

LRWC NEWSLETTER

August 2014 Edition

LRWC ACTION NEWS

BAHRAIN



Ahmed Humaidan | hrw.org

LRWC joined 10 other human rights organizations to send a letter calling for the release of Ahmed Humaidan, an award-winning Bahraini photojournalist sentenced to 10 years in prison on 26 March 2014 in connection with his work documenting the ongoing unrest in Bahrain. Mr. Humaidan has been in jail since his arrest 29 December 2014. He was denied access to a lawyer until the first day of the court proceedings against him. LRWC regards the detention of Mr. Humaidan as arbitrary.

BRAZIL

On 13 August, LRWC sent [a letter](#) to the government of Brazil calling for protection for Mr. Davi Kopenawa, chairperson of the indigenous rights organization Yanomami Association Hutukara (HAY). Mr. Kopenawa has received a series of death threats following his successful campaign against gold mining in Yanomami territory. Furthermore, armed thugs, reportedly hired by gold miners, have been seen at HAY headquarters and other locations that Mr. Kopenawa frequents. As well as calling for effective protective measures for Mr. Kopenawa, LRWC called on the government of Brazil to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the threats.



Davi Kopenawa | survivalinternational.org

CANADA

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs makes misleading statements to the public about the UN Human Rights Council's appointment of a Gaza commission of inquiry

On 25 August, LRWC released a [statement](#) to express concern about distortions of truth in recent statements by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs John Baird slamming decisions of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on a Gaza commission of inquiry. The Minister condemned the appointments to the commission as a "sham" and an "utter shame" on 11 August and provided incorrect information about the HRC's resolution on Gaza in a public statement on 23 July. The Minister's statements contributed to a media campaign vilifying the appointed head of the commission of inquiry,

internationally known human rights and humanitarian law specialist William Schabas. LRWC's statement corrects false impressions created by the Minister's misleading statements and expresses regret that he has publicly prejudged the commission of inquiry so as to discredit its findings even before it has commenced its work. LRWC said it is "troubling that Mr. Baird has chosen to adopt a partisan role in a dangerous conflict that requires measured commitment to the facts and law and careful diplomacy to prevent and remedy the violations of international law that have taken so many innocent lives."

THAILAND

UK rights defender Andy Hall facing possible jail sentence for protecting migrant workers' rights

On 8 August, LRWC was among 108 co-signatories of a [joint letter](#) from human rights organizations and labour unions to the members of the Thai Pineapple Industry Association (TPIA) expressing concern over the actions of Natural Fruit Co. Ltd. ("Natural Fruit"), a member of TPIA. In 2013, Natural Fruit filed criminal and civil defamation suits against UK human rights researcher Andy Hall, who contributed to a report by Finnwatch that criticized labour practices within Thailand's fruit and fishing industries, including the labour practices of Natural Fruit. Finnwatch repeatedly sought to work with Natural Fruit to resolve the issues before publishing the report. Rather than working cooperatively with human rights organizations and civil society, Natural Fruit has chosen to launch an aggressive legal battle designed to intimidate and silence human rights advocates. LRWC urged TPIA members to pressure Natural Fruit into dropping the lawsuits. TPIA responded to the joint campaign with a letter on 13 August 2014 threatening that TPIA members would commence further coordinated law suits against Hall. On 14 August 2014, LRWC wrote a [letter](#) to TPIA urging the association to take action to promote adherence to the law by Natural Fruit and other TPIA members rather than threaten further retaliatory court actions. The first criminal defamation trial is scheduled to be held on 2 September. Hall resides in Burma. Mr. Hall was released on bail. Hall's passport has been confiscated and he must seek court permission for short visits to Myanmar and he is confined to Thailand. Given increased use of retaliatory criminal defamation lawsuits as well as abrogation of judicial independence since Thailand's 22 May 2014 military coup, UK and Finland embassies plan to send monitors to the trial. On 27 August, LRWC sent letters to Canadian, US and Australian embassies in Thailand requesting that monitors be sent to the trial.



Andy Hall

TURKEY

On 31 July, LRWC wrote [another letter](#) criticizing the prosecution of well-known defense lawyer Ramazan Demir, who has represented journalists prosecuted within the framework of a broad-ranging operation intended to dismantle the Koma Civakên Kurdistan/Group of Communities in Kurdistan (KCK). Mr. Demir is charged with "insulting or ... offending the dignity of a public authority (the prosecutor) in the performance of his duties". The prosecutor complainant alleges that, in court and during the trial of his journalist client, Mr. Demir challenged the legitimacy of the wording of the indictment, questioned the capacity of the Prosecutor to determine what activities constitute the normal professional activities of journalists and called on the court to hear evidence instead from a professor of communications. The LRWC letter reviews international



Ramazan Demir |
advocatenvooradvocaten.nl

law obligations to protect freedom of expression, the right to be represented and the right of lawyers to engage in vigorous advocacy as well as the law regarding criminal defamation and concludes that the prosecution contravenes Turkey's international law obligations to protect rights to free expression, legal representation and rights to a fair trial.

VIET NAM

As part of [continuing efforts](#) to secure the release of lawyer Le Quoc Quan, LRWC joined 10 other NGOs in [a letter](#) calling on Viet Nam authorities to release Le Quoc Quan from prison on the Viet Nam National Day on 2 September. In an Opinion released in November 2013, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Le Quoc Quan's detention was arbitrary and recommended compensation and immediate release or trial in accordance with the fair trial requirements of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. The Working Group concluded that Le Quoc Quan had been denied fair trial rights through having inadequate access to his lawyer and being denied rights to pre-trial release. Viet Nam, currently a member of the UN Human Rights Council, has not complied with the recommendations. The Working Group Opinion was made in response to [a Petition](#) submitted by LRWC and other NGOs. LRWC also provided [submissions](#) in Vietnamese to the court hearing Le Quoc Quan's appeal.

FOURTH INTERNATIONAL COLOMBIA CARAVANA 2014

LRWC delegates to the Fourth International Colombia Caravana—BC-based lawyer Heather Neun, Ontario Court of Justice judge Brent Knazan and UBC law students Samina Ullah and Flora Vineberg—were in Colombia 23-31 August to investigate and report on attacks on Colombian jurists and 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. During the week-long visit, LRWC delegates travelled to Cali, Valle del Cauca Dept.; Pasto, Nariño Dept.; Bucaramanga, Santander Dept.; and Santa Marta, Magdalena Dept. Delegates spent long days meeting with defense lawyers, prosecutors, judges, human rights defenders, government officials and victims including political prisoners, torture victims, people targeted with extermination and families affected by enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings and breaches of humanitarian law. The UK Colombia Caravana will publish a report of the delegates' findings. LRWC will continue to work with lawyers in the Cauca Dept. to prevent the almost routine murder of lawyers and to identify and remedy causal factors. Members interested in joining the Colombia monitoring group to participate in this work should contact LRWC.

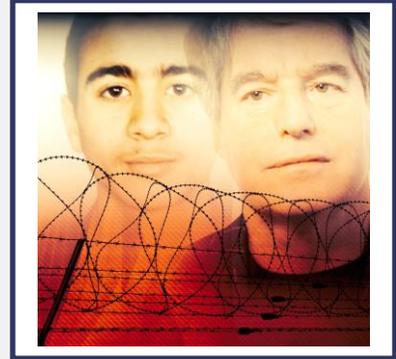


EDUCATION EVENTS

HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE IN CANADA: THE CASE OF OMAR KHADR with Dennis Edney Q.C.

Friday 19 September 2014, 5:30pm at the Grand Mosque Community Centre, 2445 Waverley St. Winnipeg, MB.

Dennis Edney Q.C., who has represented Omar Khadr *pro bono* basis for over a decade, will be keynote speaker at a fundraising dinner in Winnipeg. Peace Alliance Winnipeg and members of Winnipeg's Muslim community have organized this event to raise the profile of the Omar Khadr case as a bellwether of human rights and justice in Canada today and to recognize Dennis Edney for his work. The event is planned to coincide with the opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. For additional information visit [Facebook](#) or see the [poster](#). Tickets are available for purchase at <http://www.peacealliancewinnipeg.ca/2014/08/human-rights-justice-in-canada-the-case-of-omar-khadr/>.



LEGAL AID: A RIGHT OR A PRIVILEGE?



Sally T. Buck

Launch of two new LRWC publications:

[*The Right to Legal Aid: A Guide to International Law Rights to Legal Aid*](#)

[*The Right to Legal Aid: How BC's Legal Aid System Fails to Comply with International Law Obligations.*](#)

Wednesday October 1st, 2014, 7:00 pm, Alice MacKay Room, Vancouver Public Library 350 West Georgia Street, Vancouver

Admission free: Seating is limited. Approved for CPD credits by the Law Society of BC

Legal aid is an essential component of a fair legal system founded on equality and the rule of law. LRWC's new publications examine international law duties to provide legal aid and how BC's legal aid system fails. An introduction to the publications by author Lois Leslie will be followed by comments from panellists and a discussion. Panellists are Austin Cullen, Associate Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of BC, The Honourable Anne Rowles, Retired Justice of the BC Court of Appeal and lawyers Phil Rankin and Birgit Eder with moderator Michael Mulligan. See the [poster](#).

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, 27th Session, 8 – 26 September 2014

Four LRWC members will attend the 27th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva during September: Toronto-based Gavin Magath will attend the first week, Victoria-based Catherine Morris and Paul Scambler will attend the second week and Scarborough-based Gary Anandasangaree will attend the third week.

LRWC MEMBERS CONTRIBUTING PRO BONO IN AUGUST

Thank you to LRWC members working *pro bono* on letters, research, investigations and advocacy during August: Brian Samuels, Gail Davidson, Lois Leslie, Catherine Morris, Heather Neun, Samina Ullah, Flora Vineberg, David F. Sutherland, Luisa Teixeira, Flora Vineberg. Thank you also to Justice Knazan and student volunteers Hillary Song and William Liaw.

LRWC is seeking monitors for Bahrain, Malaysia and the Philippines.

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, 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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