

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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LRWC NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE	
Letters for Lawyers	Canada, India, Phillipines
Conferences	Fifth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders
Publications	LRWC Written Statement to the 13th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on Omar Khadr; Protective Measures for Human Rights Defenders and Lawyers in Danger: What can NGOs Do?
Research	LRWC "first response mechanism" for jurists in danger
Upcoming Events	13th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, 1 – 26 March 2010
LRWC AGM	Saturday 24 April 2010

Letters for Lawyers

Canada: On 21 February 2010, Catherine Morris followed up on LRWC's 27 January letter calling for an investigation of allegations of executive interference with Rights and Democracy (the International Centre for Human Rights and International Development). This organization was created by Parliament in 1988 as an independent organization to promote human rights and democracy globally. The February letter noted further allegations of politically partisan appointments, and called for adherence to the all-party consultation processes required for appointments to the Rights and Democracy Board. Organizations under government control masquerading as NGOs can significantly undermine human rights advocacy by monopolizing resources, suppressing awareness of violations, and blocking remedial action.

Olympic Protests: The Vancouver Police Department and the Integrated Security Unit responded positively to receiving copies of the *Protesters' Guide to the Law of Civil Disobedience in B.C.: Olympic Edition*, stating, "...the VPD understand, recognize and respects the rights of citizens to engage in lawful protest" and "...police [ISU] commanders already have received a copy of the guide along with ISU operational plans that deal with law enforcement responses to civil disobedience."

India: On 31 January 2010, human rights lawyer Devi Singh Rawat was arrested and charged with a number of offences, including mischief, assault and deterring a public official from doing their duty. The arrest and charges are believed to be in reprisal for Mr. Rawat's work as a lawyer for the National Project on Prevention of Torture (NPPT). Prior to his arrest, Mr. Rawat had filed a torture complaint on behalf of NPPT against the Adarsh Nagar police. On 30 January the police threatened Mr. Rawat that if he did not compromise with respect to his complaint he would face dire consequences. Mr. Rawat refused and was arrested the next day. On 3 February Mr. Rawat was granted bail and is awaiting trial. Trisha Apland of LRWC sent a letter on 7 February 2010.

Philippines: On 6 February 2010, 43 doctors, nurses and community health workers (health care workers) were arrested by the 202nd Infantry Brigade of the Philippine Army and the Rizal Philippine National Police while attending a community health training program provided by the Community Medicine Development Foundation (CMDF). *Habeas corpus* proceedings filed by CMDF allege that the arrests were entirely illegal. As of 26 February all those arrested remain in a military prison (Camp Capinpin, Turay, Rizal). Lawyers from the Public Interest Law Centre and the National Union of People's Lawyers have asked the Commission on Human Rights to investigate reports that the health care

workers have been subjected to torture and other ill treatment. The Philippine government alleges that the health care workers are members of the National People's Army.

Conferences

Fifth Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders, Dublin Castle, Dublin, Ireland, February 10-12, 2010. Isabela Piacentini attended this meeting of 100 human rights defenders and guests which examined? / discussed? patterns of attacks against human rights defenders and practical measures to ensure their protection, electronic communications and security, specific challenges facing women human rights defenders, and regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights defenders. Special guests included Ms. Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and **Ms. Margaret Sekaggya**, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders. Isabela met with and interviewed human rights defenders about protective measures and how NGOs such as LRWC can assist in improving their safety and independence. Isabela's report is available on request.

Publications

- *LRWC Written Statement to the 13th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on Omar Khadr*, 22 February 2010.
- *Protective Measures for Human Rights Defenders and Lawyers in Danger: What can NGOs Do?* Isabela Piacentini, 19 February 2010.

Research

LRWC is preparing a report on the need to develop a global 'first response mechanism' to provide effective protective measures to jurists in danger. A short report will be filed for consideration at the 14th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in June 2010 (filing deadline 15 May 2010). A longer report will be presented to the other NGOs. We hope to present the longer report at the September meeting of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers in Manila, Philippines. LRWC is looking for people available to work on this report. Isabela Piacentini is the principal researcher.

Upcoming Events

13th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, 1 – 26 March 2010

Isabela Piacentini will attend the 13th Session of the UN Human Rights Council as LRWC's representative for two weeks from March 9-26.

LRWC Annual General Meeting

Plan to attend the LRWC AGM on Saturday 24 April 2010. Attend in Vancouver from noon to 2:00 pm at Simon Fraser Harbour Centre and in Toronto from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the Law Society of Upper Canada in the Museum Room. The Toronto and Vancouver locations will be linked by video conference and time will be allocated for members to meet.

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Defend Defenders around the world by becoming a monthly donor to LRWC

- Fees and donations can be made by cheque or Visa.
- Phone, fax or email your visa number and expiration date, or mail a cheque.
- Monthly donations increase LRWC's ability both to respond quickly and plan ahead.
- Airline points donated to LRWC qualify as a tax-deductible donation!
- Donations made by December 31, 2010 are eligible for a 2010 charitable tax receipt.

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Thanks for your support.

