



ISHR NEWSLETTER

July 2018

IMPORTANT DATES

18 July

Nelson Mandela Day

28 July

Anniversary of the
ratification of the 1951
Refugee Convention in
Geneva

30 July

Int. Day of Friendship

30 July

World Day against
Trafficking in Persons

CONTENTS

From the President.....	1
<i>Schirmacher thanks former Federal Minister, Hermann Gröhe</i>	<i>1</i>
From the Sections.....	1
ISHR Spain	
<i>The Mediterranean and Europe in the center: tensions, conflicts and human displacements</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Spanish civil society condemns anti-gypsyism in Italy</i>	<i>2</i>
ISHR Ukraine	
<i>Journalist Vasily Muravitsky released from remand prison</i>	<i>3</i>
ISHR Switzerland	
<i>New generation on the board.....</i>	<i>4</i>
Current Developments	4
Migration in Europe & the U.S.	
<i>From kids in cages to indefinite family detention: The face of migration in the U.S.</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>'An Invented Crisis': Migration into EU down to pre-2015 levels</i>	<i>5</i>
ISHR Events	5
<i>ISHR President spoke with 40 Grand Muftis or Ministers of Islamic Affairs from 25 countries.....</i>	<i>5</i>

DISCRIMINATION MUST BE STOPPED

This month, our sections reported a disturbing rise in persecution and discrimination towards Roma minorities in Europe (see the report from ISHR Spain). This example, among others, highlights the danger of xenophobia and racism in the EU and elsewhere as a grave threat to the human rights of minorities, which cannot go unchallenged.

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others" – Nelson Mandela

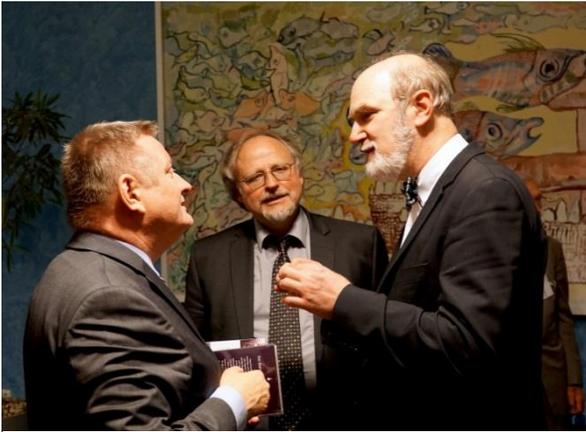


Children at a rally against family separation of migrants in the U.S.

Source: P. A. Gethen, Wikimedia Commons

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Schirmmacher thanks former Federal Minister, Hermann Gröhe, for the “most momentous rebuke in all my life”



(from left) Hermann Gröhe, Heiner Bielefeldt (UN Rapporteur), Thomas Schirmmacher © M. Warnecke

(Bonn, 25.06.2018) Thomas Schirmmacher published his speech at the opening of the religious freedom chair at the Gießen School of Theology (Freie Theologische Hochschule Gießen). In it he thanks the vice-chair of the CDU/CSU in the German Parliament and former health minister, Hermann Gröhe, for the “most momentous rebuke in all my life”.

To quote from the speech: “I especially welcome the former federal minister and leading member of our parliament, Mr. Hermann Gröhe. He has in 1999 – at that time still in the opposition – initiated the first discussion of our theme in the German Parliament and was outraged afterwards, seeing the thin and unreliable data provided by us. His sentence

‘That must change’ had the effect, that professor Sauer and I founded the IIRF, which today has offices on all continents. Dear Mr. Gröhe, my deepest thanks for this most momentous rebuke in all my life, which, in the last analysis, was the key factor for the establishment of this professorial chair.

Thomas Schirmmacher

President of the International Council of ISHR

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR Spain

Debate: "The Mediterranean & Europe in the center: tensions, conflicts & human displacements"

Among violent conflicts, "springs", migrations, marches and refugee camps, and massive displacements of people, the Mediterranean is again the scene of the battle for the future and for one's own life. The dream of paradise turned into a nightmare, lives submerged in the waters or stranded in their destinies, uprooted, disintegrated. In this scenario, political, social and humanitarian issues of responsibility unavoidably emerge.

Being situated and living in this context, the Ministry of Culture, the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya) and the Municipality of Tarragona collaborate in the planning of the 2018 Mediterranean Games and in the design of a cultural program that will precede and accompany the different sports activities. This cultural program covers different disciplines such as dance, theater, music, exhibitions, manifestations of intangible heritage, thought or cinema, among others, in order to deepen knowledge and understanding of the cultural diversity of the participating countries.

ISHR Spain was invited to participate in the debate, in which its President, Ms. Enerida Isuf, took part. In her speech, she discussed migration as a social phenomenon, the European legal framework on migration, discrimination against immigrants and the lack of social justice in national and international migration law. Through this intertwined programming of films and public debates, we wished to encourage thinking and reflection on contemporary reality in this vast geographical and cultural space, also emphasizing the value



Ms. Enerida Isuf, President of ISHR Spain, speaking at the event (left).

of culture - and cultural diversity - as an essential element for dialogue, mutual learning and coexistence. The cycle took place at El Seminari, in the center of Tarragona, on June 6, 2018.

Further participants included Jaime Palomera, an anthropologist from the ERC Grassroots Economics Project & member of the Hydra Cooperativa, and Lena de Botton, a Researcher at the Community of Research Center on Excellence for All and Professor of Sociology at the University of Barcelona, as well as the moderator, Xavier Torrens, Professor of Political Science at the University of Barcelona.



ISHR Spain joined the protests held in Barcelona in front of the European Parliament Representative Office and Embassy of Italy on June 27.

Spanish civil society condemns anti-gypsyism in Italy and asks Italian government to uphold the rule of law

Only a few weeks in office, the new Italian government coalition of far-right Northern League and the eurosceptic Five Star Movement is shaping a racist narrative against Roma in Italy by promoting anti-gypsyist actions and continuing to engage in hate speech. As European Roma and pro-Roma civil society, we strongly condemn the unconstitutional proposal of Interior Minister Matteo Salvini to establish a census for Roma in Italy and ask the Italian government to uphold the rule of law and democratic values.

It is now time for European institutions, civil society organisations and all citizens believing in democracy and human rights to speak up, recognize the nature and the cause of hate speech directed towards Roma, and push for the enforcement of the existing legal mechanisms of the European Union.

Even though the proposal for a census of Roma and for expulsion all non-Italian Roma is clearly against the law and has already been retracted by his government, Salvini counts on the support of a large percentage of the population and successfully uses antigypsyism to increase his voter base. Sadly, hate speech by Italian politicians is on the rise and is not a new phenomenon, especially among members of the Northern League.

The mayor of Treviso in 2015 stated that it is best “to dress Roma up as rabbits, so the hunters will shoot at them”. In 2017, Mara Bizzotto declared on April 8, International Roma Day, that “we should rather commemorate the victims of Roma’s felonies” [instead of Roma victims of genocide]. Just a few days ago, Italian League member MEP Danilo Oscar Lancini argued against future Roma related EU policies and funding in the European Parliament since “Roma do not want to be integrated”.

80 years ago Europe experienced a similar narrative and we all know the consequences. This is why we ask the European institutions and the broader public to act responsibly and not only stand by and watch. Everyone should condemn this racist act. The European institutions must make use of the available mechanisms and start penalizing hate-speech against all groups. The European Commission needs to launch an infringement procedure against this Italian government concerning Roma people’s housing situation, which we have been calling for several years. There is no justification for Salvini’s antigypsyist acts and statements. It is a high time to join our forces and fight anti-gypsyism because the future of our society is at stake. Europe must start defending its core values and stand up for our right to live in a racism-free society.



Civil society organizations including ISHR Spain advocating for Roma rights at the protest in June.

*Enerida Isuf
President of ISHR Spain*

ISHR Ukraine

Journalist Vasily Muravitsky released from remand prison, detention reduced to house arrest



Vasily Muravitsky pictured in the glass box called 'the aquarium' in which prisoners sit during court hearings

Legal experts of the International Society for Human Rights have been carefully monitoring the proceedings of the case of journalist Vasily Muravitsky, who was first arrested in August of 2017 on accusations of treason and infringement of the territorial integrity of Ukraine through his journalistic activities. He has since been held in remand prison, until very recently.

On June 27, 2018, the Korolevsky District Court of Zhitomir held a hearing on his case, in which two petitions were considered regarding the measure of restraint for the accused, including the extension of detention and on changing the measure of restraint to house arrest.

The ISHR has repeatedly pointed out violations of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as criminal procedural

legislation regarding the measure of restraint for V. Muravitsky. The court took into account the fact that prosecutors once again failed to substantiate the necessity of applying an exceptional measure of restraint in the form of detention, did not prove the impossibility of avoiding the risks associated with the failure of the accused to fulfill their procedural obligations in the event of applying alternative measures of restraint. Based on this, and also guided by the practice of the European Court of Human Rights (which obliges the court to have a good reason for making a decision on the extension of the term of detention; consider alternatives to the detention, and also indicates that the presence of suspicion that a person has committed serious crimes in itself cannot justify a long period of pre-trial detention), the court decided to change the measure of restraint in the form of custody for round-the-clock house arrest.

This is the most significant achievement for the whole time of monitoring by the International Society for Human Rights of the case of Vasily Muravitsky, who spent 11 months (330 days total) in remand prison. Vasily Muravitsky also issued a statement following his release, in which he thanked the International Society for Human Rights, among other prominent human rights organizations, for their support of his case.

This is also an important event for the Ukrainian judicial practice, since the adoption of a decision on the use of house arrest on articles where the Criminal Procedure Code prohibits other measures of restraint other than detention, has very few precedents. That means that in Ukraine there has been a positive tendency of the courts to apply the norms of international law and the practice of the European Court.

The ISHR legal experts monitoring the case express hope that this trend will affect other processes in which the accused are held for several years in jail in anticipation of a decision on their case (the case of A. Melnik and others – almost 4 years in jail, the case did not begin to be considered in fact; the case of A. Schegolev – almost 3 years; the case of E. Mefedov – 4 years, etc.)

Despite this, it should be noted that for V. Muravitsky, the change in the measure of restraint does not in any way stop and does not change the course of criminal proceedings; the charges have not been dropped.

Therefore, the experts of the International Society for Human Rights will continue monitoring this litigation. Stay up to date on this case and others currently being monitored in the Ukraine by visiting:

<https://humanrights-online.org/en/our-news/>.

*Anton Alekseyev
Executive Director of ISHR Ukraine*

ISHR Switzerland

New generation on the board of ISHR Switzerland

During the General Assembly of ISHR Switzerland on May 26, 2018, a generation change took place on the board of the section. The longtime executive director, Monique Schlegel, resigned from her position after 30 years as director. In recognition of her extraordinary efforts, she was appointed honorary president for the ISHR Switzerland. Hanspeter Hartmann, previously the President, was elected to become the new executive director.



Hanspeter Hartmann, Exec. Director



Rita Schlegel, President

Rita Schlegel, the former executive director's daughter, was elected as the new president. Ms. Schlegel has also been with the IGFM Switzerland for decades, as well as a member of the delegation who presented the Swiss Human Rights Award in Dharamsala, India to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2000. Furthermore, Michel Baumann, former General Secretary of the International Council of ISHR, became the new vice president of ISHR Switzerland after Simone Schlegel resigned from the board. For more information, please visit: <http://www.igfm.ch/kontakt/vorstand/>.

*Hanspeter Hartmann
Executive Director of ISHR Switzerland*

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Migration in the U.S. & Europe



Photo provided by U.S. Custom and Border Protection to a reporter on tour of detention facility in McAllen, Texas. Reporters were not allowed to take their own photos. June 17 2018. Via Wikimedia Commons

From kids in cages to indefinite family detention: The face of migration in America

The zero-tolerance policy of border control along the Mexican border with United States initiated recently by the Trump administration has involved criminally prosecuting any undocumented migrants entering the United States, including those applying for asylum. This in turn involved separating children from their parents, because children cannot legally be jailed. Intense protest against the extremely inhumane practice in which over 2300 children were reported by Homeland Security to have been separated from their families and held in cages within detention centers pressured President Donald Trump to

rescind the policy. However, he has simply replaced it with indefinite family detention, which is also absolutely inhumane and raises the ghost of the ugly past of the internment camps used in the U.S. during WWII. It is also illegal, as it contradicts the Flores settlement, which limits the detention of children to 20 days. At the moment, mothers with children are released after three weeks with ankle monitors that can be tracked by ICE. The Department of Justice has, however, announced plans to continue indefinite detention. Documents from the U.S. Navy have also revealed plans to create 'austere' detention centers in several border states.

These present gross violations of human and children's rights which must be challenged by the international community. Xenophobia cannot be allowed to prevail in robbing human beings, including children, of their rights under the guise of promoting national security. There are no simple solutions to the issue of migration, and this cannot be the way forward.



Activists protesting family separation in San Francisco on June 30, 2018. Photo: P. A. Gethen via Wikimedia Commons

‘An Invented Crisis’ – Migration to Europe down to pre-2015 levels

Meanwhile in Europe, authoritative information gathered by organizations like Frontex and the UNHCR clearly demonstrates that levels of migration to Europe have decreased sharply, to pre-2015 levels. This has not prevented far right-wing parties and leaders all over Europe from winning campaigns based on fear mongering of a ‘migrant invasion’. There are of course ongoing challenges in managing the number of migrants who already entered the European Union (especially during the surge in 2015), but migration has dropped just as sharply as it rose. Matteo Villa, a migration specialist at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies cited in the New York Times called it ‘an invented crisis’, which nationalist parties have used to their advantage. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that the facts are heard and not unfounded fear, so that solutions that are respectful of universal human dignity and rights can be reached.

Maya Robinson

ISHR EVENTS

ISHR President spoke to 40 Grand Muftis or Ministers of Islamic Affairs from 25 countries



Thomas Schirmmacher with the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shawki Ibrahim Allam
© BQ/Warnecke

(Bonn, 29.06.2018) As was announced only now due to security reasons, the Syrian-Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II and the President of the ISHR, Thomas Schirmmacher, addressed the highest Muslim leaders of 40 countries and called upon them to protect their Christian minorities, two days before Christmas 2017. They spoke at the “2017 – Year of Islamic Solidarity: Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue” in Azerbaijan’s capital of Baku.

The invitations came directly from the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and His Virtue Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, the highest ranking Muslim of Azerbaijan and the Grand Sheikh of the whole Caucasus region. They also invited the Vatican, who was represented by a delegation under the leadership of the Maronite Patriarch Moran Mor Bechara Boutros Cardinal al-Rahi, several Jewish leaders and a small group from other religions.

In his speech, Schirmmacher said: “Some months ago I visited an old friend, the Grand Mufti of Lahore, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad, in his huge mosque with sometimes up to 100.000 people praying there at the same time. But this time it was an official visit, as on behalf of the community of the World Evangelical Alliance and its 600 million members I thanked him for having stopped a large mob that wanted to burn Christians quarters in Lahore, and he did it at three different times, standing in their way and telling them, that this is not the will of Allah. One time – and I heard this from several eye witnesses – the mob moved on and this brave and pious man of God said: If you want to kill them, you have to kill me first. The mob stopped. This is solidarity at its best!”

Schirmmacher also backed the declaration of his role model and friend Moran Mor Ignatius Aphrem II from Damascus, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch, who listed principles of the utmost importance for all religions to live in peace. These included: respect for every human being regardless of religion and race, guaranteeing freedom of religion for all human beings, upholding the principle of equal citizenship (including a clearly defined separation between the private religious lives of individuals and the public affairs of a nation), and the necessity for dialogue between as well as and knowledge of people of different faiths. For the complete article and further photos, see: <https://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/bonner-querschnitte-202018-ausgabe-537-eng.html>.

Contact Information:

Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte
Deutsche Sektion e.V.
Borsigallee 9, 60486 Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

Editor: Thomas Schirmmacher
Managing editor: Maya Robinson (maya.robinson@igfm.de)
Assistant editor: Martin Warnecke