



# ISHR NEWSLETTER

November 2019

## IMPORTANT DATES

### 2 November

International Day to  
End Impunity for  
Crimes against  
Journalists

### 16 November

International Day  
for Tolerance

### 20 November

Africa Industriali-  
zation Day

*“To deny people their  
human rights is to  
challenge their  
very humanity”*

– Nelson Mandela

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

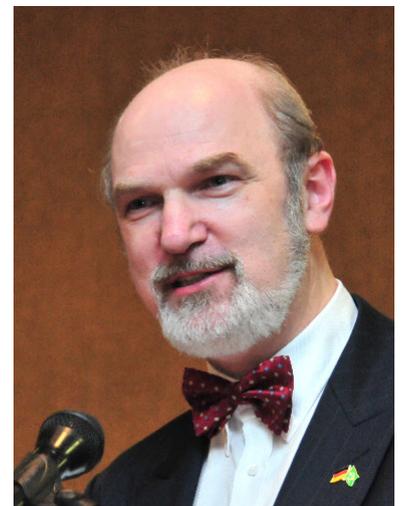
### As the year gradually comes to an end!

Dear ISHR community,

the November edition of the Newsletter is here. As the year gradually comes to an end, we are grateful to all the sections that have been doing great human rights work, in furtherance of our objectives. We thank everyone both big and small for all your efforts.

In this edition, you can read about the efforts of the Ukraine section in working to

strengthen the rule of law in the Ukraine through their



*Article continues on next page ...*

monitoring. There is also a report of the conference convoked in Frankfurt by the German section on the 30 years after the peaceful revolution in the GDR. ISHR also paid another visit to Northern Iraq as the report from Mrs. Katrin Bornmüller showed. We are grateful to her and to Khalil Al Rasha for all the great work they are doing for the refugees in Northern Iraq.

As you all prepare for Christmas, we all are wishing you all a time full of life, love and happiness.

We wish you all a happy reading.

*Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher*  
President of the International Council of the ISHR  
*Emmanuel Onyemaechi Ogbunwezeh, Ph.D.*  
Managing Editor

## FROM THE SECTIONS

### ISHR Ukraine

*Working to Strengthen the Rule of Law in the Ukraine*

The Ukrainian Section of the ISHR is working in the field of observance of the right to a fair trial in Ukraine. We started this work in 2017, and since then we have been constantly improving on the quality and quantity of the monitoring. The year 2019 became the next big and logical step in this direction. We received official support from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany. This opens new opportunities; besides the monitoring of the court hearings we now have the capacity to conduct meetings and roundtables with government officials, judges, prosecutors and attorneys. That is exactly what we did in August and September when we had seven roundtables in six regions of Ukraine.



© ISHR Ukraine

I think it is important to give some numbers (i.e. number of participants and their professional background) which will show the involvement of the major target groups of the project. Seven meetings were attended by 129 participants, out of which 26 were judges and officials of the judicial system; 34 attorneys; 13 journalists; as well as lawyers, prosecutors, representatives of OSCE, and human rights activists. This “numerical” result shows that law professionals are interested in the work of the ISHR. We are receiving invitations to participate in the meetings of the Communication Committee of the Justice System of the High

Council of Justice and events of the Ukrainian National Bar Association. Attorneys and court officials are communicating with ISHR observers in order to insure their presence at court hearings which might contain violations of human rights.

This is a good start for a multiyear project that will last until spring 2021. What did we learn during this first couple of months?

First, we see the openness of the judges and representatives of the judicial branch of the government. In previous years majority of communication of our observers with lawyers was concentrated around attorneys, they were willing to talk to our representatives, provide us with the relevant information and documents considering the criminal cases we were monitoring. Today, we still maintain good relations with attorneys, but we also managed to establish connection with representatives of the judicial branch. Court officials showed interest in our project, their main goal is to show the international community the problems that Ukrainian judges are facing. ISHR project can become a good “Communication Bridge” between civil society and judicial system.

Second thing we discovered is the existence of problems that affect every participant of the trial (the judge, the side of defense and prosecution). These problems were confirmed to us by judges, attorneys and the prosecution in all six regions of Ukraine which are covered by the project (this is Kiev, Kharkov, Lvov, Zaporozhie, Poltava and Zhytomir). What are these problems?



A Cross section of participants © ISHR Ukraine

- Deficit of judges, Ukrainian judicial system has a huge shortage of judges. In Zhytomir we talked to a head of a local court who told us his court have only three judges. In Lvov region one of the courts has only one judge! This situation arose about five years ago, when the new post-Maidan government decided to reform the judicial system. A lot of judges were fired or resigned on their own, but the state did not appoint new judges to replace the ones that were fired. This problem is one of the main causes for violation of the right to receiving a trial within reasonable time. ISHR wrote about it in 2018 Report on observance of the right to a fair trial in Ukraine.
- Aggressive behavior of certain groups of activists (groups of radical Ukrainian nationalists, veterans of the war in the East of Ukraine, etc.) towards the judges, attorneys and prosecutors. After Maidan, in 2014 the special police unit that was responsible for security of courts was disbanded. This led to drastic decrease of security in the courts. Participants of our roundtables talked about numerous attacks and treats to judges and attorneys right in the courtrooms. This problem was confirmed at every roundtable we held. Law enforcement officials are afraid to stop such violations, because they fear to lose their jobs, freedom or even life in case they interfere. After 2014 a lot of policemen and other government officials (including judges) were fired or criminally persecuted for trying to stop the Maidan protestors.

- Aggressive Media campaigns against certain judges and attorneys. Pressure from the Media on a judge, which passed an unpopular decision or an attorney who defends the “wrong” person is a usual situation in today’s Ukrainian society. This negatively affects the conduction of a fair trial. Participants of ISHR’s roundtables expressed hope that ISHR will assist in providing objective information about the trials to the Ukrainian society and the international community.

This project already gave ISHR an opportunity to help establish a dialog among different parts of the Ukrainian society which are affected by the judicial system; they are willing to listen to us and to tell us their stories. It is up to all of us to use this opportunity to help making Ukraine a fair and just place.

*Anton Alekseyev, ISHR Ukraine*

## ISHR Iraq

### *ISHR back in Iraq*

Khalil Al-Rasho, the ISHR’s Iraq co-ordinator, and Katrin Bornmüller of ISHR Wittlich, were again 12 days in refugee camps in Kurdistan in Iraq. They had interviews with IS-Daesh victims; young girls, who were released after 5 years in IS prison during the bombardment by the Americans and the YPG in Baghoz Syria. Some of the things they heard in the course of the interviews, shocked them to the bones. Some of them then came out of the notorious IS women’s camp AL Hol in Syria, where murder and manslaughter were the order of the day. Brainwashed children screamed at the victims: “We will kill all of you unbelievers”. The victims, who were found together with battle-hardened Yezidis in Burka, were reunited with their relatives via a Yezidi community or brought to Yezidis in Shingal via the PKK. The search for the relatives of the victims was also aided by the social media, especially facebook.



*The Refugee Camp at Bardarash, Iraq © ISHR*

Words are notoriously inadequate, to capture the depths of the torments, which these 8-10 year old girls suffered during their time in the captivity of of IS Daesh fighters and their IS women, which all began, when they were captured on 3.8.2014. Rape of the most brutal kind was used as a weapon against these girls and women, because they were considered enemies and infidels. They were continuously beaten, since IS/ Daesh ideology stipulates that: if one does not strike the woman, one is not a man!

The visit to the newly opened camp, housing the refugees from Mosul BARDARASH was a shock to them. Within a few days about 14000 Kurdish refugees, who fled from Erdogan’s bombardments from Syria arrived there. A 12-year-old boy had just set himself on fire with fuel

oil. Some interviews showed the desperation of the people, who fled with almost nothing. The ISHR Wittlich financed new seminars, four alphabetization courses in camps and villages with IS victims, one birth control and English sewing and first aid course. In January, the 17<sup>th</sup> transport of the ISHR Wittlich and the 50<sup>th</sup> of the ISHR in total would be sent to the refugee camps, and at the end of January they would be flying back there for distribution.



*Katrin Bornmüller and Khalil Al Rasho (the two on the right) paid a visit to the Catholic Bishop of Al Qosh © ISHR*

We request donations from well-meaning individuals and organizations, who would want to help us in this regard. Our Bank Account is:

IGFM Wittlich IBAN DE 24 5875 1230 0000 0060 0051 54.

We would request donors to please provide their addresses, so that we can send receipts acknowledging their donations, for tax purposes.

*Katrin Bornmüller, ISHR Wittlich*

## CURRENT EVENTS

### **Germany: 30 years after the peaceful revolution in the GDR and Eastern Europe**

*The contribution of Stasi and KGB memorials to the culture of remembrance*

This was the theme of a conference of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) in Frankfurt am Main on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

30 years after the fall of communism in East Germany and Eastern Europe, the retrospective transfiguration and trivialization of this totalitarian ideology is once again widespread. In the curricula for teaching history at schools, in science, research and teaching at universities, in literature and in the media, there is largely no critical examination of communism.

Those who are 45 years old or younger today already have no personal memories of the communist tyranny in Europe.



*Norbert Altenkamp MdB © ISHR Germany*

In 2018, on the occasion of his 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, Karl Marx was paid homage in a shockingly uncritical and trivial way. That would have been unthinkable shortly after the “fall of the wall” in 1989/1990. This example makes clear which tasks and at the same time which deficits political-historical education has.

The Black Book of Communism – first published in France in 1997 on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution – lists 100 million victims of communism to date, including 20 million in the Soviet Union, 65 million in China and 2 million each in North Korea and Cambodia.

Today, memorials and museums in Eastern Germany and Eastern Europe commemorate the communist tyranny. Most of them are located in the former prisons of the Stasi and the KGB, i.e. in original locations. You make an indispensable contribution to political and historical education. During our visits to Eastern Europe in recent years we have visited the KGB museums in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Hungary. Unfortunately, reality also includes the fact that in Germany and most Eastern European countries one can speak of an open culture of remembrance, whereas in Russia one's own past or that of the former Soviet Union is glorified.

30 years after the peaceful revolution, a critical view of communism is an indispensable task of political education. In this way, a contribution is made to preventing political extremism from both the left and the right, including current extremism.

Norbert Altenkamp, Member of the Bundestag, Member of the Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the German Bundestag, gave a welcome address at the conference.

The Occupation Museum in Riga, Latvia, was presented Prof. Dr. Valters Nollendorfs. He has been Chairman of the Board of the Latvian Occupation Museum since 1996. From 1961 to 1995 he taught as a professor at the University of Wisconsin/USA. 1988–1989 he was director of the Latvian Grammar School in Münster.

Raimo Tõnissoo presented on the Occupation Museum (KGB Museum) in Tallinn, Estonia.

The Cottbus prison memorial was presented by Sylvia Wähling, director of the memorial.

Prof. Dr. Lajos Gecsényi from Imre Nagy Memorial House in Budapest, Hungary, and former General Director of the Hungarian National Archives, sent a greeting.

*Edgar Lamm, ISHR Germany*



*Prof. Dr. Valters Nollendorfs, Latvia, Raimo Tõnissoo, Estonia, IGFM Chairman Edgar Lamm (from left to right) © ISHR Germany*

## Nigeria

### *Plan Colombia: a fundamentally flawed model for Nigeria*

Christian activists in the United States are urging the US government to implement a “Plan Nigeria”, based on its military/economic Plan Colombia. This is a multi-billion dollar, ongoing programme launched by President Bill Clinton to combat drug cartels and left-wing guerrillas. An appeal for such a plan for Nigeria on the grounds of genocide prevention was recently made in an op-ed article entitled “Africa’s gathering storm”, published in *The Hill* (Frank Wolf and Matthew Daniels: [Africa’s gathering storm](#), *The Hill*, 21.09.2019). But precise details of “Plan Nigeria” have not yet been presented to the public. Very few Nigerians are aware of this Washington-based effort to commit their destiny to an uncertain future.

The cardinal question here is: Should billions of American government dollars and weapons go to the Government of Nigeria, as they did to the Colombian government in the late 1990s, to end the violence in the northeast and Middle Belt of Nigeria? Many Nigerians in the affected areas view tacit government support, government dysfunctionality, and the unsupportable corruption of government agencies and parastatals, including the security apparatus, as supporting and nourishing the violence across Nigeria.

The danger that this push for a Plan Colombia poses for Nigeria cannot be overstated. Every independent and honest appraisal of Plan Colombia has shown that it created the framework for a sequence of negatives. The US spent decades bankrolling the Colombian military and paramilitaries, and directly intervening in the country by means of Special Forces and intelligence operatives. This gave Washington access to seven military bases and guaranteed that she became complicit in the human rights abuses committed by Plan Colombia partners. US policy in Colombia was concentrated on the military-strategic alliance with the armed forces, the security apparatus and the intelligence services – all in the name of the United States national security interests. Plan Colombia led to the expansion of the “dirty war”, in which people all over Colombia were massacred, and to the expanded militarization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC, which no doubt committed its own share of atrocities in Colombia.

Is this the kind of situation any right-thinking Nigerian would choose to have implemented in Nigeria? Would any right-thinking person want to have such huge amounts of funds and weapons put at the disposal of the Nigerian military and the government, both of which have a notoriously poor human rights record?

Most Nigerians know that the government of President Muhammadu Buhari no longer makes any pretense at democracy. This is a government that has battered and eviscerated the judiciary and that throws its opponents, journalists, and activists in jail. The government has formed a shameless habit of ignoring every court order to release those unjustly imprisoned. Members of the Indigenous People of Biafra group (IPOB) agitating peacefully for Biafra have been mown down in a hail of bullets by the military under the command of Buhari. Those arrested have shown signs of having been brutally tortured in a manner that would shame medieval inquisitors. After a sham process the government ended up proscribing, and designating as a terrorist group, an organization that has been non-violent in pursuing its fundamental right to protest. Shi’ite protesters have also been felled by fusillades of military bullets at the order of this president. And

until now, no one has been held to account. The Shi'ite leader, Ibrahim El Zakzaky, is still in jail, with his fundamental human rights violated at every turn. But the Sunni Fulani herdsmen, who are on a slaughtering spree throughout the Middle Belt and the south of Nigeria, have not so much as been declared a terrorist group by the government. Many Nigerians see a double standard in the attitude of the government in this case and suspect the reason for it is that President Buhari is himself a Fulani. Need we mention Sambo Dasuki, who has been in jail since this government came to power? He was slammed into jail without trace, and due process has been denied him at every turn. Many journalists are rotting in jails across Nigeria while this government makes plans to criminalize free speech, under the ruse of fighting fake news.

Over and above terrorizing the opposition, attempting to muzzle free speech and sending the military into civilian spaces to terrify non-violent agitators, this government has been unable or unwilling to stop the violence against Christians by Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram in the north, Middle Belt and southern parts of Nigeria. But the government has been quick to send soldiers to attack civilian protestors, including the Shi'ites and members of IPOB.

Is this a government that the United States should entrust with implementing a policy with far-reaching and unforeseen possibilities for Nigeria? Is Nigeria still a colonial dependency that can have a policy imposed on her without her citizens being allowed to actively defend their interests?

The lack of public discussion and debate on this in Nigeria is really ominous. This is an area where Nigerians should not keep quiet. Our destiny for many decades to come is at stake here. If Nigerians of goodwill, and Nigerian Christians in particular, keep quiet over this ill-advised move, we may soon find that enormous funds and weapons are to be channeled to Buhari for military activity against not only Boko Haram, but also against all others that stand in the way of the Muslim Fulani agenda.

In the event of that, some of the following scenarios may unfold:

First, Nigeria may be forced to host US military personnel, brought in as trainers and advisers. In 2009, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua rejected pressure for Nigeria to host the United States African Command. Welcoming American military personnel under any guise may be a backdoor into Nigeria hosting an American military base. It is accepted wisdom that wherever the Americans land, they never leave.

Is that what Nigerians want? Wouldn't that raise the ire of Islamic militants and put Nigeria in the crosshairs of metastasized terror networks, who would start viewing Nigeria as the base of American operations against them, thereby putting innocent Nigerians at risk of terror attacks?



Dr. Ogbunwezeh emphasizing a point  
© ISHR Germany

Second, there is no such thing as a free lunch anywhere. Any bilateral arrangement that is to be funded by the US must totally address US interests, security and strategic concerns. These concerns and interests may not necessarily be the interests and concerns of ordinary Nigerians. What about the opportunity cost? What is the alternative that Nigeria would forego by accepting the plan?

Third, the massive inflow of American funds would naturally fund the corruption and further underwrite the dysfunctionality of our government, which has persisted since our independence. That is what petrodollars and aid dollars have done to the Nigerian economy. Anybody thinking that such free monies would lead to stability and development has not studied the trajectory of Rentier economies.

Moreover, the funds coming from "Plan Nigeria" would certainly increase the capacity of the government to strike down legitimate opposition by labelling opponents terrorists and fake news peddlers. Buhari's government has shown its draconian face on so many occasions. The government has finally eviscerated the judiciary, with its overthrow of Chief Justice Walter Onnoghen and appointment of a totally unqualified lackey in his place. It has severally disobeyed court orders, and arrested and detained journalists and activists arbitrarily in violation of Nigerian laws. Who would hold this government in check when the negative sides of the Plan start manifesting themselves, as they did in Colombia – the legislature? I doubt if that would be of any effect or consequence. The present National Assembly is viewed by many Nigerians as a lapdog of the executive. I fear that if Plan Colombia is adopted for Nigeria, the human rights violations witnessed in Colombia under that plan would be the antics of spoiled kids in comparison to what this government would wreak in Nigeria. Nigerians were caught in the brutal fangs of a Buhari government between 1983 and 1985 and these fears are not unfounded.

Furthermore, these funds would give the Nigerian government, which many suspect is systematically Islamizing and Northernizing Nigeria into a nepotistic Fulani enclave, the financial and moral backing of a super-power, for its final push to eviscerate all opposition and install a tyrannical government that owes its legitimacy to American support and not to the mandate and will of the Nigerian people.

Repackaging Plan Colombia for Nigeria under whatever ruse would undermine the progress the country has achieved through blood and sweat and would be a grievous error. It would end once and for all our continuing claim to nationhood, and deepen the primitive fault lines that have dogged unity, peace and progress in Nigeria. Mutual suspicion would be exacerbated, since sections of the country that are presently very marginalized by the Buhari government's unabashed Pro-North and Pro-Fulani Realpolitik would now have just cause to believe that the government has been given carte blanche to secure Muslim Fulani ascendancy in Nigeria in furtherance of US strategic interests. The plan would break those weak strings and forces that have held the country together. It would set the country up as a tyrannical stronghold of US interests that makes a pretense of democracy and human rights but is tele-guided from Washington. Or it would plunge the country into a theatre of war: unstable, highly volatile and a fomenter and exporter of terror.

This assessment is based on the massive scale of the corruption that has dogged our dysfunctional government institutions in Nigeria. Some elements in our police force and the military have been variously accused, with very good reason, of selling weapons to armed robbers

and members of Boko Haram. How then can we be sure that the mass quantities of weapons that would be sent to our security forces, consequent on a Plan Colombia-Nigerian style, would not find their way into the lairs of the terrorists and armed robbers who have money to pay for them?

Plan Colombia is not a functional response to the Nigerian security situation at the moment. Nigeria and Nigerians don't need another war directed from a Western capital. We are not a drug-producing nation. We have had a civil war, which attracted all the international vultures and dogs of war. We have close to four million obituaries as a placard to that collective madness. We offered the world a ringside seat to that very first case of televised, fratricidal genocide in post-independence Africa. We should not stand aside and watch as actors beyond our shores plan to convert our fragile peace into a conflagration. The hard military option has not acquitted itself creditably as a solution to complex conflicts like that of Nigeria. Such options have been known to create war economies, which keep on fanning the flames of unending war, as we see in DR Congo.

Plan Colombia, no matter how it is adapted, is not a credible option for Nigeria. Nigeria is too complex for such a plan. This was also the conclusion reached by Major Elliot Burns in his 2016 MA thesis presented to the US Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, entitled "Colombia to Nigeria: Exploring the Possibilities of a Security Co-operation Strategy for Nigeria Based on the Successes Realized through Plan Colombia". While he acknowledged the threat of Boko Haram, the author did not foresee the Fulani herdsmen crisis or the agitation for the restoration of Biafra by the IPOB. In spite of these lapses, he concluded that Plan Colombia cannot be successfully implemented at the present time in Nigeria ([E. Burns](#), accessed on 25.10.2019). By the present time he meant 2016. When one looks at Nigeria, three years later, one would conclude that the situation is even more complex.

Any plan for Nigeria should and must come from Nigerians themselves. Nigeria does not need a Plan Colombia. In fact we already had a plan, decided by Nigerians sitting in a constituent assembly and submitted to the presidency in the final days of the last administration. Most of the recommendations of that assembly would go a long way in helping the Nigerian socioeconomic, geopolitical and security situation. We should be pushing for its implementation, not for the imposition of a plan designed for a drug-producing country and proposed by the US to attain its specific security interests. It cannot be overemphasized that any Plan Nigeria must take into account the security challenges posed by Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen, while giving serious consideration to the human rights concerns of Nigerians, the rights of vulnerable groups and the rights of minorities. This is a clarion call for all Nigerians to raise their voices and be counted. No plan to commit us should omit us.

*Onyemaechi Emmanuel Franklyne Ogbunwezeh, ISHR Germany*

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