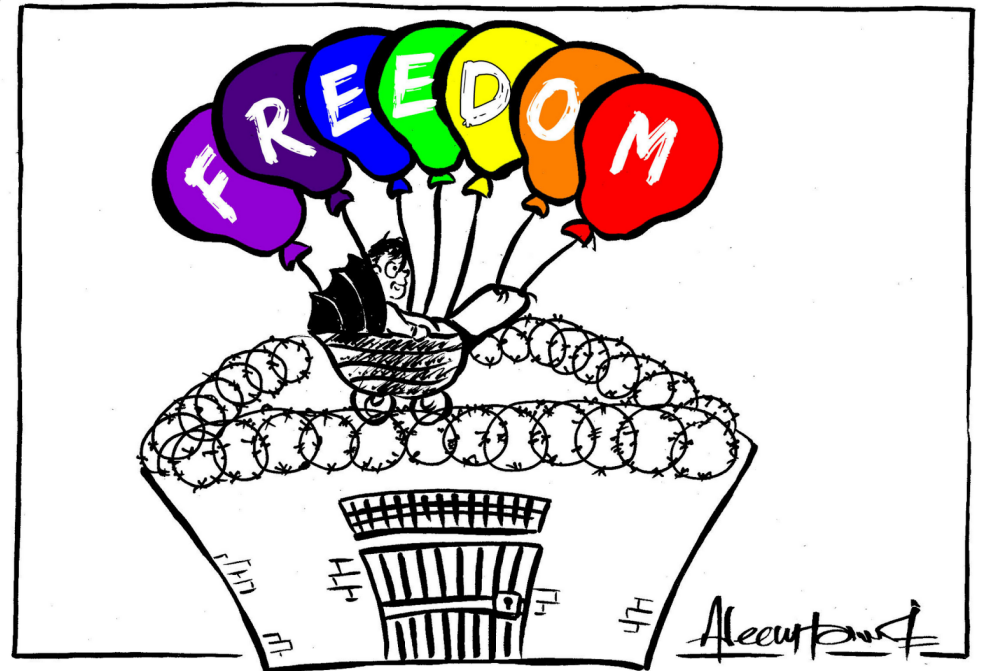
9. BIRTH RIGHTS

#668Babies



10. BALLOONS

#668Babies



CALL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ARTICLES

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 Citizens' Voices No. 14 (Sept. 2019)!

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 July 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 July 2019

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

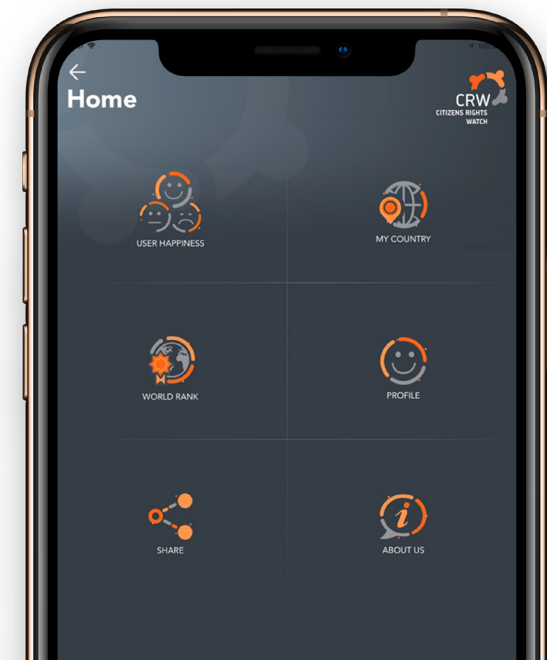
Thank you for reading.
Feel free to circulate!
CRW Editing Team



DOWNLOAD OUR MOBILE APP AND BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

CRW's Mobile App is developed as a first App of its kind 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 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..



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

CITIZENS RIGHTS PARTNERS

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

In solidarity!

