FROM THE PRESIDENT

Keeping up the Good Work!

Dear ISHR community,

We present to you the July edition of our newsletter. The last edition took moments to highlight our efforts in Northern Iraq. This edition seeks to, over and above highlighting the work of ISHR in Bosnia, as well as the great efforts of our very own Ms. Katrin Bornmüller; we allowed the sections present to you their various. This is important because this newsletter was

“No one should be allowed to die, because he or she cannot afford to live.”

— Onyemaechi Ogbunwezeh
primarily designed to reflect what the sections are doing in their various areas, in order to stimulate new ideas, and co-operation among the sections.

The Armenian Section, which has done a tremendous job in the project to monitor and seek ways of redressing the abuse of the rights of workers in Armenia, presented us the report of their study. We laud their efforts in carrying out the project sponsored by the European Union, and co-financed by the ISHR German section. Their project highlights the hazardous conditions, in which Armenian workers are compelled to endure in the workplaces in Armenia. We thank the president Bela Shikaryan, and all members of our Armenian section for that excellent job. Don’t skip over their report. It is very rich in information, and could be a basis for further projects for other sections. The ISHR Kurdistan Section

President Kramj Othman of the Kurdistan section has been busy in the media circuit, highlighting the important human rights issues in Kurdistan and Northern Iraq. The report is here as well. The Section in Belarus held an anti-corruption roundtable. We shower praises on them for seeking new ways to collaborate with various institutions in their fight for human rights. The Moldovian section welcomed the ISHR president, as they hosted him on his working visit. We wish you all a happy reading.

Thomas Schirrmacher, Prof. Dr.
President of the International Council of the ISHR

FROM THE SECTIONS

ISHR Armenia

The Results of the “Monitoring the Rights of Workers” Project presented

The ISHR Armenian Section held a working meeting on the 18th of June, 2019, where the results of the project “Monitoring the protection of workers’ rights” by the Section, was official presented.

The event was attended by more than 30 stakeholders, representatives of state and public organizations, students.

Working rights are very topical in today’s Armenian reality, and in fact they are quite difficult to solve. The issues of protecting the rights of workers and ensuring proper working conditions have not been resolved since the independence of Armenia, the transition from social and legal relations to market relations has been accompanied and continues to be mainly with gross violations of the rights and
interests of workers, especially in the private sector. Before the 2018 Revolution, the authorities mainly served the interests of businessmen, the reason for which was the merging of the public administration system and the business environment. In this way, workers’ rights have always been pushed to the background, which was also promoted by a high level of unemployment.

Until 2015, the State Labor Inspectorate functioned in Armenia, which, despite some shortcomings, was also a supervisory authority. After the transformation of 2015, the structure has undergone various changes and became the Health Inspectorate, which has very few responsibilities and does not even have the right to conduct inspections, but more precisely does not have instructions.

In these circumstances, the role of civil society in the protection of labor rights is great. We have a huge disadvantage in this area from the legal side, and on the other hand, a less legitimate worker who also does not see a third party objectively interested in his interests, in legal relations with the employer.

The main objective of the project was to study the working conditions of employees in supermarkets, network trading, identify and pose questions.

We conducted research in 8 shopping centers, supermarkets of food and clothing, which are mainly employed by thousands of people, especially young girls. We had preliminary data, as the organization has been dealing with these issues for several years. In almost all stores, employees are forced to work in conditions that do not meet the requirements of health. These include, for example, the obligation to remain on their feet for all working hours, that is, throughout the working time, which often lasts from 12 to 13 hours, workers have no right to sit down, even for a minute, or even lean on something.

As part of the project, we chose the list of stores to be studied, which was related to the size of the stores and the popularity of the network. Our outlets were divided into two groups: local and franchises.

From February to March 2019, there were 233 observations in selected stores, networks, such as “Yerevan City”, “SAS”, “Carrefour”, “NEW ZOVQ”, “NEW YORKER”, “ZARA”, “Basic Center”, “WORLD OF CLOTHES”.

We observed more than 4000 employees. Parallel with the observations, we conducted 10 anonymous interviews, lasting 40 minutes each. The interviews were anonymous.

It is noteworthy that during all these observations and comprehensive surveys, the researchers did not meet more than one employee / sales consultant / in a sitting position and cashiers also in clothing stores. In the halls of shops there are no chairs, if there are several shops, they are intended only for buyers. The study, among other things, also showed that employees, especially in local area networks, have restrictions on a number of rights, such as a 15-minute break for 13
hours of work, lack of free days and annual leave, non-registration of employees, Disrespect for the dignity of employees, numerous violations that are described in our report.

During the final conference, Hermine Karapetyan, an expert on in-depth research of the team, presented the difficult path that the group went through during the survey. It was quite difficult to find people who would agree to talk about the conditions of their work. However, our public activities, active discussion of this topic in social networks, allowed us to identify a group of volunteers who provided the expert group with accurate information about the working conditions of workers in these networks, subject to confidentiality.

In the course of the project, in response to our warnings, the Labor Protection Inspectorate of the Republic of Armenia issued an official statement, which specifically stated that work done on the feet of 50 percent during working hours and without a normal break is considered hazardous to health. Service sector employees (especially in network centers) often work in hazardous conditions. They work up to 12 hours a day in a standing position without rest and food, without regular breaks, weekly uninterrupted rest and annual leave, without the right of workers to fair working conditions.”

After that, the inspection body conducted a series of seminars in supermarkets.

At the final seminar, the senior specialist of the inspection body Alvard Arshakyan presented the work they had done according to our recommendations, which, of course, is the most important achievement of our program. But the final solution of the problem still requires considerable effort. Artur Asoyan, Head of the Inspection Department for the Coordination of Inspections of the RA Government Sta, expressed the organization’s readiness to provide support and propose effective solutions to these problems.

Within the framework of the project, we also created a labor rights protection group. After preliminary discussion, a working group on the protection of workers’ rights was formed during a two-day seminar in Aghveran on May 18–19, in which representatives of non-governmental organizations and independent experts participated. Anahit Tovmasyan, a member of the group, presented the activities of the group and various letters addressed to us (https://protected-employee.am/%d5%a1%d5%ab%d5%ba%d5%b0%d5%af/).

During the project, a multifunctional website called “Protected Worker” was created (https://protected-employee.am/).

The site, among other pages, also has the ability to receive complaint applications from site visitors. Lilit Avdalyan, sociological analyst, unveiled research findings, methodology, and conclusions.

According to the results of the study, a legal analysis of the situation was compiled, which was included in the report. The author of the report, Helen Manaseryan, presented the report and the legal proposals of the working group.
Discussions, exchanges of opinions took place in a very rich atmosphere, which indicates the importance and relevance of the problem.

Within six months, the project working group performed all its tasks.

But this continues and it can be said that the process of protecting the interests of workers begins both for the organization and for the group of workers' advocates established during the project.

Our working group is ready to cooperate with state, non-governmental and international organizations to protect the rights of workers.

The program “Monitoring the rights of workers” is implemented under the subprogram provided for in the project “Consortium Obligation” under the auspices of the Armenian Bar Association with the financial support of the European Union.

Co-financing of the project was carried out by the German section of the ISHR.

Bela Shikaryan
President of the ISHR Armenian Section

**ISHR Belarus**

‘We either kill corruption or corruption will kill us’

The Belarusian section of the ISHR in conjunction with the Department of Humanities at Mogilev State University of Food Technologies and the civil initiative “The Public City Council” held a roundtable on corruption on May 18 in the city of Mogilev. Participants of the meeting noted the urgency of the problem for Belarus, agreed on joint actions, and publication of materials.

An assessment of the state of corruption in the country and measures to overcome it by the Belarusian section of the ISHR was made in the report of the Chairman of the Board, Professor Ivan Kotlyar on the topic “Corruption in Belarus in the assessment of the Belarusian section of the ISHR” and the speeches of the Deputy Chairman of the Board Fedor Leonov and Executive Secretary of the Board Anatoliy Kumets.

The Belarusian section of the ISHR notes the topicality of the problem for Belarus, the harm it causes to all spheres of society and the state: economy, the management system, and the social sphere. In the field of human rights, corruption has a negative impact on the process of their realization, as to the rights: to work, property, health, education, and participate in management of the state.

In the last and current years, the Belarusian public witnessed a number of high-profile revelations in the field of the fight against corruption. First of all, we are talking about mass
detentions of persons in the leadership of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus. These events have been widely reported in the media. The public was shocked by the scale of the anti-corruption case in medicine.

This suggests the following conclusion: corruption, despite the struggle with its carriers, is a mass phenomenon. Confirmation can be given with recent examples (detentions of the Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Belarus, senior officials of ministries, directors of enterprises, chairmen of city district executive committees).

In general, the fight against corruption continues to be a pressing issue for the state and society. There are also questions: how has it happened that in the 25 years of the fight against corruption we could not defeat it, what conditions contribute to its constant manifestation? And what is more important: conscience or professionalism, and do they, corrupt officials, have conscience?

Responding to the posed questions, we believe that the efforts of the State Security Committee of the Republic of Belarus only are not enough – public participation and support from the people are necessary. This participation is going to be strengthened via measures such as:

- enhancing transparency and promoting community involvement in decision-making processes;
- providing effective public access to information;
- carrying out public awareness activities that contribute to creating an atmosphere of intolerance towards corruption, as well as the implementation of public education programs, including curricula in schools and universities;
- Respect, encouragement, and protection of the freedom to search, receive, publish, and disseminate information about corruption.
- The formation of public opinion aimed at overcoming corruption should be given great importance. The masses should know the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Combating Corruption,” the documents of the United Nations and the European Union on the issue of overcoming corruption. Such an approach provides for the holding of conferences, seminars, meetings of round tables, the organization of a broad and open discussion, and educational events.

It is also necessary to increase the role of the media. The informational function on this issue is mainly performed by the non-state newspapers “Narodnaja Volya,” “Svobodnye Novosti Plus,” and television. At the same time, it is worthwhile to strengthen the function of analysis and the formation of public opinion in the struggle to overcome this evil. This applies to both public and private newspapers.

We must support the scientific study of the problem and those scientists who are engaged in this or are just preparing to engage in this process. It is necessary to note the significant
contribution of the Doctor of Socio-logical Sciences, Professor, Head of the Department of Humanities at Mogilev State University of Food Technologies Yury Bubnau. There is an example for other scientists.

It is fundamentally important not to talk the problem against time, not to turn it into the world of a thousand words. It is necessary to encourage the judicial-criminal anti-corruption vector to transform into a socio-political one.

We also see our participation in improving the moral climate in society. The lack of a proper level of morality is one of the conditions for the reproduction of corruption. Of course, changes are needed in the sphere of management, economy, the functioning of the executive branch.

The problem was discussed at a board meeting of the Belarusian section of the ISHR. A resolution was adopted, in accordance with which we will discuss the problem of the formation of public opinion on overcoming corruption at a seminar next year. Considering that the problem of corruption is a global one, we invite to cooperation the national sections of the ISHR of Eastern Partnership, Russia, Germany, and other countries.

Pavel Pernikau
Member of the Board, Head of the Press Center

Professor Ivan Kotlyar
Chairman of the Board

ISHR Wittlich / Bosnia

The City of Prijedor Honors Mrs. Katrin Bornmüller and the ISHR Wittlich

Katrin Bornmüller was invited to the “City Day on 16.05.2019” for the ISHR-Wittlich by the Serbian Mayor Milenko Djakovic of the city Prijedor in the Republic Srrska in Bosnia Herzegovina, to be honoured for the outstanding work she has been doing in alleviating the plight of the people, who are still recovering from the effects of the war.

Mrs Bornmüller flew to the ISHR Section President for Prijedor, Jadranka Cigelj in Zagreb Croatia – victim of the Serb concentration camps Omarska and Trnopolje – who had suffered damage due to the inhuman detention. She is also traumatized and disappointed in the wake of the sad events she witnessed in The Hague. For her, it is scandalous how the government deals with the victims. She is badly touched by the illogical excuses, with which every victim’s pension is rejected, which forces the victims to eke out an existence of chill penury on about 300 € pension.

Mirsad Duratovic – victim of 3 Serbian Concentration camps in Omarska, Trnopolje and Manjace – does not get a victim’s pension. He was 17 years old, when he was sent to the
Concentration Camps. He is now a town councilor in Prijedor and was the person that nominated the ISHR - Wittlich for an award for its permanent humanitarian aid.

The ISHR offers aid to a Muslim association – MDD – Merhamet, whose chairman is Selman Mesudija. The Association care for about 700 poorest families of Bosnians, Serbs and Roma, who all lost their livelihood due to the war.

The award ceremony was a festive occasion and took place in the theatre. Among the 10 people honoured, Katrin Bornmüller was the only foreigner. A feast was held afterwards. That day unfortunately coincided with a big flood in Prijedor, which ravaged the city, with 300 houses being under water. To this end, the ISHR-Wittlich wants to send an aid transport soon. Donations are requested from all and sundry in order to buy food there as well, the prices are much cheaper. The ISHR Wittlich Bank Account is as follows if you want to donate: IBAN DE24 5875 1230 0060 0051 54

Please include your address so that we can send you a receipt for your donation. For more information, you could reach the following people at the phone numbers included:

Katrin Bornmüller: 06571 28307  
Johanna Werner: 06571 4047  
Rita and Leo Shepherd: 06575 4490  
Marlies Elsen: 06571 3963  
Marlen Rodenbüsch: 06571 4270

ISHR Wittlich and work of Katrin Bornmüller in Bosnia in Pictures

On the 13th of June, 2019 the ISHR Wittlich sent its 11th trailer truck of material, and its 468th in total to Prijedor. Every time the truck arrives is like Christmas for the people. Many people have almost nothing. Many don’t even have beds to sleep on. In the transport were many things that the people need. The customs office in Wittlich helps the IGFM very much, before the truck must cross the scales. The forwarding agency Elsen writes the export declaration – all work without pay. With the help of Mirsad Duratovic everything worked out at the customs in Bosnia. All these ensure that the joys of ISHR Wittlich know no bounds. Below are pictures of the aid deliveries from ISHR Wittlich to Bosnia.

Unloading the transport in Prijedor © ISHR Wittlich
The ISHR Wittlich Transport arrives Prijedor. © ISHR Wittlich

The ISHR Wittlich Transport arrives Prijedor. © ISHR Wittlich

The people of Prijedor were moved and are grateful. © ISHR Wittlich

There were helpers helping to arrange the packets for distribution to those that need them. © ISHR Wittlich

People inspecting the materials © ISHR Wittlich

One happy face like this makes all the effort worth it © ISHR Wittlich
ISHR Kurdistan

Letting the world in on our story – The ISHR Kurdistan on the media Circuit.

The ISHR Kurdistan section has been touring the media circuit, to let the world in on the major issues in relation to human rights that have been impacting the people in our war-torn region. Below are some of the timelines of our efforts to tell our own side of the story.

1 of July Krmanj Othman, the director if IGFM Iraqi section conducted a training session for local NGOs in city of Erbil regarding Human Rights awareness raising and the work of IGFM in Iraqi Kurdistan, 17 NGOs attended the workshop both male and female.

30 of June Krmanj Othman had TV interview with Kurdistan Satellite channel regarding impotency of Human Rights in new KRG cabinet and more attention to IDPs and refuges filed, the interview included enhancing KRG to support IDPs and negotiate with Bagdad to make the process of IDPs return to home faster.
after stabilization of Mosul and reconstruct the city. The link of interview available here: 
https://www.facebook.com/krmanj.othman/videos/34529522368063453/?t=3

29 of June Krmanj Othman had a 35 minutes of TV interview in Arabic language with Zagros satellite channel regarding the Human rights situation in Iraq, the link of interview available here: https://L.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DT3g6F5NBm4w%26fclid%3DIwAR2sYKapl2QLCjv5NAKGkxxhAX6suzAqxjilNHD9Bsh25X4IFPE_h7hZRk&h=AT0C0FlB7T4KREVckpbwcxPZP1ENXxaWFZGi1huiRB-bULgC7NSn2Tf3DnxUSBqP1Rq1u42aUqn7THHRdypbHSUQE7CpiguNui8jxCHoxsWSfrx

26 of June Krmanj Othman attended IOM regional conference in Erbil regarding draft law of protection of Ezeydes survivors that prepared by Iraqi government.

21 of June Krmanj Othman had TV interview regarding the genocide recognition of ISIS crimes, the interview had with WAR satellite channel from Dahok.

19 June Krmanj Othman IGFM Iraqi director welcomed by Kurdistan Parliament president Ms. Vala Fareed and many issue regarding human rights discussed included adopting laws for human rights defenders protection.

19 June Krmanj Othman IGFM Iraqi section director attended a forum regarding the Iran – US relation and human rights situation in Iran.

18 June Krmanj Othman IGFM Iraqi section director had interview with Kurdistan Satellite channel regarding the human rights situation in Iraq and Kurdistan.

11 June Krmanj Othman welcomed Iraqi section of UNICEF regarding preparation of child law protection in Kurdistan.

10 of June Krmanj Othman IGFM Iraqi section director attended a 55 munities of interview with Rudaw Satellite channel on youth and peace panel, the link available here: https://www.facebook.com/Rudaw.net/videos/822240958148615/?t=0

9 of June Krmanj Othman visited Erbil local council and welcome by the Erbil Mayor and Human Rights protection manly with minorities discussed and future projects prepared.

8 of June Krmanj Othman TV interview with IMN Iraqi TV regarding Human Rights in Iraq.

3 of June Krmanj Othman Meeting with EU delegate mission to Iraq.

Krmanj Othman
President ISHR Kurdistan
The President of the International Society for Human Rights, Professor Thomas Schirrmacher, visited the Republic of Moldova from May 4 to 6, 2019. The purpose of the visit was to support Moldovan human rights activists, including the members of the Moldovan Section of the ISHR, as well as conduct an on-site study of the state of human rights in the Republic of Moldova, including the unrecognized Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (Transnistria) Professor Thomas Schirrmacher was accompanied by his wife, Professor Christine Schirrmacher.

Local human rights activists have focused on long-term tendency to democracy diminution in the country, when so called “pro-European power”, loudly declaring democratic principles and values, in practice, consistently imposes in Moldova a tough authoritarian system. Today, the Moldovan oligarch, the chairman of the Democratic Party, Vladimir Plahotniuc has in fact become the sole ruler of the country. It got to the point that in modern Moldova Vladimir Plahotniuc can even cancel the results of local elections that don’t suit him.

As a result of the election of the mayor of Chisinau, Andrei Nastase, known as the most tough and irreconcilable opponent of the oligarch, became the winner on June 3, 2018. His victory inspired the opposition and gave the hope for the victory in the battle against criminal regime. But the joy of the opposition was short-lived.

On June 19, 2018, the Chisinau Court declared invalid the results of the election, allegedly due to the agitation on the day of the election. Subsequently, the Supreme Court and the Central Election Commission supported the Chisinau Court decision.

This was the precedent when the court decided on invalidity of the election on their own initiative, although there was no recourse to the court both from the competitor and from institutions controlling the election process. It is not clear how the court could assess the degree of influence of agitation upon the final result.

Politically motivated decision was opposed not only by Moldovan opposition but Western partners of the current Moldovan authorities as well. EU and USA criticized Moldovan authorities for canceling of the results of the Chisinau mayor election.

The participants of the meeting related with pain that selective justice and corruption are still the most serious problems encountered by the Moldovan citizens. The current power doesn’t refrain from applying outright repression against unwanted oppositionists.

The ruling party has found a punitive instrument in the form of the justice system. Just after Plahotniuc had actually usurped the power, imprisonment for political reasons became reality.
Moldova faced the phenomenon of political persecution, and specifically the mass of this phenomenon. Staging criminal cases as to the people that are unfavorable to the regime has become the norm. The state authorities in Moldova insult and discredit human rights activists and the activity thereof. Human rights activists are exposed to threats, intimidation and persecution even for criticizing the decisions of the authorities.

In this sense, one of the most famous cases was the “Petrenko Group”. Grigory Petrenko and six of his comrades were detained on September 6, 2015 during the protest at the General Prosecutor’s Office.

Despite the fact that earlier, in June 2015, Grigory Petrenko was assigned the title of “honorary member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe”, this didn’t stop the regime of Plahotniuc, and the charges were fabricated.

The release from prison was facilitated by the active position of the international community and especially the PACE. However, fair trial couldn’t be achieved: Grigory Petrenko and his group were convicted in 2017 to different terms. During the proceedings, the representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, German Government and US Department of State recognized members of the “Petrenko Group” as political prisoners.

At the end of the meeting, Thomas Schirrmacher highly appreciated the aspiration of the Moldovan human rights activists to give wide publicity to the facts of human rights violations in Moldova. He urged activists to coordinate efforts as much as possible inside the country and regularly report on violations in Moldova to European human rights institutions. He considers that there is “a huge abyss” between how Moldova represents itself abroad and how the human rights are observed in Moldova.

Meeting participants thanked Thomas and Christine Schirrmacher for their interest to the activities of Moldovan human rights organizations and for the understanding of difficult conditions of activities thereof.

The portraits drawn during the meeting have become a pleasant surprise for our guests.

Dr. Liubov Nemcinova  
Chairman of the Moldovan Section of the ISHR