

## LRWC NEWSLETTER

July 2014 Edition

### LRWC ACTION NEWS

#### BAHRAIN

**Human rights groups call for Bahrain to be designated as a 'country of concern'.** LRWC joined the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and 26 other NGOs in sending [a letter](#) to the UK Foreign Affairs Committee requesting that Bahrain be designated as a 'country of concern.' The signing organizations observed that the human rights situation in Bahrain remains grave. UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, released [a statement](#) on 6 June 2014 expressing that "the important recommendations made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Professor Cherif Bassiouni are all in a state of non-implementation...[A]ll the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council during the Universal Period Review on Bahrain are as far as we can tell not being implemented by Bahrain at this point". A [press release](#) was also issued.



#### BANGLADESH

**Foreign donations Bill threatens NGOs.** On 9 July, the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) and Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) [sent a letter](#) to Bangladesh's Prime Minister in response to amendments to the proposed *Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, 2014*. The Bill would grant the NGO Affairs Bureau, a department under the Prime Minister's Office, extensive powers over NGOs, including a veto over NGO ability to receive foreign contributions of any kind. The Bill would also put in place inappropriately onerous requirements for NGO registration and give the NGO Affairs Bureau the power to forcibly dissolve non-compliant NGOs.

**Thanks from Bangladesh.** LRWC received two thank-you notes from human rights defenders in Bangladesh during July. In response to the LRWC/CLD joint letter on the Foreign Donations Bill, a Bangladeshi NGO thanked LRWC/CLD saying, "Thank you very much for releasing this letter. This will help to put pressure on the government to think before they pass it." In response to the LRWC letter of 27 May 2014 regarding an abduction, the released lawyer wrote, "Your response and support...will have very positive impact to ensure my personal safety and security, as well as, for other activists working in the field of human rights in Bangladesh."

## BRAZIL

**Lawyers attending protest arrested and beaten.** On 9 July, LRWC [wrote a letter](#) calling on government officials in Brazil to initiate an independent investigation into the arbitrary arrest and assault of Daniel Biral and Silvia Daskal Hirschbrush, two Brazilian lawyers. The two were arrested without cause, in contravention of the Brazilian Constitution, at a peaceful protest in the city of São Paulo. Mr. Biral was beaten in a police car following his arrest and the police chief refused to accept Mr. Biral's charges against the police officers and only registered the military police's statement. As well as calling for an investigation into this matter, LRWC also called upon the government to ensure the protection of these two lawyers.



## IRAN

**Lawyers jailed for defending human rights.** On 24 July, LRWC [sent a letter to the government](#) of the Islamic Republic of Iran objecting to the wrongful prosecution, sentencing and imprisonment of Mr. Hadi Esmacilzadeh, a law professor, human rights lawyer and member of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC). On 31 May 2014, Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court imposed a sentence of four years of imprisonment plus a ban from practicing as a lawyer for two years. The charges of “assembly and collusion with intent to commit anti-security crimes” and “spreading propaganda against the State” were brought as reprisals against Mr. Esmacilzadeh for exposing rights violations in Iran. LRWC has called for the immediate release of Mr. Esmacilzadeh and two other imprisoned DHRC lawyers and for Iran to comply with its international human rights obligations.

## SWAZILAND

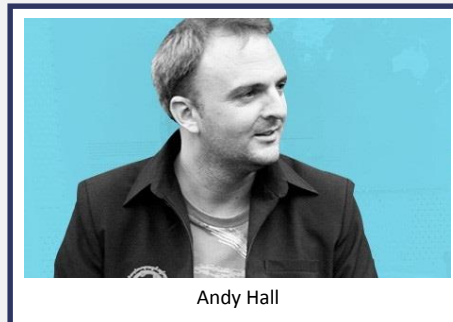


**Lawyer and editor jailed for questioning judicial independence.** On July 31, LRWC sent [a letter](#) to the government of the Kingdom of Swaziland calling for the immediate release of jailed lawyer Thulani Maseko and newspaper editor Bhekithemba Makhubu. Thulani Maseko— prominent human rights lawyer— and Bhekithemba Makhubu—well-respected Editor-in-Chief of The Nation, the sole independent newspaper of Swaziland—were convicted of contempt of court and each sentenced to two years in prison. The charges related to articles allegedly authored by the two men, published by The Nation in February and March, criticizing the arrest and detention of a government inspector after he charged a Supreme Court judge's driver with a driving infraction and raising concerns about judicial independence. An appeal is expected.

## THAILAND

### Human rights defender faces criminal charges for exposing abuses of migrant workers by corporation.

On June 29, LRWC [released a letter](#) calling on the Government of the UK to take action to protect UK citizen Andy Hall, a human rights defender charged in Thailand with criminal defamation by Natural Fruit Co. Ltd. after exposing major human rights violations by the company in the report, “Cheap Has a High Price”. While Mr. Hall has been released on bail, his passport has been confiscated, meaning that he must seek court approval to travel outside Thailand until the charges against him have been resolved. LRWC urged the UK to intervene on his behalf by seeking return of his passport and by attending all hearings. On 2 July 2014, the UK embassy sent a representative to a pre-trial hearing who expressed to the court “deep concerns on human rights implications” of the case.



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## FOURTH INTERNATIONAL COLOMBIA CARAVANA 2014



LRWC delegates Heather D. Neun, lawyer, Justice Brent Knazan of the Ontario Court of Justice, and University of British Columbia law students Samina Ullah and Flora Vineberg will participate in the Fourth International Caravana of Jurists and Lawyers to Colombia, 23-31 August 2014. The Colombia Caravana is an international delegation of lawyers and judges that monitors human rights abuses faced by legal professionals in Colombia. Every two years the delegation travels to Colombia to investigate, monitor and draw international attention to attacks on Colombian lawyers, as well as the state's non-compliance with international human rights standards,

particularly those relating to protected rights to life, liberty, equality, and fair trial rights including the right to legal representation and standards relating to the integrity of legal systems. LRWC research, education and advocacy in relation to these themes is ongoing.

It is extremely dangerous to be a lawyer and to uphold the right to access justice in Colombia. Between 2002 and 2012 alone, there were over 4,400 incidents against lawyers in Colombia, according to official sources, and the Colombian Caravana UK Lawyers' Group reports that over 400 lawyers have been killed in Colombia since 1991. This means that on average one lawyer is killed every month in Colombia. In light of these startling statistics, LRWC is committed to supporting and fostering efforts to improve the state of affairs in Colombia through research, advocacy and education.

The first delegation took place in 2008, in response to the ACADEHUM (Asociación Colombiana de Abogados Defensores Eduardo Umaña Mendoza) inviting an international delegation of jurists - the International Caravana of Lawyers (Caravana) - to visit several regions of the country in order to meet lawyers and hear testimony from human rights defenders at risk. Lawyers and legal professionals from Europe, Canada and Latin America joined the mission and issued a report, [Sin Abogados No Hay Justicia: No Justice without Lawyers](#). LRWC delegates participated in the Caravanas held in 2010 (Alyssa Brierley) and 2012 (Heather Neun and the Honourable Carol Huddart). The 2010 delegation published a report,

“[Colombia: The Legal System still under Attack](#)” and Alyssa Brierley’s [talk about the 2010 Caravana](#) can be viewed online. In 2012 two reports were published with significant contributions from LRWC delegates Heather Neun and Carol Huddart: “[Judges at Risk](#)” and “[Colombia: Protecting Access to Justice](#)”. This year, LRWC delegates will travel to various regions of Colombia to meet with lawyers and others legal system workers and users at risk.

Contributions of any size towards the expenses of ACADEHUM and the Colombian organizers of the Caravana are welcome.

## INTERNATIONAL LAW RIGHTS TO LEGAL AID

### ***How BC's Legal Aid System Fails to Meet International Human Rights Standards.***

LRWC is producing two manuals on rights to receive, and state duties to provide, legal aid. *Rights to Legal Aid: Handbook on International Law Rights to Legal Aid* and *How British Columbia's Legal Aid System Fails to Meet International Human Rights Standards*. [A draft of this report](#) was released on 9 July 2014 to lawyers, legislators and others to facilitate discussion on the legal aid crisis in BC. BC's legal aid system has been singled out for criticism by the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which have noted the failure to provide access to justice for Aboriginal women and other socially and economically marginalized people. LRWC is inviting feedback for the final draft of the report by 8 August 2014. The lead author of the reports is Lois Leslie, B.Soc.Sc. (Hons), LLB, LL.M. Production of the manuals is funded by the Law Foundation of BC and LRWC members. Both manuals will be released in September and a launch and public discussion is scheduled for Wednesday 1 October 2014, 7-9 pm in the Alice MacKay room of the Vancouver Public Library, 350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver.

On Monday 7 July, the Trial Lawyers Association of BC Legal Aid Action Committee led a “Rally in Robes” in Vancouver to mark the start of a series of service withdrawals by lawyers providing services on legal aid to expose the inadequacy of legal aid funding in BC. The Committee plans that lawyers will resume services 8 August until October when a series of withdrawal of services for one week per month will begin.

## MICHAEL MANDEL PEACE INTERNSHIP

**Michael Mandel Peace Internship** - This Summer Internship honours the memory of Michael Mandel (6 May 1948 – 27 October 2013), professor of law at the Osgoode Hall Faculty of Law, whose passion for peace and social justice was reflected throughout his life, both in his teaching and in his fearless commitment to political engagement. Professor Mandel was committed to the pursuit of even-handed justice and was recently known and respected for his inspirational anti-war activism against the U.S. and NATO for engaging in, “the waging of aggressive war”, in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. The annual Internship of \$10,000 is for a period of not less than 12 weeks. Donations can be made at: [www.give.osgoodealumni.ca](http://www.give.osgoodealumni.ca)

### A Tribute to the Life and Contributions of Professor Michael Mandel

*Law professor, anti-war activist,  
mentor, tenor extraordinaire*

Friday, December 6, 2013  
11:00am

Paul B. Helliwell Centre  
Osgoode Hall Law School



## LRWC MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING PRO BONO IN JULY

**Thanks to LRWC members contributing *pro bono*** to LRWC communications, research and education during July. Contributing to letters sent in July were: Amy Reier (Swaziland), Siobhan Airey (Bangladesh), Gail Davidson, Heather Neun (Colombia), Tina Parbhakar (Iran), Luiza Teixeira (Brazil). Contributions to research and education by Ed Levy, David F. Sutherland, Lois Leslie, Heather Neun, Catherine Morris, Grace Woo, William Liaw. Office assistance from Hillary Song and Star Khasha.

## LRWC AIRMILES

### Ways to Collect:

- Ask us for a LRWC Airmiles card and use it to collect miles from participating vendors.
- Contact us to receive YOUR card today ([lrwc@portal.org](mailto:lrwc@portal.org), 604-738-0338).
- Ask for our barcode and scan it at participating vendors.

### Ways to Donate:

- Transfer Airmiles from your account to LRWC by calling 1-888-247-6453.
- LRWC's account is 8008-979-6800.



We welcome feedback on Newsletter content, format, and delivery. Mail subscriptions are also available.

Fees and donations can be made by cheque, [PayPal](#), or [Canada Helps](#).

Monthly donations increase LRWC's ability both to respond quickly and plan ahead.

Airline points donated to LRWC qualify as a tax-deductible donation!

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