



University of Essex

ESSEX HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

10th ANNIVERSARY
HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASIA CONFERENCE 2018

**A RAY OF HOPE:
THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN ASIA**



Saturday 24 March 2018
10:00-17:00
Essex Business School

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The Program of the Day

- 9:30** *Meet & Greet*
- 10:00** Human Rights Centre Representative – Welcome Talk
Dr Ahmed Shaheed
- 10:10** Welcome Talk
Dr Sanae Fujita
- 10:30** Keynote Address on General Issues Affecting Children
Ms Kara Apland
- 10:50** Panel on Refugees, IDPs & Statelessness
Ms Nikolina Milić
Dr Zibiah Loakthar
Ms Horia Mosadiq
Moderator – Dr Carla Ferstman
- 11:50** *Break*
- 12:00** Access to Education in the Malaysian Context
Ms Nur Raudhah Nazari
- 12:30** One Child Policy in China and its Repercussions
Ms Kailing Xie
- 1:00** Lunch
- 2:00** Child Sexual Abuse
Ms Katharina Theil
- 2:30** Child Sex Trafficking – Successful Models and the Emerging Threat of the Internet
Mr Steve Webster
- 3:00** Panel on Juvenile Justice
Ms Mandira Sharma
Ms Nivedita Guhathakurta
Dr Ahmed Ehsanul Kabir
Moderator – Dr Alexandra Cox
- 4:00** Anniversary Session
Dr Sanae Fujita
Professor Paul Hunt
Ms Nina Giraudel
- 5:00** Reception



Human Rights Centre Representative – Welcome Talk



Speaker: Dr Ahmed Shaheed, Lecturer in the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex

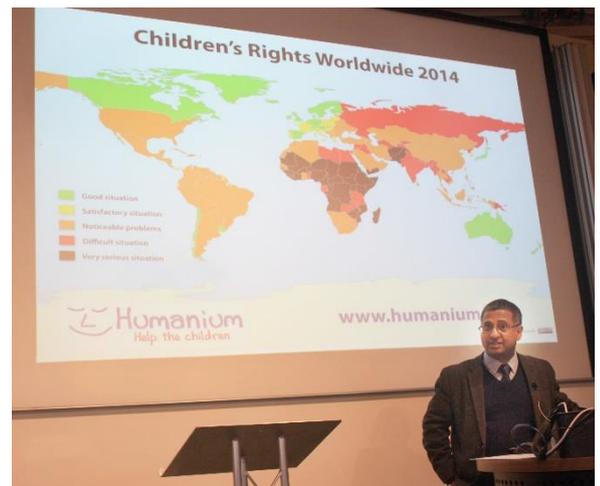
The tenth annual Human Rights in Asia Conference was opened with a welcome speech by Dr Ahmed Shaheed, the Deputy Director of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex. Dr Shaheed began by stating how happy he was to take part in this student-led Conference and warmly welcomed everyone that had taken the journey to attend the conference as listeners or as panellists.

Dr Shaheed conveyed the Human Rights Centre's pride in its global focus. Despite being the largest region of the UN, Asia is the region with the lowest protection of Human Rights. It is important to remember that this is also a region characterised by a vast diversity of cultures, religions and races. Moreover, there are several prolonged mass atrocities taking place in areas such as Syria, Kashmir, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Illustrating with various maps, he then spoke about the situation of child rights in the world. This year is the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), but we still fail to protect children. More specific to the Asian region, he mentioned how there are few countries in which children live under satisfactory conditions. The situation is actually worsening. Another example was how corporal punishment has only been banned in two countries.

On a more positive note, he brought attention to the work by students and academics on different issues in the Asian region and shared the good news about Sirikan Charoensiri. She is an Essex alumna who was awarded this year's International Woman of Courage Award by the American Secretary of State's for her work as a human rights lawyer in Thailand.

Dr Shaheed ended his welcome speech by praising the organisers of this year's Conference.



Welcome Talk

Speaker: Dr Sanae Fujita, Conference Supervisor, University of Essex

Dr Fujita opened her welcome address by explaining how she herself was a student at the University of Essex, as she did her PhD in Law and LLM here. Since then she has been affiliated to the University as an associate and part-time teacher in the School of Law/ the Human Rights Centre.

She went on to explain how the idea to have a conference on human rights in Asia was first raised by a number of Asian students in 2008. There was no module covering human rights issues in the region, and the desire to learn more was the beginning of this student-led conference. Since then, she has been an



advisor and has supported the event as a supervisor.

Dr Fujita then thanked everyone for coming before giving an overview of the human rights situation in Asia. She highlighted how despite containing a significantly large population in comparison to Europe, the ratification of UN human rights conventions are very low, especially the optional protocols.

Finally, she directed the focus to the human rights situation of children in the region. In this regard, a message from a previous student now working in the CRC was shared. He emphasised that there is a greater need for more disaggregated data, more monitoring and better implementation.



Keynote Address on General Issues Affecting Children

Speaker: Ms Kara Apland, Senior Researcher at Coram International

Kara Apland thanked Nina for the introduction and Professor Paul Hunt for the invitation to participate in the event. She then congratulated the Conference organisers.

Before going into the topic of her speech, she gave a brief introduction of herself and her work. As a research and policy specialist at Coram International, she has, for a number of years, worked in applied research within the area of children's rights, in most cases consulting with UNICEF. Her research involves a combination of legal and social research methods and has in recent years focused on Asia.





Although emphasising the risk of drawing generalisations across countries and regions, her speech highlighted some consistently emerging themes that she has found to present both threats and opportunities for child rights in the region. The economic growth in Asia over the last two decades has resulted in a number of countries moving from low income to middle-income status. However, these economic opportunities are increasingly concentrated in cities. Furthermore, as mobility has burgeoned, this has led to a dramatic upsurge in migration impacting children in numerous ways. When adults migrate, children are often left behind receiving inadequate care. In addition to being left behind, children and young people also migrate themselves. Such trends place increasing pressure on governance, and in particular, on the mechanisms governments build to protect children's rights.

She continued to explain how these changes in the Asian context have brought both challenges and opportunities for child right. Ms Apland emphasised the importance of acknowledging that there has been significant attention and work devoted to address these issues, and how it is equally important to acknowledge that these are not simple problems to address. Significant gaps in knowledge and understanding of these issues remains a challenge; a lack of rigorous and comprehensive evidence on the extent and nature of child labour, trafficking, child marriage, and other forms of violence against children is one of the greatest challenges in child protection. Furthermore, she has experienced how research into these topics raises more questions than answers and forces us to rethink some of the assumptions and categories upon which human rights advocates and professionals rely. Examples she mentioned was research on child trafficking and migration.



To conclude, Ms Apland said that responding to contemporary child rights challenges in Asia will require new, adaptive and creative solutions.

Panel on Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons & Statelessness

Speakers:

Nikolina Milić, LLM student at the University of Essex, member of the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights in Serbia

Zibiah Loakhtar, Lecturer in Refugee Care at University of Essex

Horia Mosadiq, Human Rights Defender and journalist currently working with Amnesty International

Moderator: Dr Carla Ferstman, Lecturer at the Law Faculty at the University of Essex



Ms Nikolina Milić, “Unaccompanied children from Asia at the EU borders”



Ms Nikolina Milić opened the session by giving an overview of the state of refugees with a specific focus on unaccompanied children in the world and Asia, in particular. According to research conducted at the end of 2017 it was found that there were 22.5 million refugees in the world, where half of those fleeing persecution were under the age of 18 (55 percent of those minors (under the age of 18) were made up of children from Afghanistan, Sudan and Syria). Between the year 2015-2017 there were 86,160 unaccompanied children seeking asylum in the EU (largely in Germany and Sweden), most of which are boys between 13-17 years of age (these asylum seekers rarely apply in the first country of arrival. Most of the Unaccompanied children seek asylum in Germany and Sweden). Statistic

further show that many of the unaccompanied children were Afghan, a number that has increased since 2017.

In line with the theme of refugees, Ms Milić gave specific focus on the migration flow affecting Serbia, an issue that contributes to the broader issue of unaccompanied children fleeing to the EU. Her presentation summarized how Serbia became the centre of mixed migration in 2015. There has been a high number of asylum application received, 577,995 to be exact, of which 5,000 entries are registered per day. She goes on to reiterate that the majority of the numbers is made of people who are fleeing Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria more than half of which are women and children.



In the second half of her presentation Ms Milić goes on to discuss the reasons asylum seekers in general and unaccompanied children in particular (within the context of Asia) choose to flee. She explains that the reason for fleeing can be subjective and unique to the child’s situation. The factors are usually interconnected and may range from war, poverty, forced recruitment, and violence to poor employment prospects, lack of access to education and sexual and gender-based violence. These children are usually left to fend for themselves which makes them vulnerable. They are therefore exposed to physical and psychological problems as well as various security risks. They are also vulnerable to abuse and harassment by officials when caught at transit points and to smugglers who exploit and force them to do labour, peddle drugs, and pickpockets.



Ms Milić concluded her presentation by underlining on the different protection measures the international community needs to consider to better ensure the safety of these vulnerable groups. She goes on to emphasize that as a community we need to remember that children are first and foremost children. Ms Milić underscores on the imminent need to ensure those principles underlined in international conventions: non-discrimination, best interest of the child, and non-refoulement as well as family reunifications and other durable solutions, to ensure a well-rounded protection of the child.

Dr Zibiah Loakthar, “Statelessness and children”



Dr Zibiah Loakthar on her presentation regarding statelessness and the rights of child started with identifying different perspectives on how the world and the international human rights community perceives children/child rights. She went on to elaborate, using personal encounters that she had had, to better set the context of how we as a community understand and see children. In addition to the disposition and spectacle that falls on children. Dr. Loakthar goes on to add an additional factor that adds to their vulnerability i.e. statelessness. She explains that despite the fact that different international human rights instruments adhere to “freedom and equality in dignity and rights” there still exist, according to UNHCR 10million people in the world who are denied

nationality .

According to the article 1(1) of the 1954 UN convention relating to the status of stateless persons; stateless person is a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law. She further goes on to enumerate instances where a person may be excluded from recognition as a stateless person. For instance the UK immigration rules on the section regarding statelessness states that a person who is receiving protection and assistance from organs or agencies of the UN except UNHCR; or have been given recognition as having the rights and obligations attached to the possession of the nationality of a country of their former habitual residence; have committed crimes against peace, war and crimes against humanity as defined in the international instruments; committed serious political crime outside the UK prior to their arrival in the UK and have been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the UN.



After setting the general context of how statelessness both internationally and at a domestic level operates, Dr. Loakthar went on to address the question of statelessness of children in Asia (with a specific focus on the Rohingya) how the international community is informed of them, and who are the caretakers in action.

The Rohingya are a group of people of ethnic *indo* origins who follow the Muslim faith. Dr. Loakthar explained that despite the Rohingyas having settled in Rakhine (Arakan state) in

western Burma (1-2million of them) for centuries, the Burmese government considers them to be foreigners. The Rohingya, as one of the most persecuted communities in the world, have been made to flee their homes for several reasons. One of which is the forceful imposition of a national verification card by the Burmese government which lists their nationality as Bengali, which in other words denies them their Burmese citizenship. The

Rohingya continue to be refused citizenship and face discrimination and abuse.

There exist about 250,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, most of which are un-registered. Among the unregistered Rohingya refugee population children contribute a large portion of the number. Several children are born into statelessness, a phenomenon partially attributable to the unrecognition of children born outside of “authorized wedlock”. Dr. Loakthar explains that authorities on a local level that are aware of these children, keep a separate record of the births known as “the blacklist”. The marginalization and unrecognition of these children has led to consequences where they face restrictions an access to education, health care and food, an unfortunate fact demonstrated by testimonies of individuals Dr. Loakthar went shared with the audience. Dr. Zibiah also tries to shed light on how the ill-treatment against the Rohingya was stimulated by the



dissemination of government-backed public message that incited hate and discrimination against the community. Negative stereotyping of refugees has also fuelled hate and hindered possibilities of assimilation.



The growing concern regarding the Rohingya community and escalating issue of statelessness has initiated movement such as the Arakan Project, a human rights organization specializing in monitoring and documenting the situations of Rohingya Muslims. It submits regular findings to UN treaty bodies on the human rights situation. In January 2012, Arakan Project submitted to the committee on the rights of the child on issues concerning stateless Rohingya children in Myanmar.

As a way of combating this issue Dr. Loakthar made several recommendations that range from taking measures where children-based organizations such as *Clowns Without Borders* visit refugee camps and spread joy; efforts towards changing people's attitudes and allowing the local language to be digitized to allow communities themselves to tell their own stories (This measure has been adopted in a planned upgrade to the Unicode standard to the global coding system to start digitizing the Rohingya local language).

Ms Horia Mosadiq, "Effects on Refugees as well as stateless children"



Being the largest continent in the world, Asia poses a problem for creating a regional institution. Nevertheless, the specific dispositions and inequalities faced by this demographic, such as it being the largest continent of stateless people, demands a common measure for overcoming these violations.

As an expert on Afghanistan Ms Horia Mosadiq, went on to give an overview on the situation in the country. According to her presentation, Afghanistan up until the Syrian crisis, had the largest number of IDP's. Regardless, there still exist many Afghan Refugees. The informal settlements, poor habitation, extreme temperature and seasonal diseases have contributed to the rising fatalities of Afghan refugees. The children which make up a portion of the Afghan refugee population have little to no access to health facilities and education.

Obtaining formal identifications to better access school, work and purchasing property is also a difficult process where the journey is both dangerous and expensive leaving these refugees in a circle of poverty and misery.

Access to Education in the Malaysian Context



Speaker: Ms Nur Raudhah Nazari, Undergraduate student at the University of Essex, President of Enactus Essex, founder of Khalifa'

Ms Nazari started her presentation by stating that the access to education in Malaysia is not a problem, but the issue is whether or not Malaysia is giving the right meaning to the right to education. She stressed the importance of education both at home and in school. Ms Nazari highlighted the example of children in an orphanage lacking guidance, through the learning process. The access to education goes beyond sitting in the classroom, it intakes how to nurture and

utilize this knowledge learnt. With her NGO, 'Khalifa', Ms Nazari was instrumental to teaching English to almost 100 children, through interesting activities. According to Ms Nazari, parents should encourage their children to go to school and receive an education. The Ramadan period can be a break for the access to education, that is why, Ms Nazari's team organised a feast where volunteer would motivate children to learn.



She pointed out the issue faced by children of the question of the usefulness of going to school. Access to education goes beyond the classroom and passing exams. Education is knowledge that children will be able to use later on in their life.

Ms Nazari concluded by explaining that it is our responsibility to challenge the lawmakers, the governments to change the flawed laws and policies.

One Child Policy in China and its Repercussions

Speaker: Ms Kailing Xie, PhD student at the University of York



Ms Xie started her presentation by stating that the Economic Reform Policy that took place in 1979 lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty. China's One Child Policy started in 1979, as part of China's grand social engineering programme to speed up the national modernisation process. This policy had two aims: control the quantity of the population and improve the "quality" of the population. It was a social engineering programme designed by the Party-State with the ambition of accelerating the nation's progress towards regaining its global prominence by raising a new generation of healthy, wealthy, smart and savvy young people. There were variations in the policy, which allowed limited exceptions to some couples, depending on their

employment, ethnicity and area of residency; for instance, rural couples with only a daughter were allowed to have a second child. For urban residents, state-employed cadres and workers, the One-Child Policy was strictly implemented with official approval needed for exceptions under special circumstances. This difference illustrates the deeply entrenched divide between urban and rural populations that the economic reform has created.

The consequences of this policy were a population crisis, with a rapidly aging population and a low fertility rate; and gendered consequences with a son preference. It led to selective and enforced abortions, abandons, infanticides and unregistered girls. The sex ratio at birth was 118 males for every 100 females in 2010, while in 2016 according to a new research, the female to male ratio isn't as dire as it sounds.

The One-Child Policy, created a generation of 'well-educated' substitute sons, who are privileged due to their urban birth, their access to high education, and they now formed the Rising Middle Class. After more than 30 years, these girls, born under the One-Child Policy are now coming to the age of being mothers themselves. However, they are still under the pressure of the Two-Child Policy, put in place in 2016. Ms Xie explained that women face pressure from the society with "deadlines" for marriage, and motherhood.

Ms Xie illustrated that in retrospect, the story of the heroine Mulan, who cross-dressed as a man to join the army on behalf of her father, sums up



the historical expectations of Chinese women in the last century. The story consistently portrays the heroine's motivation for joining the military as her desire to protect her father and familial line, or her country, never for her own new social subjectivity. This popular story delineates the moral boundaries of a filial Chinese daughter.

Coincidentally, China now has the largest number of well-educated women in its history, who cultivate themselves as competitive neoliberal subjects. It explores how privileged young Chinese women negotiate their position as they face the tension between neoliberalism and an increasingly patriarchal and authoritarian party-state in contemporary China. Therefore, Ms Xie pointed out that it is fair to say that China has never, to this day, acknowledged women's liberation as independent from the interests of the wider collective to which she is supposed to belong.

Ms Xie concluded her presentation exposing some concern towards the representation of the women in China as, just after International Women's Day ended in Beijing, the Weibo account of the influential online group Feminist Voices was deleted.



Child Sexual Abuse

Speaker: Ms. Katharina Theil, Trainee Solicitor at Leigh Day



Ms. Katharina Theil, a lawyer working with law firm Leigh Day, focussed her presentation on the litigation and law relating to cases of child sexual abuse offences committed by British nationals abroad, using a case from Thailand as an example. Ms. Theil explained that advocates make use of the local law as well as English law to bring claims against the abusers in England. Shedding light on how these incidents occur in the first place, Ms. Theil elaborated on the process of grooming which the children often undergo before they begin to trust their abusers. In many cases, perpetrators provide victims with money and access to games, in order to gain their trust.

Ms. Theil also highlighted other problems faced when bringing civil claims against abusers. Since it involved transnational litigation, in many cases, the domestic legal framework of the countries of the children may not include sufficient protection for them, however the English legal framework requires the application of local law in their cases. Furthermore, in some jurisdictions there is very little case law to guide decisions, especially with respect to compensation.

Ms. Theil highlighted the importance of compensation in child sexual abuse cases, for example, in order to ensure the continuation of the children's education or provide access to vital medical treatment. She highlighted that in fact, children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds were highly vulnerable to these forms of abuse, since abusers might pay the child's school fees or provide financially in other ways. Ms. Theil also



provided information and examples of other common risk factors that make children in certain countries and regions more vulnerable to transnational sexual abuse offences.

Child Sex Trafficking – Successful Models and the Emerging Threat of the Internet

Speaker: Mr. Steve Webster, Chief Operating Officer at the International Justice Mission UK



Mr. Steve Webster, Chief Operating Officer of the International Mission spoke about child sex trafficking and the emerging threat of the internet. Mr. Webster described several cases and success stories of rescuing children from sexual exploitation. He emphasised that in general, the crime of child sex trafficking is difficult to identify and document. This is why the civil society approach to the issue needs to be multi-dimensional. It must include capacity-building and collaboration with local law enforcement to pursue justice for the victim. In addition, Mr. Webster called for greater focus on rehabilitation and prevention of re-victimisation. This also points to the importance of engaging trained investigators, psychologists and case-workers since the cases need to be handled with a high level of sensitivity.



In the context of the digital age and the internet, Mr. Webster highlighted the new threat of cybersex trafficking. He stressed that the approach to digital crime must be a novel one, since the crime is new as well, and unlike old crimes in many ways. He highlighted the specific issues associated with cybersex trafficking such as a greater difficulty to trace victims, as well as perpetrators. Mr. Webster reiterated that while the challenges and crimes are many in number, there is hope, and there are models that work in rehabilitating and restoring children who have been abused.

Panel on Juvenile Justice

Speakers:

Ms Mandira Sharma, PhD student at the University of Essex, Human Rights Activist and the founder of Advocacy Forum Nepal

Dr Ahmed Ehsanul Kabir, Assistant Professor at Jagannath University in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Ms Nivedita Guhathakurta, LLM student at the University of Essex, Lawyer in India

Moderator: Dr Alexandra Cox, Lecturer at the University of Essex



Ms Mandira Sharma, “The Juvenile Justice System in Nepal”

Ms Sharma, first, stated that persons of 16 years old and under are considered children. However, the Nepalese legislation consider that a child can be criminally responsible from the age of 10. From 10 to 14 years old, the child might be condemned with a lighter sentence, while a child from 14 to 16 years old will be punish with half the penalty an adult would have received.

Ms Sharma, then, identified the issue of large presence of youth in detention centres. Indeed, the lack of evidence of age, and sometimes illegal detention, leads



to hundreds of children in detention centres. Children can also be detained with adults which lead to abuses in said facilities. There is legal evidence of these abuses as legal cases have been build with record of testimonies of thousands of children. In Nepal, lawyers are intervening to challenge the detention of children with adults, as well as to end torture and ill-treatment, including targeted to juveniles. Ms Sharma insisted on the fact that procedures are not being followed for the protection of children in detention.

Dr Ahmed Ehsanul Kabir, “Protection of Children’s Rights in the Juvenile Justice System of Bangladesh: A Detailed Consideration of the Children Act, 2013”



Firstly, Dr Kabir stated the existing juvenile justice legal framework in Bangladesh. He explained that the first consolidated law to deal with children in conflict with law was the Children Act, 1922. It was subsequently replaced by the Children Act, 1974. After becoming the State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in 1990, Dr Kabir pointed out that it was the responsibility of Bangladesh to enact legislation in line with the CRC. The Children Act, 2013 (CA 2013) was then enacted, concerning juvenile justice system.

Secondly, Dr Kabir went on examining the compatibility of the provisions of CA 2013 with the obligations set out in article 40 of the CRC. During his analysis, he identified that although some provisions present in the CRC can also be found in the CA 2013, like the duty to inform the guardians of the charges held against the child, some fundamental rules are absent of the Bangladeshi legislation, for example, the presumption of innocence.

Thirdly, Dr Kabir identified that Section 82 of the Penal Code exempts children below the age of nine years from criminal liability while the Section 83 provides that “a child will not have criminal responsibility above nine and below twelve years who has not attained sufficient maturity of understanding to judge the nature and consequence of his conduct”. Dr Kabir recommends that the age of criminal responsibility be raised from 9 to 12 years old.



As the CRC prescribes, sections 48 and 84 of the CA 2013 established alternative measures to judicial proceedings, for example, diversion and alternative care.

To conclude, Dr Kabir recommended that specific provision should be incorporated regarding the presumption of innocence, the prohibition to compel a child from giving confessional statement in the CA, 2013. He also suggests that the definition of the term ‘trial’ should include the pre-trial stage.



Ms Nivedita Guhathakurta, “The Juvenile Justice System in India”



Ms Guhathakurta established the legal framework of protection of children by stating that India ratified the CRC, and that most of the CRC’s provisions had been included into India’s Constitution as Fundamental Rights or Directive Principles of State Policy.

Talking about the juvenile justice system, she highlighted that the principal law in India governing the crimes committed by children is the Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The object and purpose of this law is the proper care, protection, reformation and rehabilitation of children by providing a child-friendly approach and keeping in mind the best interest of the child. A child in conflict with law is a child who allegedly or is found to have committed an offence and while under the age of 18 at the time of commission of the offence. Children above the age of 16 can be subjected to adult criminal procedures. Following events in India, campaigns in the media was asking for the reduction of the age of criminal responsibility.

Ms Guhathakurta concluded her presentation by challenging the audience to think about the question: “is the reduction of the age of criminal responsibility the answer to reduction of juvenile crimes?”.



Anniversary Session

Speakers:

Dr Sanae Fujita, Fellow at the University of Essex, Supervisor of the conference

Professor Paul Hunt, Lecturer at the University of Essex, Advisor of the conference

Ms Nina Giraudel, LLM student at the University of Essex, Chair of the conference

Dr Sanae Fujita, “10th Anniversary Human Rights in Asia Conference”



In a first part, Dr Fujita explained the background of the event. The conference was put in place in 2009 by MA and LLM students from Asia because of the absence of a module on the Asian situation of human rights.

The session was punctuated by throwbacks to previous conferences through video recordings by past members of the organising teams.

For the first year (2009), on ‘Strengthening Human Rights Protection in the Asia Region: Optimism or Pessimism?’, Isa Soemawidjaja explained the creation of the conference as a challenge from Professor Kevin

Boyle. The conference was mainly composed of presentations by students, with some talks from academics.

The second year (2010) of the conference was on Human Rights in Asia in general. Claire Simmons made her testimony.

On its third recurrence (2011), students kept the general theme of Human Rights in Asia. Tara Van Ho, classmate of the organising team that year, highlighted the importance of





the event to bring awareness to the situation of human rights in Asia, as well as an opportunity for students to share their knowledge with their lecturers.

The fourth Human Rights in Asia Conference focused on “Natural Disasters and Human Rights” (2012).

In 2013, the organising team chose “Human Rights in Myanmar” as a focus for the day and a half long conference. Izumo Shiga, part of the organising team in 2013, focussed his message on the challenges of the organisation of the conference, as well as the learning experience it has been.

The sixth conference (2014) was on “South Asia in Focus”. The testimony of Hayman Oo was given. He insisted on the importance of the event as the situation of human rights in

Asia is not a common subject in European Universities. He described his sense of responsibility to bring awareness to the issues faced in Asia to his classmates.

“Democracy and Human Rights” was the theme of the seventh conference (2015). Olivia Solari, by video, remembered the experience as being a good opportunity to get to know her classmates, as well as to get to know the issues happening in Asia that she was not aware of.

For the eighth occurrence (2016), “Human Rights Defenders” were put in the spotlight. Sabrina Rau, present at the conference, congratulated the 2018 organising team, recognised the challenge of the organisation as well as the importance of the conference to bring awareness to Asia.

The ninth conference (2017) focused on “Gender and Sexuality”. Caroline Bird thanked the team for continuing the legacy by organising this year’s conference.

As a conclusion, Dr Fujita thanked and congratulated the organising team. She sees the conference as the foundation for future co-operation among Asian students and students from other regions. Video Messages are available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVjyFRYwnp4&feature=youtu.be>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx-ZCTb1-aU&feature=youtu.be>



Professor Hunt, “Thank you”

Professor Hunt expressed his gratitude towards the speakers, and especially the keynote speaker, Kara Apland. He thanked the organising team for organising this great event on the key topic of children’s rights in the Asian context.

Ms Nina Giraudel, “Thank you”

Ms Giraudel, as Chair, thanked all the speakers for coming to talk about the important topic of child rights in Asia. She also thanked the audience for coming to the conference. Ms Giraudel acknowledged and congratulated the team on all their efforts to organise this day. She also expressed her gratitude to Dr Fujita and Professor Hunt for their help and advice throughout the organisation of the conference. Finally, she thanked the Events and Communication Team of the Law School for their help in the organisation of this event.



Biographies of the Speakers:

Dr Ahmed Shaheed

Dr Shaheed is a lecturer, supervisor, and Deputy Director of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex. He is an internationally recognised expert on foreign policy, international diplomacy, democratisation and human rights reform especially in Muslim States. Furthermore, he is at present Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Dr Sanae Fujita

Dr Fujita has been advising the Human Rights in Asia Conference since its launch in 2009. She is furthermore an Associate Fellow at University of Essex. Since 2013, she has played a crucial role in raising international awareness of freedom of expression and information in Japan and has been leading a project by assisting the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Special Rapporteur on Rights to Privacy.

Ms Kara Apland

Ms Apland holds a BA in Political Science and Economics from Brown University and an MSc in Human Rights Law and Sociology, from the London School of Economics. She is a Senior Researcher at Coram International with speciality in issues of protection and vulnerability, particularly in relation to childhood, youth and adolescence, gender and migration.

Ms Nikolina Milić

Ms Milić is currently an LLM student at the University of Essex studying International Human Rights Law and works at the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights in Serbia. While at the Belgrade Centre, she has been involved in various activities and projects tackling the protection and integration of vulnerable groups of refugees, more specifically unaccompanied and separated children.

Dr Zibiah Loakthar

Dr Loakthar is a lecturer in Refugee Care at University of Essex. She has enjoyed travelling in Asia and working with Asian community groups in London. She has a special interest in oral history and has been an Editor of the Oral History Journal for a number of years. She is currently involved in several charities that seek to promote young people's rights.

Ms Horia Mosadiq

Ms Mosadiq is an Afghan human rights defender and journalist with more than 23 years of experience in the fields of media, human rights, transitional justice and women rights in Afghanistan and the region. She currently works with Amnesty International, the International Secretariat as Afghanistan Researcher and has a local NGO in Afghanistan named Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SRMO).

Dr Carla Ferstman

Dr Ferstman is a lecturer within the Law Faculty at the University of Essex. She has a Ph.D. in Public International Law with most of her impressive career focusing on the field of human rights. Most recently she moved up the ranks to become the director of REDRESS, the award-winning nongovernmental human rights organization which pursues justice on behalf of victims of torture and related international crimes.

Ms Nur Raudhah Nazari

Ms Nazari is a second-year law student at the University of Essex. She is the president of Enactus Essex, a group of passionate humanitarian activists. Furthermore, she is a founder of the Malaysia based organization Khalifa' helping orphaned children, aged seven to seventeen, gain access to education and providing the homeless and elderly with access to food and a better social life.

Ms Kailing Xie

Ms Xie is currently a Ph.D. researcher at the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of York. In 2017 she was awarded the Early Career Researcher Prize for her article "Premarital abortion, what is the harm? The Responsibilisation of women's pregnancy among China's privileged daughters". Her research interests broadly include social justice, identity politics, and race in China.

Ms Katharina Theil

Ms Theil is currently a trainee solicitor in the Medical Negligence department at the London based law firm Leigh Day. Within the International Claims department, Katharina has specialised, over the past four years, in the area of international sexual abuse, labour exploitation and corporate accountability for human rights abuses. She has been with Leigh Day since 2012, and had prior to that a fellowship with the International Labour Organisation.

Mr Steve Webster

Mr Webster is the Chief Operating Officer at the International Justice Mission UK. He oversees IJM's business operations within the UK. Drawing from direct on the ground experience of International Justice Missions work in South East Asia, he shares learning and successful models for addressing the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the new rapidly emerging threat of "cybersex trafficking".

Ms Mandira Sharma

Ms Sharma is a leading human rights activist from Nepal, and the founder of Advocacy Forum Nepal. She has been extensively engaged in promoting accountability for the recruitment of children in armed forces and promoting juvenile justice system to deal with the children in conflict with the law. Mandira is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Essex, researching transitional justice issues.

Ms Nivedita Guhathakurta

Ms Guhathakurta is an LLM student in International Human Rights Law at the University of Essex. Over the past seven years, she has focused on issues relating to women and children; especially issues related to child rights and the juvenile justice system. Adolescent empowerment has been a vital part of her work in India.

Dr Ahmed Ehsanul Kabir

Dr Kabir is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Law, Jagannath University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has a good number of publications in national and international law journals and national dailies in different areas of law. His research interest extends to issues of juvenile justice system in Bangladesh, the elimination of torture in educational institutions and the protection of children during armed conflict.

Dr Alexandra Cox

Dr Cox is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. Her PhD research focused on the role that frontline workers play in resisting de-carceration. She has several years of experience working in the fields of criminal justice and drug policy reform in the United States. She continues to practice as a sentencing mitigation specialist, representing primarily young people charged as adults.

Professor Paul Hunt

Professor at the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex and an important supporter of the Human Rights in Asia Conference. He has served as an independent expert on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999-2002), he was the Special Rapporteur on the Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (2002-2008), and more recently took on part-time responsibilities with the World Health Organization.

Ms Nina Giraudel

Ms Giraudel has an LLB in French and English law from the Université de Bordeaux, in France. She is now undertaking an LLM in International Human Rights Law at the University of Essex and is more importantly the director of this year's Human Rights in Asia Conference. She is passionate about children's rights, equality and education, and the intersection of these issues within the context of International Humanitarian Law.

10th Annual Human Rights in Asia Conference Organizing Team

Nina Giraudel (Chair), Sweekruthi Keshavamurthy (Vice-Chair), Ingvild Barstad, Luciana Collete, Andrea Debono Sant Cassia, Munmun Goswami, Nivedita Guhathakurta, Elshadai Hailu, Yaa Nti and Sri Nandini Reddy

Dr Sanae Fujita (Supervisor) and Professor Paul Hunt (Adviser)



(Photos credit to Patrick Davey and Dr. Sanae Fujita)