



ISHR NEWSLETTER

August 2018

IMPORTANT DATES

9 August

Int. Day of the World's
Indigenous Peoples

12 August

International Youth Day

19 August

World Humanitarian Day

21 August

Int. Day of Remembrance
to the Victims of Terrorism

30 August

Int. Day of the Victims of
Enforced Disappearances

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HAFEN AWARDED HUMAN RIGHTS PRIZE

ISHR Switzerland has decided to award Karl and Wenche Hafen, ISHR Germany, with the 2018 Swiss Human Rights Prize in recognition of their decades of dedication to the worldwide ISHR movement. We congratulate them on their well-deserved nomination! For more information, please

visit: <http://www.igfm.ch/2018/08/10/schweizerischer-menschenrechtspreis-2018/>

More to come in the next issue!

"After Ivan Agrusov, the founder of the ISHR, Mr. Hafen, with the support of his wife, Wenche, has remained the heart and soul of our organization. Thank you both for all you have done!"

– Dr. Carmen Krusch-Grün, ISHR Germany



Wenche and Karl Hafen at the annual meeting of ISHR Germany in April 2015

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Visiting with the President of Korea, the Joint Chief of Staff & the General of the 8th US army regarding peaceful reunification



Thomas Schirmmacher pictured during his recent visit to South Korea

Interview with Thomas Schirmmacher

What can you tell us about your conversation with high-ranking military representatives in South Korea?

I spoke with Lieutenant General Michael A. Bills, the commanding general of the eighth US army stationed in Korea and of the Korean border troops, and with Jeong Kyeong Doo, the Joint Chief of Staff of the South Korean Army, who presides over the three commanders of the forces. In both of their cases and in those of other military personnel, it was clear that they are hoping and praying that there will be no armed conflict with North Korea, despite training intensively for it.

I also spoke with the leading military chaplains, and not for the first time. In my view, they are exerting a very positive influence, because they do not religiously elevate war; instead, they convey that ethically, peace is always the better option, and war can only be the last resort of defense.

What was the most remarkable aspect of your visit?

At the National Prayer Breakfast in Korea, where I also briefly met the President and his wife, there was no war rhetoric whatsoever; there was only prayer over and over again for a peaceful reunification, with Germany time and again being named as an example.

Have you visited the line of demarcation between North and South Korea?

Yes, at several points in fact. Most frequently, I've been present at the transition of the United Nations between South and North Korea, while serving various functions; I have represented the World Evangelical Alliance, represented the ISHR as its president, and at other times, I have been accompanied by the most important leaders of the church in Korea. By now I know the area so well, that I could immediately tell that the shots recently fired at a fleeing North Korean officer were illegal, because the North Korean gunman could only achieve the appropriate angle from South Korean territory.

I have not only gotten to know the Berlin Wall at various spots, but I have also seen the walls and border fences in Israel, in Cyprus, and those between India and Pakistan. However, Korea's is a particularly desolate one because it is actually a vast no-man's-land. And while Seoul is getting closer and closer to the border, the North Korean side is only no man's land for a long distance, where only military can be seen.

What is the reason behind the frequent invitations to visit Korea?

The International Society for Human Rights has worked closely with partner organizations in South Korea for a long time, especially in regards to researching the human rights situation in North Korea.

Did you report on the reunification of Germany while in Korea?

Yes, I answer questions regarding it all the time. The division between North and South Korea is already of a much longer duration than the division of Germany, and it goes much deeper. In the beginning, there was a cruel war against one another, which created wounds that are still not healed to this day. Also, propaganda in North Korea has put down much deeper roots. Christians from South Korea told me that during encounters, they did not recognize their relatives in North Korea, and they were unable to find a common basis for discussion. In addition, South Korea itself was not a democracy for a long time and still has some democratic deficits; for example, in the area of government corruption. It was only gradually that the theme of 'freedom' became the central point of difference.

Still, German reunification is a constant topic of conversation in South Korea, and hopes have been high since 1989 that Korea could experience something similar. There is a parallel as well; German reunification occurred when the Soviet Union no longer supported and protected the GDR. However, with regard to North Korea, the Soviet Union was replaced by China, which has kept North Korea financially alive through payments for access to the sea; it holds its protective hand over the land. If China were to terminate its support, reunification would only be a matter of time.

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR in Croatia & Bosnia

Katrin Bornmüller reports on her visit to ISHR Croatia & on the delivery of aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina

Beginning on July 1, I visited Jadranka Cigelj, section leader of ISHR Croatia, in Zagreb. Ms. Cigelj was a victim of the Serbian concentration camps of Omarska and Trnopolje. The memories of rape, torture, and the unbearable agony experienced by the inmates through the floggings, shootings, and all the other horrors of the world, which were perpetrated against these poor human beings, still haunt her. The Croatian state continues to deny the victims adequate compensation; as a result, Ms. Cigelj is filing a lawsuit against the state, which if need be, will be taken to the Court of Justice of the European Union. Her pension is 250€, 93€ of which she no longer receives from Bosnia because she does not live there, and rent alone costs 160€. Furthermore, she must pay for treatment for her illness, adding to impossible financial situation. She explained that without the help of ISHR Germany, she would have not survived.



Katrin Bornmüller (left) pictured with a representative of MDD Merhamet in Prijedor

Ms. Cigelj was invited to the memorial day of Srebrenica 1995 - 2018, which we attended together. It was a purely meaningless political event in parliament, in which no victim spoke. The mayor of the city of Zagreb, Milan Bandic, was the only one who remembered all the victims of this war. At least there was one victim from Srebrenica (Jadranka Cigelj) present in the room.

The next stage of the journey was accompanying the arrival of the 9th transport of humanitarian goods from ISHR Working-group in Wittlich to Prijedor in the Republic Srpska (part of Bosnia-Herzegovina). It was such a great feeling when Mirsad Duratovic was able to bring the transport through customs. Of the more than 700 poorest families supplied by the local charity association and ISHR partner, MDD Merhamet, around 20 helpers had been located to help with unloading. The relief supplies are stored in an empty house, for which the association rents for 50€ per month; they finance themselves from donations. However, the state collects taxes wherever it can; for example, the association was forced to pay customs on the hospital beds that came as a donation for the state hospital, which is **sickening**.

MDD Merhamet cares for people from many ethnic backgrounds, including Bosnians, Croats, Roma, and Serbs. If a family of four is lucky, they will receive a pension of 130€. An allowance for children is allotted only after the 3rd child, and then it is a mere 45€ per month. Roma families in particular tend to have many children; before the war, they all had houses and work and now they have nothing. There are many people who have almost nothing to eat. The hospitals have no medication available. If someone needs to go to the hospital for an infusion, they must pay for it themselves. For the coming winter, the most pressing request is for flour.

The AWO Dusseldorf donated a bus to the association, but the authorities in Republic Srpska demand paperwork that the German authorities do not have. The IGFM Wittlich will continue to help.

*Katrin Bornmüller
Co-Chair of the Board of ISHR Germany*

ISHR Lithuania

Transport of hospital beds & supplies to two hospitals in need

On the morning of July 23, a new humanitarian aid transport from Wittlich, Germany arrived in Lithuania. This time, the in-kind donations, including furniture, clothing, shoes, etc. have been donated to two Lithuanian hospitals - Kupiskis Hospital and Rokiskis Hospital. The heads of the hospitals were especially grateful for the delivery of the 21 hospital beds in great condition, which are critical to effectively helping sick patients. All medical supplies in the small cities of Lithuania are very outdated and non-functional, since the state does not have the money to replace them. It is only thanks to donors from abroad that the necessary help can reach people in need. Therefore, we thank the donors from Trier and the ISHR working group Wittlich under the leadership of Katrin Bornmüller for this opportunity to support these Lithuanian hospitals. Thank you also to the nurses and medical staff from Kupiski's hospital who worked hard as an unloading team. ISHR Lithuania was responsible for the organization of the transport.



Jurgita Samoskiene (left) and the delivery driver pictured at the arrival of the transport in Lithuania

*Jurgita Samoskiene
Chair of ISHR Lithuania*

ISHR Ukraine

Trial of D. Mastikasheva: Confession obtained under torture considered admissible



Darya Mastikasheva (left) pictured during the court hearing on July 12.

ISHR experts in Ukraine have been monitoring the trial of Darya Mastikasheva, who is accused of high treason and collaboration with Russian Secret Service, since November 2017.

One year ago, on August 15, 2017, Ms. Mastikasheva was abducted by armed and masked individuals who blocked her car and took her away in the trunk of another car with a bag over her head in an unknown direction. For several days, she was allegedly beaten, choked, threatened with reprisal against her young son and mother in order to dislodge a confession to the crimes with which she was charged.

After Ms. Mastikasheva gave her consent, the video with her confession was shown by the head of the Secret Service of Ukraine (SBU) V. Gritsak at a press conference in Kiev on August 17, 2017, to report the capture of a dangerous spy. The criminal proceedings began, despite the basis of this confession being obtained under conditions of alleged abduction and torture. According to her defense lawyer, all of the confessions obtained from Ms. Mastikasheva through torture and threatening should be declared inadmissible.

In alignment with this position, the defense lawyer stated during the court session held on July 12, 2018, that it is necessary to watch the video of the press conference of the head of the SBU and to interrogate several witnesses. One of the judges responded by stating that consideration of the role of kidnapping and torture will not be provided for as a part of the trial, and in fact has nothing to do with this case at all.

Thus, without denying the fact of the abduction and torture of the accused, the court found this violation of Ms. Mastikasheva's rights insufficiently serious to raise the issue of inadmissibility of evidence collected by the prosecution. This will result in the continuation of the trial and the continued detention of Darya Mastikasheva, who has been in remand prison since August of 2017.

*Anton Alekseyev
Executive Director of ISHR Ukraine*

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Nicaragua

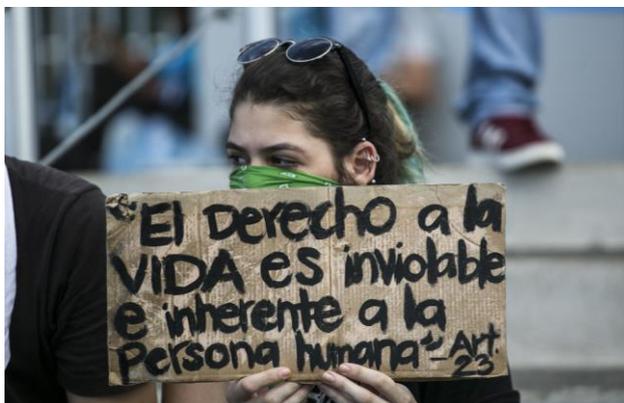
Ortega regime continues violent repression of Nicaraguan citizens; over 350 dead, torture reported

Beginning on April 18 of this year, the Republic of Nicaragua rose in a civic insurrection with the objective of obtaining their freedom and the right to have a true democracy that has been usurped for years. From that date until today, this effort has cost the lives of approximately 360 people, including children, students, poor farmers, and ordinary citizens, as well as over two thousand people injured, missing, and/or detained. In addition to all of this is the ongoing repression against those who support the insurrectional movement; this includes being forcefully removed from their homes and taken to prison where they are tortured, beaten, and charged with crimes they did not commit. Among those detained are minors and elderly people.



Demonstration of students and alumni of the main private schools of Managua, Nicaragua. May 15, 2018. The signs read: 'Assassin wanted' and display the face of authoritarian president Daniel Ortega. Photo by: Jorge Mejía Peralta, via Flickr.

Recently, on Saturday, July 14, student protestors from the Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN) were attacked with high-caliber weapons by the national police, members of the Sandinista Youth (a pro-government paramilitary group) and by security forces contracted by the government to attack the population. These events left two university students dead and 11 wounded. Several had defended the right to protest with mortars, stones, and barricades that serve as a defense against such aggression. When the young protesting students were attacked with heavy weapons, they fled to a nearby Catholic church (Divina misericordia) where they took refuge with the seriously injured. Those carrying out the assault against the students did not allow the ambulances to attend to the injured, which led to the death of at least one student who died due to lack of medical attention inside the church.



Protester near the Central American University in Managua, Nicaragua. May 16, 2018. The signs read: 'The right to life is inviolable and inherent to a human being – Article 23'. Photo by: Jorge Mejía Peralta, via Flickr.

They continued firing continued towards the church. The Catholic church and members of human rights and of international organisations mediated for the release of those who were trapped inside the church, who were then taken to the Cathedral of Managua to receive care. The violence continued in other neighborhoods of Managua, as well as in the city of Masaya, where the indigenous neighborhood of Monimbo is located. This area has been a bastion of the civic resistance of the insurrectional movement.

On Sunday, July 15, the towns of Diría, Diriomo, Niquinohomo, and Catarina, located about 40km from Managua, were attacked with the objective of entering Masaya and the indigenous neighborhood of Monimbo.

These disproportionate attacks left dead and wounded, and many were arrested; these acts of aggression terrorized the inhabitants inside the attacked cities.

When the armed paramilitary groups and police arrived in Masaya, they were repelled by the indigenous people and general population. There had already been strong confrontations in Masaya, in which four policemen were among the dead. The citizens arrested several of the attackers and verified, that three among those detained are citizens of Cuba. They are being held until human rights organizations, both national and international, such as the representatives of the OAS, the European Economic Community and/or the UN arrive to witness that the government of Nicaragua is hiring mercenaries of other nationalities, such as Cubans and Venezuelans. As has been speculated in the media of the country, this provides an explanation as to the degree of brutality they are able to use against Nicaraguans; because they are not Nicaraguan, they are not afraid to kill a Nicaraguan brother.

These violent attacks are occurring at the national level - in Granada, Leon, Masaya, Jinotepe, Diriamba, Matagalpa, Chontales and other cities in the country. All are being attacked by these gangs which are supported by the so-called national police. Nicaragua is currently a lawless state in the hands of these armed groups that assault citizens, burn down homes, loot shops, and create panic within the population, all under the tolerant gaze of the police. This is occurring at the service of the presidential couple Ortega Murillo. The population currently stays inside their homes as a way to protect themselves and their lives.

*Dr. Jose Orlando Lovo
ISHR Nicaragua*

ISHR EVENTS

Workshop in Kiev: 8 ISHR Sections, One Purpose

Bloggers from the Eastern Partnership & Russia meet to strengthen their skills and plan the next stage of the Human Rights Online project



Bloggers participate in a group discussion about the joint platform for the countries of the EaP & Russia

Human rights bloggers, one from each section in the countries of the Eastern Partnership (ISHR Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine) as well from ISHR Russia and two project management members from ISHR Germany attended the workshop in Kiev, Ukraine from July 27-28.

The workshop was the launch event for this year's project 'Human Rights Online: into the regions and into the future', which is funded by the German Foreign Office as a part of a larger

program to support civil society and pluralism in the region. Human Rights Online was initiated by Dr. Carmen Krusch-Grün of ISHR Germany in 2016 as a blog platform for our sections to share news and information about human rights issues and violations across the post-Soviet countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and Russia. Bloggers from each section were trained to use the tri-lingual (EN, DE, RU) WordPress site to upload their own posts onto the platform from on the ground. One of the goals of the workshop was to deepen their skills in working with the site and prepare them to lead workshops in regions facing especially intense human rights challenges (not in capital cities or regions).

Day one focused on analyzing the current audience and viewership of the website, trouble shooting problem areas, and developing concrete strategies to improve the efficiency and usability of the site. The afternoon focused on refreshing the skills of the bloggers and practicing using new tools on the site, including posting in native languages (besides Russian), as well as on entering SEO information into posts to boost their rankings in Google.

Day two involved a discussion on use of social media and the future SEO strategy to boost views of the site and its posts. The second part of the day focused on discussing the implementation plan for the coming workshops in the target regions of each country.

Two target regions per country were strategically selected by each section, in order to introduce Human Rights Online to areas that are outside of the capital cities, and therefore generally more marginalized and lacking in access to tools to raise awareness of the human rights issues affecting them. Therefore, the workshops will engage community members and young people from in discussing current human rights issues affecting each local area and to

introduce the site as a platform to share and discuss these problems with each other and the public. We hope to give people a voice who would otherwise remain unheard in mainstream political discourse.

The findings will be presented in posts on Human Rights Online, as well as in human rights report, to be passed on to the German Foreign Office. This will contribute to building a better understanding of the complex challenges facing minorities and facing people affected by conflict, among others.

Thank you to all the participants in the workshop and to our sections for all of their hard work in making this project a reality! See Dr. Krusch-Grün's brand new report (DE, EN, RU) on her impressions from Kiev and Ukraine: <https://humanrights-online.org/en/ukraine-the-country-of-origin-of-the-worlds-most-beautiful-melodies-has-played-itself-out/>

*Maya Robinson
ISHR Germany*



Anastasiya Alekseyev, ISHR Ukraine, introduces a new SEO and social media strategy for the site

Discussion at Global Media Forum 2018 with UN Rapporteur & President of ISHR

Topic: Religion - Cause or cure for inequalities in society?



Prof. Dr. T. Schirrmacher (left) during the discussion with UN Rapporteur, Dr. A. Shaheed (right)

Excerpt from the press release issued by the CISG, University of Bonn: On June 12, 2018, the Center for International Security and Governance (CISG) and the International Institute for Religious Freedom (IIRF) hosted a panel discussion at the Global Media Forum of Deutsche Welle.

Focusing on religion, the question to be dealt with was if religion is cause or cure for social inequalities. Therefore, Dr. Ahmed Shaheed (UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief) and Prof. Dr. Thomas Schirrmacher (Director of the IIRF, President of the ISHR) – two experts on religion and human rights – discussed this issue. Prof.

Bindenagel was not able to attend but sent a video message which was shown at the beginning.

In a nutshell: What is the appropriate response to the earlier mentioned question? As Prof. Bindenagel revealed at the beginning, religion can be both cure and cause of violence and inequalities. Shaheed adds that the image of religion – first and foremost of Islam – is negative at present although only individual cases underline this assumption. However, perceptions change over time and it is highly important that belief-systems do not stand above international law. *See the full article at:* <https://cisg-bonn.com/2018/06/religion-cause-or-cure-for-inequalities-in-society/>

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