Advocacy at the UN

By Connie de la Vega

Ten students participated in the University of San Francisco’s Frank C. Newman International Human Rights Law Clinic in the Spring 2010 semester, representing Human Rights Advocates at meetings of two UN human rights bodies. Three Edith Coliver Interns attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York and seven Frank C. Newman Interns attended the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, Switzerland.

The three Edith Coliver Interns attended the full 54th session of the CSW which was preceded by a full day of the Beijing +15 Review Conference. While the magnitude of the latter and construction work at the UN in New York created some difficulties, the Interns had an opportunity to see the CSW’s process from beginning to end, which included the discussion and passage of resolutions.

The students were supervised by Cari Nutt, a Clinic graduate who had previously attended both the CSW and HRC. Two of the students were able to make oral statements and all three were involved in a variety of activities that they describe below. One student was an LLM student from Thailand and she hopes to be able to use the knowledge she gained about the UN when she returns to Thailand.

The seven Frank C. Newman Interns who attended the 13th session of the HRC were also involved in a number of activities. Five were able to make oral statements before the full Council and many of them were involved in resolution drafting sessions. One of the students was an LLM student from El Salvador and he also hopes that he will be able to make use of the knowledge he gained about the UN when he returns to El Salvador. The students were also joined by Sun Kim, another graduate of the Clinic who is currently working on a graduate program at Leiden University in The Netherlands. The students’ reports on their work and the resolutions that passed on their topics follow below.

The HRC passed 27 resolutions on a number of topics and 17 decisions on the review of countries under the Universal Periodic Review process. The resolutions can be found at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bod-
ies/hrercouncil/13session/resdec.htm. Of note are the following thematic resolutions which can be cited as A/HRC/RES/13/#:

Communications procedures for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Res. 13/3); Right to food (Res. 13/4); Adequate housing (Res. 13/10); Persons with disabilities (Res. 13/11); Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (Res. 13/12); Combating defamation of religion (Res. 13/16); Responsibilities of judges and lawyers in relation to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Res. 13/19); Rights of the child: the fight against sexual violence against children (Res. 13/24); Protection of journalists in armed conflict (Res. 13/24); Protection of human rights while countering terrorism (Res. 13/26); and A world of sports free from racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (Res. 13/27). All of the theme resolutions passed by consensus except for the resolution on combating defamation of religion which passed by a vote of 20 for, 17 against, and 8 abstentions.

There were also a number of country resolutions. Five resolutions on Occupied Syria, Occupied Territories and Gaza passed by a varying number of votes, and one on the Democratic Peoples' Republic passed by a 28/5/13 vote (Res. 13/14). The resolutions on Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Myanmar passed by consensus.

HRA’s written statements submitted to the Council (referred to in the articles below) can be found at [link]. HRA’s written statement to the CSW (NGO/1) and the Agreed Conclusions are available at [link].

UN Commission on the Status of Women Celebrates 15th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

By Casey Truelove

Attending the 54th session of the Commission on the Status of Women as an Edith Coliver Intern was a defining moment in my law school career and I am extremely honored to have been chosen to represent Human Rights Advocates at the United Nations. This year’s session was a particularly exciting and well-anticipated one, as the CSW and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) had chosen to combine the normal activities of the Commission with the 15-year celebration and review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1), an agenda for women’s empowerment developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China in 1995.

In anticipation of the 15-year review, I focused my report on improving the implementation of the Beijing Platform in two areas: combating trafficking in women and ending employment discrimination against women. (see HRA’s official written statement to the CSW 54th session under “Statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates,” E/CN.6/2010/NGO/1, at [link].) I chose these areas because they remain serious impediments to women’s enjoyment of their human rights in 2010, a full 35 years after the First World Conference on Women, 31 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and 15 years after the promulgation and signing of the revolutionary Beijing Platform.

In particular – and I found this to be generally true for each topic area – I noticed that while signers of Beijing had been good about spreading awareness on women’s issues, little had been done in the way of concrete action. I guess this is not really all that shocking, as human trafficking remains a serious global problem that primarily victimizes women. Moreover, the various forms of employment discrimination against women (including the notorious gender wage gap and
biased work-leave policies) continue to plague women even now that women are entering the workforce in ever-higher numbers.

So I went to this year’s CSW session armed with my best practices research and ready to persuade government delegates as to how their countries can more effectively implement the Beijing Platform, and, in so doing, help reduce trafficking in women and eliminate employment discrimination against women. The CSW was fairly tricky to navigate at first, as this year’s agenda – combining the CSW session with the Beijing review – meant thousands of attendees and a plethora of events occurring at different locations all throughout the day. But the opportunity to lobby delegates and talk with other NGO representatives definitely made the stress and exhaustion worth it.

I particularly enjoyed getting to speak at an interactive panel commemorating CEDAW in conjunction with the Beijing Review at the end of the first week. (see Moderator’s summary under “Panel discussion on Commemorating 30 years of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,” E/CN.6/2010/CRP.12, at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/outcomes.html.) Although I had been quite nervous before speaking, I later found out from my colleagues that the moderator of the panel (who was one of the CSW Bureau chairs) was quite pleased with my statement, especially the part where I rebuked the United States for not having ratified CEDAW (a very dubious distinction which we share with only a handful of countries: Iran, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, Somalia, and Sudan).

Speaking of CEDAW, I should point out that although the United States has not yet ratified CEDAW, San Francisco effectively has, by passing an ordinance based on the principles of CEDAW over 10 years ago, in 1998 (City and County of San Francisco, Ordinance 128-98). The city has been quite effective at implementing the women’s employment provisions by using data analysis to tailor workplace policies and programs in the areas where they are most needed. So part of my work at the CSW included urging government delegates (including the US delegates) to use San Francisco’s proven “best practices” in their future implementation efforts.

At the end of the two-week session, although there was no outcome document, the CSW member states did vote on and adopt seven resolutions. One of them pertains to increasing women’s economic empowerment. (see “Women’s economic empowerment,” E/CN.6/2010/L.5, at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/outcomes.html.) The resolution aims to end the feminization of poverty via gender-responsive public management and budgeting, as well as through the tailoring of employment policies and programs to eliminate women’s employment barriers.

In my two weeks at the CSW, I learned a lot, both about the UN and about myself. First, although lobbying can be challenging at times, it was also the most rewarding experience for me. It was, essentially, where the rubber met the road, where all of those hours of research in the library finally resulted in concrete action and a sense of real progress. Also, I realized that, as with many things in life, making change and breaking down barriers to women’s equality require patience and perseverance. The push for equality and human rights does not occur in a vacuum, and it can take much time to change the status quo. This can be frustrating and discouraging at times, but working through the challenges and seeing the progress finally made is deeply rewarding. I plan to keep this lesson in mind as I finish law school and hopefully continue my work in the field of human rights law.

**Violence Against Migrant Women**

*By Kimberly Kaufman*

This past semester, I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in the 54th Session on the Status of Women in New York. For my report, I chose one of the topics that would be discussed during the 54th Session, Violence Against Women. I focused my topic rather narrowly on violence against migrant women in particular, and more specifically, on employer based violence, and state-based violence in immigration detention centers. My topic was very important to me, not only because it is an issue I have been concerned about for years, but also because migrant women were little discussed during the CSW other than one parallel event.

In my report, I discussed the causes of violence against migrant women, best practices, problem areas in certain countries, and made suggestions for reforms. Much of the violence against migrant women committed by employers occurs due to a combination of different factors. Migrant women often lack legal rights, and work in domestic and other low-paying positions that are unregulated, which results in a lower bargaining position with employers. I focused on positive actions taken by governments to prevent this kind of violence,
particularly laws and programs which helped to increase government oversight of women migrant workers, and to empower migrant women by giving them a chance at becoming legal residents. Ultimately, I recommended that at minimum these programs must allow migrant women to live outside of their employers’ home, as this is where violence often occurs.

State-based violence against migrant women in immigration centers, on the other hand, is in part due to the tendency of countries to criminalize illegal immigrants, and the process of deportation that countries use. I focused my discussion on the United States, where pregnant women migrants have been shackled before and after giving birth, and there have been reports of rape and other forms of abuse in detention centers, and during immigration raids. Unlike employer-based violence, there has been little formal documentation of the topic and what I feel has been a lack of transparency by governments on the issue. Although this made research more difficult as a result, I felt that it was crucial to collect facts and raise awareness on violence against migrant women in immigration detention centers.

After weeks of research and writing, by the time I reached the steps of the United Nations building in New York City, I felt thoroughly prepared to raise awareness about my topic, and ready to make a difference. I must admit, however, that I was not prepared for the shock of walking in my business suit through the snow, nor was I prepared for the total chaos of more than three thousand NGOs and delegates descending upon the same U.N. building. Despite the logistical challenges we faced, including having limited access to the resolution drafting process, we were still able to make use of every moment we had during our time at the CSW. I was able to attend events which dealt with a range of eye-opening and intriguing topics, including the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women, the situation of women prisoners, the Social Watch Gender Equality Index, the GEAR campaign to create a new gender entity in the U.N., and efforts for U.S. ratification of CEDAW, just to name a few.

One of the biggest highlights was when I was able to speak during a panel discussion on violence against women. The 2 ½ hours I waited to speak was perhaps the most nerve-wracking part of the entire two weeks. However, once I was able to speak, it was an incredibly empowering experience because I am passionate about my topic, and because I was the only person during the panel discussion that mentioned the problem of violence against migrant women. Although I was too focused on speaking slowly for the translators, and in looking out on the audience to pay attention to what the delegates were doing, my colleagues later told me that the delegates from two countries I discussed in my speech, Jordan and Canada, were listening attentively to what I had to say. (United to End Violence, Moderator’s Summary, E/CN.6/2010/CRP.10, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/outcomes/crp/crp10e.pdf)

Unfortunately the U.S. did not attend the panel discussion on violence against women, but I was also able to bring up the issue of violence against migrant women in detention centers at a U.S. Mission briefing, and give my report to a U.S. delegate.

Watching the resolutions get passed on the last day was also a fascinating experience. The most contentious were – in what was no surprise – the resolution on the Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women (E/CN.6/2010/L.4), and a resolution on Eliminating Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Through the Empowerment of Women (E/CN.6/2010/L.6) that contained language about “family planning," which caused many countries to polarize. It was interesting to see that the debate in the United States is mirrored in the international debate on the same topics. Despite the controversy surrounding some of the resolutions, there were still other resolutions that exhibited how much the international human rights movements has done in advancing women’s human rights, including a Resolution on Ending Female Genital Mutilation sponsored by Equatorial Guinea (E/CN.6/2010/L.8). Other resolutions which were passed were on Women, the Girl Child, and HIV/AIDS (E/CN.6/2010/L.2/Rev.1), on the Release of Women and Children Taken into Hostage (E/CN.6/2010/L.3), and on the Institutional Arrangements of the United Nations for Support of Gender Equality (E/CN.6/2010/L.7). (These resolution documents can be found at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/outcomes.html)

Overall, this was one of those law school experiences where I got to see the law, treaties, and entities I had learned about in class come to life. Attending the CSW also gave me a new perspective on how to change the law other than what is often taught in law school. We can change the world we live in by raising awareness to issues through lobbying and by way of international mechanisms. It was an extremely rewarding and inspiring experience and I plan to use the skills I learned during this semester during the course of my legal career.
Domestic Violence Against Women

By Prairie Punsoni

As an LL.M. student from Thailand and an Edith Coliver Intern, with determination and pride in the work I was about to begin, I marched into the United Nations CSW's 54th session through the cold with concerns raised in my mind whether or not I would be able to carry out this task. Then I remembered what Amol Mehra '09 mentioned in one of our classes: "This Clinic will prepare you to be an expert in the topic that you are doing." Whether true or not, I did not care, but I was immediately comforted by the thought. During the two weeks in New York, I went through every kind of weather there could possibly be: snow, rain and sunshine. Coming from a country with a warmer climate I thought the weather would be my worst obstacle, but to my surprise my motivation and eagerness to get to the UN made all the uncomfortable feelings from the cold go away. During the session, I advocated to prevent and combat "Domestic Violence" which was included as one form of violence against women and was one of the topics focused in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. My goal was to lobby for a better definition and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

For the goal of promoting to end domestic violence, I would like to discuss a little bit about my paper. My paper addresses domestic violence and why it has not been properly implemented according to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Domestic violence is an ongoing violation that effects women around the world. It prevents women from the full enjoyment of their rights. To overcome these violations a better definition is needed as well as the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the context of preventive measures and programs to train and educate law enforcement personnel. The paper also covers culture and social traditions that affect prevention.

First, my report addresses the need for a broader definition that can be adopted globally and provide ample protection for the victims, from such forms of abuse as economical abuse and marital rapes. The definition should also provide equal protection for victims of abuse from intimate partners. DAW has recognized these rights and states in the handbook for legislation that the definition of domestic violence should include economical abuse as one form of the violation as:


Although the handbook for legislation suggests that the forms of violation should also include economical abuse and sexual abuse, there are still several countries that do not include it in the definition. I cover the example of Thailand. What is most important is that domestic violence must be criminalized.

Second, it addresses how the long held cultural and social traditions underlying society cause the lack of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on how it should be overcome. Third, it covers the unreported cases of domestic violence and why it is very difficult to combat the ongoing abuse. Suggestions for preventive measures to end domestic violence include domestic violence education in the school curriculum.

And lastly, to combat domestic violence efficiently, educated and trained law enforcement in handling domestic violence is also crucial. The law enforcement personnel need to be knowledgeable in how to handle this sensitive situation.

I attended many of the side events and caucuses and learned many new things. First I learned how to lobby the delegates in real situations, such as the Thai delegate, who is on the drafting committee for the domestic violence act in Thailand. Thailand is on the verge of amending the domestic violence act and she mentioned that she would take my suggestion into consideration. I also learned how the voting process for the adoption of resolutions works. This includes how the United Nations meetings are held and most importantly the process of the CSW session.

Despite what I learned, I also have some concerns that include why countries are still facing a great deal of violence against women that does not seem to be declining. Although some countries have enacted domestic violence laws because of the Beijing Platform for Action, there are still some countries that do not have specific laws that deal with domestic violence. China, for example, which was the host of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, still does not have a specific law for handling domestic violence – especially a law that penalizes the violator. A new draft of domestic violence in China is currently being considered. (All China's Women Federation on Marital Rape and Violence in Cohabitation to be Defined as Domestic Violence, Zheng Yufei, December 23, 2009.)

I encountered several obstacles during the CSW. The most important obstacle was there was lack of
transparency in the overall process of the session. First, we were excluded by security personnel from a session that was held in the main plenary, although the hand-book and schedule indicated that it was an open session. 

Second, is how late we learned about the resolutions that were going to be passed, and it was very difficult to locate the drafts. It took me almost an hour to locate all the resolutions I needed before the voting session started in order for me to keep up with the debate. We were also very surprised to hear that some of the resolutions were being handed to the delegates to review no more than 30 minutes before the voting session started. Some of the delegates were having trouble studying the contents of the resolution which also resulted in the postponement of the session by 1.30 hours. Thus, it appeared that the disorganization effects the delegates as well as the NGOs.

To conclude, this wonderful opportunity has given me the chance to participate in this important arena for improving the way of life of women around the world. I would like to thank Professor Connie, Julianne, HRA and, most importantly, Sandy Coliver for giving me this chance of a lifetime. I would have never been able to attend without all of this support.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, 13TH SESSION, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Food Sovereignty: A Strategy for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Food

By Mariam Danielyan

Human Rights Advocates continued its work on the right to food at the UN Human Rights Council’s 13th Session. Within the general topic of the right to food, my focus was on the importance of food sovereignty and the potentially negative impact food aid can have on food sovereignty in recipient States. As part of the International Human Rights Clinic and a resource for lobbying delegates at the UN, I prepared a report on my topic in which I included a discussion of large-scale land acquisitions and leases, also called “land grabbing.” (Food Sovereignty: A Strategy for the Progressive Realization of the Right to Food, available at: http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_Food_Sovereignty.pdf). A written statement was also submitted to the Council. (A/HRC/13/NGO/34, available at: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.aspx?b=10&se=104&t=7).

It is universally acknowledged that the right to food is a fundamental human right. The right to food was first acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25), and later codified in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 11). General Comment 12 notes that the right to food is “linked to the inherent dignity of the human person.” (Committee on Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights, General Comment 12, E/C.12/1999/5 at para. 4., 12 May 1999.) Nonetheless the Food and Agriculture Organization reports that more than one billion people are hungry and undernourished worldwide. (The State of Food Insecurity in the World, Food and Agriculture Association of the UN, Rome, 2009 at p. 4.)

The concept of “food sovereignty” enables the realization of the right to food. The underlying principles of food sovereignty include the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods” in addition to the right of each nation or people to define their own agricultural and food policies. (Nyeleni Declaration, http://www.landaction.org/spip/spip.php?article37). Food sovereignty “puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of the food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations” (Id.). The General Assembly included language on food sovereignty in its 2008 Resolution:

“Notes the need to further examine various concepts such as, inter alia, ‘food sovereignty’ and their relation with food security and the right to food, bearing in mind the need to avoid any negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to food for all people at all times.” (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the right to food, A/RES/63/187 at para. 15., 18 December 2008.)

The Food and Agriculture Organization Voluntary Guidelines, whose purpose is to provide guidance to States in their implementation of the realization of the right to adequate food in the context of food security, support food sovereignty. Guideline 15, which ad-
The detrimental effects of land grabbing are felt by the impoverished people of target nations who give up control to substantial amounts of fertile land and many of whom are food insecure themselves. In his most recent report, the Special Rapporteur on the right to food addressed the special needs of smallholders and identified them as “the single most important group of those who are food insecure in the world today.” (Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, A/HRC/13/33 at para. 28, 22 December 2009.) Therefore, the acquisition of large-scale lands through purchase or lease can undermine food sovereignty.

At the Council, I had the opportunity to make a three minute oral intervention regarding my topic. Although addressing the Council was an invaluable experience, I found that participating in resolution drafting sessions was an even more enriching one. Not only did I observe and participate in the drafting sessions, but I also discovered the direct impact NGOs can make at the Council. Even though the resolution on the right to food is still not final, I am pleased to report that language acknowledging the Special Rapporteur’s work on large-scale land acquisitions and leases is currently included in the resolution on the right of food. (Human Rights Council Resolution on the right to food, A/HRC/RES/13/4, 14 April 2010.)

Protecting Human Rights While Countering Terrorism

By Lani Virostko

At the Human Rights Council, I focused on the human rights implications of State counter-terrorism measures. Specifically, my report addressed the need for a universal definition of terrorism and the importance of protecting the right to privacy while countering terrorism. (A/HRC/13/NGO/15, Counter Terrorism and Human Rights, 22 February 2010.) I also discussed the importance of judicial oversight and transparency of State counter-terrorism measures in protecting human rights. I was interested in this topic because of the many ways our rights are implicated by State counter-terrorist measures. I was surprised by the lack of a universal definition of terrorism, especially since it is an important means for promoting international cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Also, without a universal definition of terrorism, it is more difficult to protect human rights since States may create overbroad definitions and criminalize legal or non-terrorist conduct.

The next section of my report focused on State surveillance and intelligence measures implemented to fight terrorism. Most of us do not know the extent of these measures taken by States and it is important to promote transparency and judicial oversight of these procedures to protect human rights. Many State counter-terrorism measures are kept secret for security reasons, but in order to ensure that human rights are protected, I
stressed the need for independent oversight. My full report is available at http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_Counter-terrorism_and_Human-Rights.pdf. Aside from my report, I was also able to make an oral intervention to the Human Rights Council on my topic. It was empowering speaking to the Council, especially since I raised issues that were not addressed by any other groups.

At the Human Rights Council, I attended numerous resolution drafting sessions related to counter-terrorism. There was a resolution being drafted that related directly to counter-terrorism and protecting human rights. (A/HRC/RES/13/26, Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, 15 April 2010.) The drafting sessions were a great way to determine State’s positions on issues I was interested in. After the sessions ended, I was able to approach delegates who expressed interest in international cooperation in the fight against terrorism because they could be interested in the lack of a universal definition. Many of the delegates I spoke to were not hopeful that there would be any international agreement on a definition of terrorism, although they acknowledged the importance of this concept. I enjoyed talking to delegates who were willing to speak with me about this issue and hopefully in the future, there will be more movement toward the adoption of a universal definition. The central difficulty I had with my topic, however, was the highly political nature of issues relating to terrorism, specifically a definition of terrorism.

I was also able to attend some interesting side events at the UN. One of my favorites was organized by the NGO, International Commission of Jurists. The event was called “The Role and Responsibility of the Legal Profession in Combating torture and Ill-treatment” and related specifically to counter-terrorism measures. During the panel, one of the NGO panelists discussed issues of torture in the United States and specifically, the infamous Torture Memos written by U.S. attorneys. The U.S. Delegate offered a lengthy response, highlighting President Obama’s new policies regarding the treatment of detainees and counter-terrorism measures. The U.S. stressed the changes that have been made and the administration’s commitment to ending torture and ill treatment of detainees. It was interesting to see this type of dialogue and to watch the impact of international human rights law on U.S. policies.

I had an amazing experience overall. I enjoyed being a participant in the Human Rights Council and seeing the process in motion. I experienced the difficulties with finding consensus on highly politicized issues, such as terrorism. But I also watched delegates negotiate and agree on language in resolutions that will have an impact on human rights law in the future. Although delegates argued over every word of the resolutions, there was also cooperation and compromise over important concepts. I appreciate the opportunity I had to be involved in this clinic and work directly on important human rights issues. Working with Professor de la Vega was especially rewarding. Her passion and commitment for international human rights taught me so much about working in this field and what it takes to become a public interest attorney. I feel lucky to have worked with such a wonderful professor and other students and faculty committed to international human rights.

Privatized Prisons and Human Rights

By Ashley Connell

This spring I was one of seven lucky students to have the opportunity to go to Geneva to lobby delegates at the Human Rights Council. I worked on the topic of prison privatization, which was a new topic for the Clinic this year, and one that is just starting to gain more attention worldwide. This topic allowed me to combine my interests in criminal justice and migrant rights, as many of our country’s immigration detention centers are now being run by private companies. Many people are not even aware that our government, among others, has taken the fairly radical step of beginning to contract out the massive responsibility of incarceration, a duty historically reserved to the states. This is generally done under the guise of saving money. However, there is a good deal of evidence to show that privatization may actually cost taxpayers more. This makes sense given that corporations naturally factor a hefty profit into the cost of incarceration. One prisoner account I found during my research reported that signs displaying the previous day’s stock closing were actually posted on the walls of his private facility.

In order to maximize profit – as is the goal (and legal obligation) of any corporation – private prison companies find ways to cut costs, often to the detriment of both prisoners and prison staff. One way corrections companies lower their overhead is by hiring poorly trained or untrained guards, who are then paid very little compared to those working in public prisons. The profit motive also increases incentives for over-incarceration,
a denial of basic services such as health care, and a lack of opportunities for rehabilitation. Those standing to profit from incarceration may seek to influence legislators, parole boards, and even judges to further their means. One particularly egregious case serves to highlight the risks inherent in privatization: last year in Pennsylvania, two judges pleaded guilty to accepting 2.6 million dollars for sentencing thousands of juveniles to privately run youth detention centers.

Prison privatization affects a multitude of internationally recognized human rights – indeed, every right affected by any form of incarceration – but I chose to focus my report on the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to be treated with humanity and dignity. These rights have been repeatedly violated within the context of private prisons, yet holding accountable those responsible has been increasingly difficult as corporations often claim that they are not bound by the freedom of information laws that apply to the government. The 1500-word short statement summarizing the issues I covered, with a focus on violations occurring within the United States, is available at Privatized Prisons and Human Rights, A/HRC/13/NGO/28. The full report can be accessed at the following web address: http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_Protivized_Prisons_and_Human_Rights.pdf.

Privatization is happening in many countries around the world, but the practice is most common in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, there are also a number of countries that have denounced privatization. Last fall, for example, Israel’s High Court of Justice became the first in the world to hold privatized incarceration unconstitutional. It was thus important for my work at the Council to be able to target not only the worst offenders, but also acknowledge countries like Israel that might work with HRA to challenge this practice.

One of my main goals in Geneva was simply drawing attention to the private prison phenomenon, which to my knowledge has never really been dealt with at the international level. More specifically, I hoped to garner support for a resolution that would direct the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to investigate the topic and produce a report on its findings. I felt that I was fairly successful with the first of these goals and I plan to continue working toward the second, as the resolution on arbitrary detention will not be drafted until later this year.

I was very fortunate to have the chance to raise the issue before the entire Council by making an oral statement during the session on issues pertaining to detention. Speaking in front of such a large body of distinguished delegates was rather intimidating, especially because shortly before my turn to speak another NGO was interrupted by the Cuban delegate, a particularly vocal woman, who was furious with the allegations the speaker was making. Fortunately, I made it through my statement uninterrupted and was pleased to learn afterward that some of the people I had particularly hoped to reach had actually been listening.

Another way I felt that I was able to effectively raise my issue was by attending the side panels that occurred each day on a variety of issues. Two panels were particularly relevant to my topic – one on migrant detention and another on prison conditions in Brazil. At each panel I was able to ask specific questions that were then addressed by the panelists, and often led to conversations that continued after the group meeting. The side panels also presented great opportunities to meet with representatives from other NGOs, and discuss possible ways to collaborate.

One of the biggest things I’ve come away from this experience having learned is that just as in any other area of law that may seem daunting at first, international law is created by human beings just like us – many of them without the legal training that we are fortunate to have had. Through my interaction with delegates, I learned the importance of being able to distinguish between a nation (and its government and policies), and the individual person charged with representing that entity at the Council. I also came away with a great appreciation that this Clinic exists. I think it is incredibly valuable, both for the opportunity it provides students like myself who are interested in international human rights work to really get their feet wet, as well as for the voice it allows us to give to important issues that otherwise might never be raised before the Council. I am incredibly grateful to have had this opportunity, and look forward to applying what I’ve learned in my future endeavors as a public interest attorney.

The Right To The Truth: Beyond The Armed Conflicts

By René Eduardo Velásquez González

Corporate accountability is one of the most difficult issues to address at the Human Rights Council. This topic is very controversial to address, especially before the developed countries’ delegates, due to the large
economic interest at stake. Numerous human rights violations in recent years have called for the attention of institutions and organizations that protect human rights in order that they may denounce the infringements that corporations have performed in diverse areas especially against the environment. Based on the aforementioned, I prepared my study as a Frank C. Newman intern on the violations against human rights in the transportation of toxic wastes, focused on raising the importance of corporate accountability as a tool to provide a remedy for the victims of those violations.

I started my investigation accordingly and we identified the cases that we wanted to address. However, the Human Rights Council latter informed us that toxic wastes transportation would not be addressed in the 13th session, which meant that I had to change my topic, look for other cases and prepare an investigation in a really short time. Instead we decided to keep our sample cases and translate them to one of the other topics that would be addressed in the session: the right to the truth. We tried to extend the scope of such right to the core issues that we wanted to address in the report: corporate accountability and the right of reparation inherent to the victims of human rights violations. (A copy of the report submitted to the UN is accessible at A/HRC/13/NGO/33. An extensive report can be accessed at: http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_The_Right_to_Truth.pdf.)

As an LLM student from El Salvador I had a particular interest in bringing a situation to the Human Rights Council’s attention that has been affecting the community Las Brisas, located in the rural area of the department of San Miguel in my home country: In 1998, a Salvadoran company named AGROJELL abandoned in said area 92 barrels of toxaphene, a pesticide prohibited in the United States since 1982 by the United States Department of Health and Human Services under suspicion of being a carcinogen; banned or severely restricted for health or environmental reasons by the Rotterdam Convention of 1998. Despite numerous requests to the Salvadoran authorities for more than 10 years, no real answer was provided to the community. By 2002 the barrels’ condition was deplorable. On February 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) carried out a study released on January 2004 which described the pollution of the soil, subsoil and probably the underground water of the zone due to an explosion in one of the pipelines of the underground tanks of solvent used of the preparation of the Toxaphene (E.U.A. confirm derrame de tóxicos, Liliana Fuentes Monroy, La Prensa Grafica, January 29, 2004.)

The human rights violated in this issue include the right to life, the right to health, the right of an adequate standard of living, and the right to access to drinkable water. These same rights have been violated to people in Somalia and Ivory Coast, the other two cases addressed in my report.

In Somalia decades of indiscriminate fishing and toxic dumping have affected the health and economy of the people living in the coastal areas of the country, giving rise in part to the piracy crisis in the Gulf of Aden. The weakness of the Government provides practically no hope for the identification and accountability of the perpetrators of the toxic dumping and illegal fishing that have resulted in the grave human rights violations.

The positive example that we wanted to address on the achievement of the right to the truth derived from the outcome of the Abidjan disaster in Côte d’Ivoire. There, thanks to the international cooperation and the involvement of the Special Rapporteur on the adverse effects of the movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products and wastes on the enjoyment of human rights, the general bases of the right to the truth were achieved: the perpetrators were identified, the victims had access to justice from an impartial court, and a remedy was provided. Nevertheless, claims about possible fraud in the management of the indemnification and the possibility that many of the victims will not receive any compensation, threaten to jeopardize the effectiveness of these measures. (BBC News Friday, 22 January 2010; http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/af rica/8475362.stm.)

With these cases, I headed to the Human Rights Council meeting – an experience which proved to be better than I possibly could have expected. In my case, the main event was the discussion panel on the right to the truth held on March 9th. The panel discussion approached the right to the truth under its traditional scope that is as a tool to provide remedy to victims of gross human rights during armed conflicts. The highlight of the event for me was when I had the opportunity to take the floor and address my report to the assembly, which can be accessed at http://www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/archive.asp?go=100309.

The experience of lobbying and advocating on my topic was really interesting. We had decided that we wanted the support of Africa since many African countries have been principally affected by the toxic dumping. Therefore, we approached Ivory Coast and South Africa which we consider as the leaders of the region on this matter and the ones which may be able to obtain the support of their neighbors in a resolution that would
Continued Violations of the Right to Vote Call for Greater Protections

By Natalie Davis

As a Frank C. Newman intern, it was an extraordinary honor to attend the Thirteenth Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland this past March. My report and lobbying efforts at the Council focused on the need for greater protections for the right to vote.

Although the Right to Vote is explicitly protected in international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other various regional human rights instruments, violation of the right remains pervasive. One need only open the newspaper almost any day of the year to find evidence of this. Unfortunately, these violations often lead to larger patterns of human rights violations of grave concern to world. In addition to widespread violations of voting rights through election fraud and violence, there are also a number of voting issues, such as electronic voting, that require further clarification.

My long report, “The Right to Vote: The Need for a Special Procedure,” which can be found at http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_The_Right_to_Vote.pdf, focused on some of the violations that occurred this past year in countries such as Afghanistan and Iran. This report also demonstrated how the right to vote continues to be infringed through certain election laws and procedures, such as criminal disenfranchisement in the United States and the banning of certain political parties from election participation in Iraq and Haiti. The short statement submitted to the Council, (Need for a Special Procedure on the Right to Vote, A/HRC/13/NGO/27), also summarized these continued violations.

At the Council, I lobbied for all nations to give full effect to the right to vote and to take all necessary legislative measures to prohibit discrimination in exercising voting rights and for the Human Rights Council to take action to promote greater protection of this right by establishing a Special Rapporteur on the right to vote. The Special Rapporteur ideally would then investigate cases of voting rights violations that are inconsistent with the relevant international standards and would also study and establish meaningful parameters of election-related norms, principles, and good practices to guide all nations in protecting the right to vote.

This is an issue that Frank C. Newman interns have been working on for a few years now because it is an issue that takes time to rally enough support for. Since we are asking for the Council to take specific action, we need delegates from one or more countries to get behind the issue and to bring it to the Council’s attention. There are some difficulties in doing this since usually, as was the case this year, the Right to Vote is not specifically covered by a Council agenda item.

I did speak with quite a few delegates who were interested in our ideas, but they were really preoccupied with working on draft resolutions for other issues on the agenda. However, over the years, we have been able to get a few delegates really interested in this issue, so the goal is to keep making and maintaining that support. Also, even when the Right to Vote is not specifically covered by an agenda item, the right is so interrelated with other human rights, it is usually possible to find an agenda item that it falls under. We all learned that flexibility is essential for these efforts.

For me, the highlights of my experience were that, first, I was fortunate enough to make an oral intervention. During the general debate on one of the agenda items, I made a combined statement to the Council on the need for a Special Procedure for the right to vote and on juvenile justice issues. Second, I attended a few draft resolution sessions and these were really interesting. Not only was it a good way to identify the delegates from specific countries, but it was fascinating to see how seemingly minor changes in words really mattered to some delegates. Some of the...
inter-country tensions and inter-country unions became more noticeable here, and I got a sense of how hard it can be to get international consensus on anything. Rather than finding this discouraging, however, I think this signals how much each country truly cares about the outcomes of these resolutions. Finally, it was much easier to approach delegates after these smaller sessions instead of trying to catch them on the way out of the main session.

I had such a wonderful experience in Geneva, and I really learned a lot about what goes on behind the scenes at the Council. I now have a much greater appreciation of the difficulty involved in achieving recognition of and agreement on these important issues, but despite these difficulties, I was also reminded that consensus and change is possible. I am truly grateful to Human Rights Advocates, Professor de la Vega and USF School of Law for making this experience possible.

**Juvenile Sentencing and Alternatives to Incarceration of Juvenile Offenders**

*By Alexandra Wong*

I came to USF knowing that I wanted to pursue a career in International Human Rights, but unsure of how that would pan out during my three years of legal education. Now, at the end of my third year, I feel very blessed that I had the distinct honor of participating the 13th Session of the U.N. Human Rights Council as a Frank C. Newman Intern under the auspices of Human Rights Advocates.

The topic that I was focused on at the U.N. was juvenile sentencing and the need to pursue alternatives to incarceration. I have been working on the issue since the summer of my second year, but as I began to prepare for our work at the Council, I finally realized the enormity of the goal we were working towards. I first prepared a written statement that was submitted to the Council (Juvenile Sentencing and Alternatives to Incarceration of Juvenile Offenders, A/HRC/13/NGO/29) and then a longer report to support my advocacy work. (available at: http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_Juvenile_Sentencing.pdf.)

In regards to juvenile sentencing, my report focused on the need to ensure the complete elimination of the juvenile death penalty and juvenile life without parole sentences. Only five countries in the world continue to sentence children to death—Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen and Sudan. There have been at least 34 known executions within these countries since 2006. In addition, despite the fact that eleven countries still retain laws that permit the possibility of life without parole for youth under 18, the U.S. is the only country known to actively sentence children to life in prison. There are more than 2,500 people currently serving this sentence in our country. These sentences are known to subject offenders to enormous abuse and suffering. What was daunting was that I would have to lobby these countries to stop such cruel practices against offending youth.

However, when we arrived at the UN, Professor de la Vega and I discovered that although a full day on the Rights of the Child had been planned, the focus was on the prevention of sexual violence against children. Although elimination of the juvenile death penalty and juvenile life without parole was certainly very central to our lobbying work, we realized that it would not necessarily fit into the theme that the Council was focused on for this year. This is when the alternatives to incarceration proved to be important.

There are many examples of successful programs that have promoted restorative justice principles as an alternative to incarceration of children. These programs have realized the importance of allowing the youth to redeem and rehabilitate themselves of their offense and to successfully reintegrate into society. Research has shown that often, the successful programs involved the offender, the victim, the parents and the community in order to arrive at a solution that would be in the best interest of both the offender and the victim. Such programs are thriving in Australia, New Zealand, Brazil and even here, in the United States.

Because there was no specific panel on juvenile justice issues, I had to quickly switch the focus of my lobbying work at the UN. We began to concentrate on having delegates and participants at the Council support language calling for incarceration to be used as a last resort and concentrating on alternatives instead in this year’s resolution. Uruguay and Spain were the main sponsors of the resolution and therefore, speaking to them proved to be important. I learned that there was to be a drafting session on the resolution and that was where we brought up our concerns with sexual abuse against juveniles held in detention. We asked for language to be included that would more fully protect minors in prison and for the resolution to reinforce that detention to be used as a measure of last resort. We are happy to report that the Uruguay and other delegations, after some clarification, accepted our recommendation and it is currently included.
in the final resolution on the Rights of the Child. (Rights of the Child: the Fight against Sexual Violence Against Children, A/HRC/RES/13/20 (Paragraphs 2(g) and 4). This was important because there is now another piece of international soft law that reinforces the fact that incarceration should be used as a last resort. This language can be used in national juvenile sentencing litigation such as that pending before the U.S. Supreme Court. (Brief for Amicus Curiae Supporting Petitioners, Graham v. State of Florida and Sullivan v. State of Florida _ U.S. _ (2010) (Nos. 08-7412, 08-7621)

This has been one of the most rewarding experiences during my time at USF. I am amazed at the real opportunity to pursue what I came to law school to do. It opened my eyes to see how international law is created; the immense effort that all the different world actors (governments, IGOs and NGOs) have to make in order to reach a consensus. And most importantly, it has further fueled my passion for a career in international human rights.

Developing Law on the Death Row Phenomenon

By Brahmani Houston

Mr. S has been on California’s death row for 18 years. His direct appeal has yet to be heard, to say nothing if his state habeas corpus petitions or federal appeals. His lawyers estimate that the California Supreme Court will not decide his appeal for another four to five years. Already mentally unstable at the time of his conviction, Mr. S has deteriorated to an alarming degree since his incarceration. He no longer understands the passage of time, is obsessed with conspiracy theories and refuses medical treatment for a persistent and unsightly skin infection. Despite his deteriorated mental and physical state, Mr. S has not received psychological treatment for the entirety of his incarceration. Mr. S suffers from the “death row phenomenon.”

The death row phenomenon is a severe psychological and physical deterioration that effects death row inmates who are subjected to a combination of circumstances, specifically: (1) long delays on death row; (2) the extremely harsh conditions on death row; and (3) the acute anxiety condemned prisoners experience while awaiting their own executions.

The delays, at least in the United States, are due to a failure to provide due process procedures to condemned prisoners within reasonable periods of time. Where such failures exist and where violations result, prisoners should be given legal redress, including commutation of their sentences to life.

After nearly two years of assisting human rights attorney and Professor Connie de la Vega with a petition pending before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) alleging violations of Mr. S’s rights, I prepared to lobby delegates at the 13th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on the death row phenomenon.

I was one of seven law students who participated in the Frank C. Newman International Human Rights Law clinic, directed by Professor de la Vega. I, like the others, submitted a short statement to the HRC (Violations of the Prohibition on Torture: The Death Row Phenomenon & Denial of Notice of Execution, A/HRC/13/NGO/16) and prepared a comprehensive report to use as a lobbying tool once in Geneva. (Available at http://www.humanrightsadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/HRC13_Violations_of_the_Prohibition_of_Torture.pdf.) I was also the second clinic participant to address the death row phenomenon at the HRC since 2007.

The death row phenomenon is raised as a violation of the prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (CIDT), rather than a violation of the right to life. Accordingly, we were looking to add or shape language in the torture resolution at the 13th Session.

Soon after arriving in Geneva, we discovered that the torture resolution, sponsored by Denmark, was focused too narrowly to accommodate any language related to the death row phenomenon. (See the torture resolution, The role and responsibility of judges, prosecutors and lawyers, A/HRC/RES/13/19, 15 April 2010.) A productive meeting with the Italian delegate revealed that another death penalty moratorium resolution would be voted on at the September 2010 U.N General Assembly session in New York. We also learned that an omnibus torture resolution will be considered at that session. In light of this information, I spent the remainder of my time at the HRC making contacts with delegates and NGO representatives who would assist or promote resolution language and discussion on the death row phenomenon at the GA session. Due to HRAs’ limited staff and resources, our intention for the time being is to lobby the contacts we made and pursue new ones from our base in San Francisco.

Within a week of returning to San Francisco
from Geneva, two things happened:

First, the Universal Periodic Review hearings for the west coast took place over two days in Berkeley and San Francisco. I made an oral statement at the San Francisco hearing, citing the extremely long delays death row prisoners face in the United States. I also called attention to Mr. S’s case.

Second, we received a ruling from the IACHR regarding the petition alleging violations of Mr. S right to be free from torture or CIDT, first filed in 2007 on behalf of HRA and fos*ters, a Swiss-based NGO formed specifically to advocate for Mr. S. The IACHR ruled, over the objection of the federal government, that the issue of the death row phenomenon in Mr. S’s case was admissible. This was significant because a threshold requirement for IACHR is exhaustion of domestic remedies.

Since the remedies in place for Mr. S to access – his state and federal appeals – have yet to commence after 18 years, it would be many more years, or even decades, before he could technically exhaust remedies. The U.S., in its reply, had argued that Mr. S did not meet the exhaustion requirement because he could file a habeas petition to challenge his detention. This was a red herring, since successive habeas petitions are effectively barred, except in the narrowest of circumstances. In other words, once Mr. S files a habeas petition, he cannot file subsequent ones. If he were to file prematurely, before his appeal was decided, he very likely would foreclose claims that would otherwise become available.

The IACHR admissibility ruling is, therefore, a tacit admission that the domestic remedies for capital appeals are inherently flawed. HRA will submit a supplemental brief to IACHR for its consideration when ruling on the merits of the petition. If IACHR does find that Mr. S’s right to be free from torture or CIDT has been violated, it will be the first ruling by any judicial organ in the Americas on the death row phenomenon to date.

(Other international and foreign judicial bodies have addressed the issue, most recently the Supreme Court of Uganda. See, Attorney General v Kigula and 417 Others, January 21, 2009.)

Former students who worked on the petition and subsequent filings to the IACHR include Amy Lifson-Leu, Danielle Tizol, and Elisabeth Hanowsky ’07.

U.S. Supreme Court Rules That Life Without Parole Sentences for Juvenile Offenders Who do not Commit Homicides are Unconstitutional

By Connie de la Vega

On May 17, 2010, the United States Supreme Court reversed the sentence of a 17 year old who had been convicted of a non-homicide crime. Justice Kennedy wrote the opinion for the majority holding that the sentence was disproportionate punishment and violated the 8th Amendment of the Constitution.

In so ruling, Justice Kennedy followed the reasoning set forth in Roper v. Simmons, which held the death penalty for juvenile offenders is unconstitutional: the practice in the U.S. states, the psychological development of juveniles and the practice of other nations. Regarding the latter, the Court notes that “[t]here is support for our conclusion in the fact that, in continuing to impose life without parole sentences on juveniles who did not commit homicide, the United States adheres to a sentencing practice rejected the world over. This observation does not control our decision. The judgments of other nations and the international community are not dispositive as to the meaning of the Eighth Amendment. But “[t]he climate of international opinion concerning the acceptability of a particular punishment” is also “not irrelevant.” [citations omitted] Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. (2010), slip opinion at 4. In the discussion, the Court referred to the U.S.F. law review and report written by Professors de la Vega and Leighton, as well as the amicus curiae brief they filed on behalf of Amnesty International, Human Rights Advocates, and three other NGOs and ten bar associations from around the world. The report and article were based on reports prepared by FCN Interns to the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Council, and CERD, including Angela Fitzsimons ’05, Patricia Fullinwider ’06, Nicole Skibola ’08, and Marie Montesano and Amanda Solter ’09. Alexandra Wong and Lani Virostko ’10 worked on citations for the brief.
Civil Society Celebrates Victory for UN Gender Equality Architecture Reform: UN Women Born

By Julianne Cartwright Traylor and Birte Scholz

After four years of advocacy, the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign is now celebrating the unanimous adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution that establishes the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN Women. Entitled “System-wide coherence”, the resolution is part of the UN reform agenda to bring together resources and mandates of various UN entities and bodies for greater impact. (See Resolution A/64/L.56, 30 June, 2010) It has been characterized as a major historic step for the UN Member States to merge and build on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN which focus exclusively on gender equality and women’s empowerment, as the UN enters a new era for work on women and girls. (See Paras. 49-90). UN Women will be the “single recognized driver” to direct UN activities on gender equality issues and assist the UN system to be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality.

The two key roles of UN Women will be to: 1) support inter-governmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) both in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms, and help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, as well as forging effective partnerships with civil society; and 2) help the UN system be accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including monitoring system-wide progress.

The availability of financial resources - or the lack thereof, for UN efforts on behalf of women and girls has always been an issue and was one of the key issues negotiated during these past four years. As a result, the operations of UN Women will be funded by voluntary contributions, while the regular UN budget will support its normative work. The Member States have agreed that at least $500 million is the minimum investment needed for UN Women. This figure is double the current combined budgets of the four UN entities and mechanisms currently working exclusively on gender equality and women’s empowerment issues: DAW (Division for the Advancement of Women); INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women); OSAGI (Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women); and UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women)! UN Women will consolidate the work of these four bodies and have increased operational capacity at the country level. It will be headed by an Under-Secretary General.

The transitional phase for establishing UN Women will be July – December 2010 with the expectation that the new entity will be operational in January 2011. The UN Office of the Deputy Secretary General will head the transitional team until UN Women headed by an Under-Secretary General (USG) is in place in September of this year. The new USG will be a member of all senior UN decision-making bodies and will report directly to the Secretary-General.

The issue of the governance of the operational side of UN Women was one of the most contentious, final issues that had to be decided during the final phase of the negotiations on the text of the resolution. Some donor countries wanted to use the current UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board – a small sized board to enable quick decision-making, but many developing countries advocated for a larger board along the line of representation on the CSW to ensure stronger geographical representation from the Global South. The compromise reached provides for the creation of a new Executive Board that seeks to not only provide for geographical representation from the Global South, but also to address the need for accountability from donor countries. It will consist of 41 members and 6 seats will be allocated to contributing countries.

It is important to note that the resolution recognizes the vital role that civil society – in particular women’s organizations, in promoting women’s rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, and requests “…the USG to continue the existing practice of effective consultation with civil society organizations and encourages their meaningful contribution to the work of the Entity.”

In conclusion, Charlotte Bunch of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers University, and a founding member of the GEAR Campaign, has so aptly stated: “We have high expectations for this new agency to be a solid foundation for advancing the human rights of women as central to global policy efforts to reduce poverty and move toward greater realization of peace and democracy in the world. The coalition of women’s groups and other social justice, human rights and development
organization that played a pivotal role in this effort will now turn its efforts toward ensuring that the new body has the human and financial resources necessary to succeed.” (GEAR Press Release, 1 July 2010).

As one of the 300+ members in the GEAR network of women’s, human rights and social justice groups around the world, HRA will continue to report and advocate on behalf of the human rights of women and girl children and to monitor the developments surrounding the establishment of UN Women.

HRA Annual Meeting

HRA held its Annual Meeting on April 13, 2010, at USF, School of Law. The following were elected by HRA members to serve on HRA’s Board of Directors: Connie de la Vega, Kimberly Irish, Jeremiah Johnson, Amol Mehra, Nicole Phillips, Birte Scholz, and Julianne Cartwright Traylor.

All but Mr. Mehra were incumbents to the Board. Mr. Mehra replaced Conchita Lozano-Batista who retired from the Board last Fall. HRA thanks Ms. Lozano-Batista for all her dedicated service to HRA and welcomes Mr. Mehra who served as Interim Board Member when she retired.

Mr. Mehra is the co-director of RightRespect, a non-profit he founded with Nicole Skibola to address corporate accountability issues. He was a Frank C. Newman Intern in the Spring 2009, and has attended several sessions of the Human Rights Council since then.

The Board elected the following officers for 2010-2011: Julianne Cartwright Traylor has been elected to serve as President of HRA’s Board of Directors. Connie de la Vega will serve as Treasurer and Kimberly Irish as Secretary.

HRA NEWSMAKERS

HRA Members Recognized for their Commitment to Human Rights

National Advisory Board Member Dinah Shelton was elected to a four-year term to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights starting in January 2010. She is the first woman nominated by the U.S. to the IACHR. Three books she has authored or edited have won prizes, including the book she co-authored with Thomas Buergenthal entitled Protecting Human Rights in the Americas, which won the 1982 Inter-American Bar Association Book Prize. She has authored many articles and books on international law, human rights and environmental law. Professor Shelton is the Manatt/Ahn Professor of International Law at George Washington University. She is a graduate of Boalt Hall where she studied under Frank C. Newman.

Board Member Kimberly Irish recently accepted a position as Program Manager at Breast Cancer Action. www.bcaction.org

Board Member Nicole Phillips joined the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (www.HaitiJustice.org) as a Staff Attorney.

Human Rights Advocates

P.O. Box 5675
Berkeley
CA 94705
www.humanrightsadvocates.org
MEMBERSHIP FORM

I want to become an HRA member to support HRA’s activities and receive the Newsletter and announcements of events. Enclosed is my check for annual dues, fully tax-deductible, in the amount of:

___ Regular Membership $40.00
___ Student or low-income (sliding scale available) $20.00
___ Other __$50.00 __ $75.00 __ $100 __ $125 __ $_____

Name: ______________________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________________
City: ________________________ State: ____  Zip:  ________________
Country: _____________________
Telephone: ___________________ Fax:  _________________________
Email:  _____________________________________________________
Profession/Affiliation: ________________________________________
HRA Committee Interest:
___ Education ___ United Nations ___ Litigation/Legislation
___ Publications ___ Fundraising/Finance

Please return this form to:
The Treasurer
HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES
P.O. Box 5675
Berkeley, CA  94705

HRA is a non-profit public corporation with 501(c)(3) status; dues and contributions are tax-deductible.