

Human Rights Brief

Volume 11 | Issue 1

Article 14

2003

Center News

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Recommended Citation

Atkinson, Katherine. "Center News." Human Rights Brief 11, no. 1 (2003): 43-44.

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CENTER NEWS

CENTER PROGRAMS RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS THROUGHOUT 2003

Over the past several months, the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Center) at the Washington College of Law (WCL) has maintained its commitment to raising human rights awareness and encouraging dialog among the human rights community. The Center provided hands-on legal experiences for interested WCL students, coordinated and facilitated faculty scholarship on relevant subjects, and was a resource to the international community on human rights and humanitarian law issues. The Center's concerted programming efforts made 2003 one of the Center's most successful years to date in raising human rights awareness among its participants.

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL INTER-AMERICAN MOOT COURT COMPETITION

In May 2003, the Center hosted its annual Inter-American Moot Court (Competition). This year's Competition was the biggest and best to date. The Center welcomed 45 teams from 14 different countries and hosted over 150 participants, including four Deans of South American law schools. Over 60 government and private attorneys, diplomats, and attorneys from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights served as volunteer judges during the written and oral portions of the Competition. At the opening ceremonies, Organization for American States (OAS) Executive Secretary Ambassador Santiago Canton, WCL Dean Claudio Grossman and Center Executive Director Hadar Harris welcomed participants. Later in the week, participants visited the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights where they met with Commission attorneys and discussed the workings of the regional system. After a week of hard-fought competition, two Colombian teams arrived at the final round where they argued before a prestigious Honor Panel of judges headed by Dr. Marta Altolaguirre, President of the

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In the end, Universidad Externado beat Pontificia Universidad Javeriana by one of the slimmest margins in Competition history.

INNOVATIVE EVENTS LAUNCH SCHOOL YEAR 2003-2004

The Center sponsored a variety of events to kick off the new school year. On August 20, new students had the opportunity to meet faculty and activists from the Center, the War Crimes Research Office, the Human Rights Brief, the Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the International Human Rights Law Clinic, and Action for Human Rights. On September 4, the Center held an information session introducing students to the specific projects of the Center and ways in which students could participate. In addition, Action for Human Rights continues to host "Munching on Human Rights," an early morning coffee hour that allows students and faculty interested and involved in human rights programs at WCL to meet, make announcements, and recruit for

their projects. So far, all enjoy and look forward to the hour to mix and mingle, as well as the free breakfast and cup of fair trade coffee or tea!

The Center also proudly launched a new speaker series welcoming human rights defenders from around the world to discuss their work and their personal journeys into human rights advocacy with the WCL community. The Center was honored to host Colin Gonsalves, the Executive Director of the human Rights Law Network (HRLN) and leader in public interest law in India, as its first speaker. The HRLN is India's first association of legal professionals that provides support to those who have little or no access to the law. Mr. Gonsalves' network helps to train lawyers and push the government to be more active in human rights.

The Center was also honored to host Hanna Ibrahim, a Senior Partner in the General Law Practice of the Aires Law Firm in Garki Abuja, Nigeria. Ms. Ibrahim has led a team of lawyers as



Center Director Hadar Harris, Asst. Secretary of State for Human Rights Lorne Craner, Sarah Hymowitz, and Dean Claudio Grossman
Credit: Rick Reinhard

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defense Counsels in addressing issues corresponding to the implementation of Islamic Sharia Law. Ms. Ibrahim has been head counsel to all cases, thus far, of women who have been sentenced to death by stoning for allegedly committing adultery. Ms. Ibrahim is currently in residence at WCL as a Humphrey Fellow.

Collaborating with the Central and Eastern European and Newly Independent States Student Organization (CEENISO), the Center hosted a two-week symposium on human rights in Central Asia. Ambassador Baktybek Abdrisaev of Kyrgyzstan welcomed participants at the Gala Opening Reception on September 29, 2003. The Honorable

Lorne W. Craner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor delivered the keynote address on October 2. Throughout the symposium, several panels of experts highlighted the many challenges of transition in this complex region. In addition to the events, CEENISO displayed an exhibit of artwork and textiles from Central Asia during the symposium.

Lastly, the Center launched its Fourth Human Rights Film Series on October 7, 2003, with *The Day I Will Never Forget*. The film, by Kim Longinotto, provides an inspiring look at what women today are doing in Kenya to resist female genital cutting (FGC). Following the film, Colleen Renk from the Tahirih Justice Center provided attendees

with further information about the practice of FGC and led a discussion about its effects and ways countries may move to eradicate the practice. The film series continued with *The Damned & The Sacred (aka Dans, Grozny, Dans)* on October 14. The film, directed by Jos de Putter, tells the story of a dance troop of Czech orphans. On October 21, the Center also showed *War Takes*, directed by Patricia Castaño and Adelaida Trujillo, which uses personal stories to expose the violence in war-ravaged Colombia. The Center's film series is scheduled to continue throughout the fall. [HRB](#)

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CENTER FACULTY/STAFF NEWS

John Cerone, executive director of the War Crimes Research Office and adjunct professor of law at American University's Washington College of Law (WCL) traveled to Dili, Timor-Leste (East Timor) in September, 2003 with his Deputy, Susana SaCouto, to conduct seminars on international criminal law for the national and international judges on the Special Panels for Serious Crimes established by the United Nations (UN) to provide criminal accountability for the gross human rights violations perpetrated there. Professor Cerone published a chapter called "Recent Developments in the Law of Genocide" in *Ethnic Cleansing in 20th-Century Europe*. He gave a lecture entitled, "Beyond a Criminal Justice Response to Trafficking in Persons" at the United Nations Association in Washington, DC. Professor Cerone also gave lectures entitled, "An Introduction to the International Criminal Court," "State Cooperation, Article 98 Agreements, and the Status of Immunities under the Rome Statute," at WCL and at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

Robert K. Goldman, professor of law and co-director of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Center)

attended the Expert Meeting on Remedies for Victims of Violations of International Humanitarian Law (Meeting). The Meeting was held in Amsterdam in May, and was organized by the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights, Utrecht University and the Amsterdam Center of International Law. In July, he attended a regional Expert Consultation on Fostering Compliance with Humanitarian Law in Mexico City, organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Mexican Foreign Ministry. Throughout the summer, Professor Goldman traveled to Colombia four times in his capacity as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' (Commission) Rapporteur for Colombia. In Colombia, Professor Goldman met with government officials, including President Uribe, as well as with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and victims of human rights abuses to discuss cases before the Commission and precautionary measures issued by the Commission.

Claudio Grossman, dean and co-director of the Center, presented a petition with four WCL students to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights against Cuba on the executions of

Lorenzo Enrique Copello Castillo, Barbaro Leodan Sevilla Garcia, and Jorge Luis Martinez Isaac on April 11, 2003. Over the summer, Dean Grossman was a panel speaker on "New Challenges for International Law in the 21st Century" at the Southeastern Association of Law Schools Annual Meeting. He also participated in the meeting of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States as a representative of the Inter-American Institute on Human Rights. Dean Grossman organized and participated in a roundtable discussion held by the American Bar Association with law school deans and practitioners on developing a curriculum to educate and train transnational lawyers, and was the keynote speaker at the May 2003 Spring Meeting of the Section of International Law and Practice of the American Bar Association on "Human Rights: The Business of All Lawyers." In September, 2003, Dean Grossman presented on the "Protection of Human Rights of Vulnerable Groups in the Inter-American System", at Pontificia Universidade Catolica De Sao Paulo and went to Argentina in his capacity as the Organization of American States' observer in the AMIA bombing trial in Buenos Aires.