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NGO Update

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NGO UPDATE

To foster communication among human rights organizations around the world, each issue of the Human Rights Brief features an "NGO Update." This space was created to aid non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by informing others about their programs, successes, and challenges. The views of the organizations below do not necessarily reflect those of the Human Rights Brief. For information on how to submit updates for your organization, please see the instructions provided at the end of the column.

CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS (CCR)

www.ccr-ny.org

The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) is a nonprofit legal and educational organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For almost 40 years, CCR has used litigation proactively to advance the law, to empower poor communities and communities of color, to guarantee the rights of those with the fewest protections and the least access to legal resources, to train the next generation of constitutional and human rights attorneys, and to strengthen the broader movement for constitutional and human rights. CCR has litigated a number of landmark cases including *Monell v. Department of Social Services*, which enabled private individuals and civil rights groups to bring constitutional claims against local government officials; *NOW v. Terry*, which was the first case to establish a "buffer zone" around abortion clinics; and *Filártiga v. Peña-Irala*, which established the Alien Tort Claims Act (ATCA) as a statute that can be used to bring claims involving human rights violations in other countries. CCR has continued to influence the field of international human rights litigation with cases such as *Sosa v. Alvarez-Machain*, which reaffirmed an individual's right to have U.S. courts review violations of international law under the ATCA, and *Rasul v. Bush*, in which the Supreme Court held that prisoners in Guantánamo Bay have

access to American courts to challenge the legality of their detention.

More recently, on November 30, 2005, under the doctrine of universal jurisdiction, CCR filed a complaint on behalf of four Iraqis who were tortured in U.S. custody. The complaint was filed with the German Federal Prosecutor's Office against high-ranking United States civilian and military commanders over abuses committed at Abu Ghraib prison and elsewhere in Iraq. CCR decided to ask the German prosecutor to launch an investigation because the U.S. government is unwilling to open an independent investigation into the responsibility of these officials. CCR chose Germany because several of the defendants are stationed there.

LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS UNDER LAW

www.lawyerscomm.org

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to provide legal services to victims of racial discrimination. The Lawyers' Committee has litigated cases involving fair housing, education, desegregation, employment discrimination, voting rights, and environmental justice. The Lawyers' Committee also testifies before Congress on issues affecting civil rights and equal access to justice and engages in public policy advocacy within the federal administration. In addition to the direct representation of clients in ongoing litigation, the Committee frequently files *amicus curiae* briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court and federal appellate courts to participate in the evolving interpretation of civil rights laws.

After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita last fall, the Lawyers' Committee quickly became involved in litigation against the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Lawyers' Committee filed a class action lawsuit in November 2005 on behalf of Hurricane evacuees to prevent FEMA from evicting registered displaced victims who were staying temporarily in hotels. The New York law firm of Schulte

Roth & Zabel LLP; John Pierre, Attorney and Professor at Southern University Law Center; the Public Interest Law Project; and the Equal Justice Society have assisted with this litigation. FEMA had previously announced that the evacuees would have to find alternative housing by mid-December. On December 12, 2005, the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of the Lawyers' Committee's clients and allowed individuals displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to remain in hotels until February 7, 2006, or two weeks after they receive a notice regarding their application for assistance.

MOVIMIENTO DE MUJERES DOMINICO-HAITIANAS (MUDHA)

<http://kiskeya-alternative.org/mudha>

Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano-Haitianas or Movement of Dominican-Haitian Women (MUDHA) was founded in 1983 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, and assists communities surrounding sugar refineries. MUDHA aims to battle sexism, racism, and *antihaitianismo* (anti-Haitianism), as well as to defend and safeguard the civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and human rights of Dominican-Haitian women and children. MUDHA directs seminars, conferences, trainings, and campaigns in the Dominican Republic.

CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC STUDIES (CEHURDES)

www.cehurdes.org.np

The Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies (CEHURDES) is a nonprofit, nonpolitical, and nonpartisan organization based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Established in 1999, CEHURDES is coordinated by a committed group of Nepali human rights workers, lawyers, social activists, and journalists. CEHURDES works for the protection and promotion of human rights, especially freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as well as democracy in Nepal. Each year CEHURDES publishes a report on freedom of the press in Nepal. The 2005 report is available on its website.

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vent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women. She maintains her focus on women, human rights, and public interest law, which she

now hopes to apply to her prospective judgeship. Most of all, Ms. Rioseco continues to share her passion through her courses and her many publica-

tions and hopes that her work will positively affect others now and in the future. **HRB**

Emily Wann, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, covers the Alumni Profile for the Human Rights Brief.

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50 YEARS IS ENOUGH: U.S. NETWORK FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC JUSTICE

www.50years.org

50 Years Is Enough: U.S. Network for Global Economic Justice is a coalition of over 200 U.S. grassroots, women's, solidarity, faith-based, policy, social and economic justice, youth, labor, and development organizations dedicated to the transformation of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade

Organization. The Network partners with over 185 international organizations in more than 65 countries. Through economic literacy training, public mobilization, and policy advocacy education and action, the Network seeks to transform the international financial institutions' policies and practices and to make the development process more democratic and accountable.

The Human Rights Brief is accepting submissions for the next edition of the "NGO

Update." If your organization has an event or situation it would like to publicize, please send a short description to hrbrief@wcl.american.edu and include "NGO Update" in the subject heading of the message. Please limit your submission to two paragraphs. The Human Rights Brief reserves the right to edit for content and space limitations. **HRB**

Lauren Bartlett, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, covers the NGO Update for the Human Rights Brief.

CENTER NEWS/FACULTY AND STAFF UPDATES: *continued from page 55*

hoc and hybrid criminal tribunals. She also delivered a presentation on the prosecution of gender-based crimes committed in the context of war or mass violence at the Global Women's Court of Accountability, held November 17-18, 2005, at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice of the University of San Diego. Over the past several months, she has participated in three sessions of the Working Group on Social Reconstruction and Reconciliation convened by the U.S. Institute of Peace. In January 2006 she also participated in a roundtable discussion on legal and judicial reform in Sudan convened by the Initiative for Inclusive Security.

Rick Wilson, Professor of Law at WCL and Co-Director of the Center, served as a mod-

erator for a panel on "Globalization of Clinical Legal Education: Transplanting Clinical Models into Other Cultures and Families of Law" at the Sixth International Clinical Conference, UCLA/IALS, in Lake Arrowhead, California. He sponsored a report entitled "A Moral Choice for the United States: The Human Rights Implications for the Gwich'in Peoples of Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge" along with the Gwich'in Steering Committee and the Episcopal Church. He served as a commentator on a presentation by Justice Richard Goldstone called "Perspectives on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights." He also served as a moderator for a panel on "International Prevention of Torture: The Role of the United Nations, International

Law and the United States" presented by the United Nations Association, National Capitol Area, and co-sponsored by the ABA Section of International Law. He was invited to serve as an international expert by the Clinical Legal Education Foundation of Russia to assist in the planning of three trainings of 24 selected clinical programs during 2006 in St. Petersburg, Russia. In November he was interviewed by Susan Kinzie of the *Washington Post* about WCL's clinics and other human rights activities. In December he was interviewed by the *National Journal* regarding the case of Canadian detainee Omar Khadr, represented by Rick and Muneer Ahmad. **HRB**

UNITED NATIONS UPDATE: *continued from page 40*

NEW JUSTICES

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT of Justice is composed of 15 permanent judges who are elected by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council from individuals nominated by the national groups in the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Elections take place every three years, with one-third of the judges retiring at the end of each cycle to ensure continuity within the Court. Judges may be re-elected.

On November 7, 2005, the UN General Assembly elected four new judges, who will begin their nine-year terms on the bench on February 6, 2006. The retiring judges include Nabil Elaraby of Egypt, Pieter Kooijmans of the Netherlands, Francisco Rezek of Brazil, and Vladlen S. Vereshchetin of the Russian Federation. The new judges include Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco, Sir Kenneth Keith of New Zealand, Bernardo Sepúlveda Amor of Mexico, and Leonid

Skotnikov of the Russian Federation. Judge Thomas Buergenthal of the United States, former Dean and Professor of International Law at the American University Washington College of Law from 1980 to 1985, was reelected for another term. **HRB**

Nicholas Leddy, a J.D. candidate at the Washington College of Law, covers the United Nations Update and the ICJ Update for the Human Rights Brief.