

Center for Civil and Human Rights: *Continuing a Tradition*

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Since its founding by Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, in 1973, the Center for Civil and Human Rights of Notre Dame Law School has been one of the world's leading centers of teaching, research, and advocacy in the field of international human rights.

The University's commitment to the values of human dignity and to the importance of their defense by law is underlined by its generous support of the center. Each year, the Provost's Office funds 15 full-tuition scholarships and 10 full-living-expense stipends for human rights lawyers in developing nations to pursue master's and doctorate degrees in international human rights law at the center.

Graduates of these programs now hold key positions at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, among other international human rights tribunals and agencies. This year's LL.M. class includes human rights lawyers from Cameroon, China, Colombia, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Moldova, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Ukraine.

The programs also provide valuable opportunities for J.D. students, who benefit from one of the broadest curricula in international human rights offered by any law school and from exposure to foreign human rights lawyers. The extensive experience of these lawyers in human rights practice in diverse legal cultures, often in trying circumstances, inspires and informs our students.

Beginning in 1998, the center was led by Argentinian human rights lawyer and former political prisoner Juan Mendez. In 2004, Dr. Mendez left Notre Dame to head the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York as well as to become the first UN special advisor on genocide, appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

After a year-long search process, the center now continues its work under new leadership. Its director, Doug Cassel, has also been named a Lilly Endowment Professor of Law by the University. He comes to Notre Dame after seven years as founder and director of the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University School of Law, and, previously, eight years as co-founder and director of a similar center at DePaul University College of Law in Chicago.

Prof. Cassel is well known internationally in the field. Among other positions, he has served as legal adviser to the UN Truth

Commission for El Salvador and was elected by the Organization of American States to the board of the Justice Studies Center of the Americas, which in turn elected him as its president. He is also currently president of the Due Process of Law Foundation in Washington, D.C., and sits on the executive council of the American Society of International Law.

His scholarly articles are published in international law journals in English and Spanish. His regular commentaries on human rights are broadcast on Chicago Public Radio and published in the *Chicago Daily Law Bulletin*, and periodically in the *Chicago Tribune*.

I am the Center's new assistant director, a "triple domer," whose B.A., J.D., and LL.M. in human rights are all from Notre Dame. I was among the first recipients of the Law School's loan forgiveness program, which enabled me to work on inter-American human rights matters for the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) in Washington. Before returning to Notre Dame, I directed a legal services program for survivors of torture and severe war trauma at a center for refugees in Falls Church, Va.

The Center's J.S.D. program is chaired by Prof. Paolo Carozza, author of groundbreaking articles in the field. Last year, Prof. Carozza was nominated by the US government and elected by the Organization of American States to serve as a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The center's students now assist him in research and analysis of matters before the commission.

Courses attended by center students are also offered by Professors Barbara Fick, Mary Ellen O'Connell, and Teresa Phelps, as well as by other members of the Law School faculty.

During the current academic year, the center also benefits from the presence of two visiting fellows who assist in research, lecturing, and advising students. Dr. Babafemi Akinrinade of Nigeria holds his LL.M. and his J.S.D. in international human rights from Notre Dame. Dr. Juan Diego Castrillon, a human rights lawyer from Colombia, received his doctorate with honors from Mexico's most prestigious academic center, the Legal Research Institute of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. His thesis was on international legal protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Among the center's aims is the desire to ensure a lively and diverse program of speakers and conferences on human rights. Among the main events it has held during the current academic year, the center organized and sponsored:



The center also facilitates public advocacy on issues of human rights. In addition to his commentaries, which this year have addressed such issues as torture, genocide, and backsliding on human rights in Russia, Doug Cassel recently cowrote an amicus brief before the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, in which international humanitarian law experts argue that US military commission trials at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba violate international standards of fair trial.

I have led teams of J.D. and LL.M. students conducting research on two projects. One team provided research assistance to the newly named United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Migrants, Prof. Jorge Bustamante of Notre Dame. The other team is currently assisting the Center for Human Rights of the American Bar Association. Its research seeks to evaluate the extent to which the US government has carried out ABA recommendations concerning torture, military commissions, and other matters raising issues of human rights in the “war on terror.”

Through teaching, research, and public engagement, the center is committed both to the highest standards of academic excellence and to the service of the Catholic value of human dignity through the defense of fundamental human rights.

- A two-day conference on “Human Rights in the Shadow of China: The Case of Taiwan,” which brought together leading scholars from the US and Taiwan (the videotaped proceedings may be viewed and heard on the center’s Web page at <http://www.nd.edu/~cchr/>);
- Presentations by Cristian Correa, former executive director of Chile’s national commission on torture and political imprisonment (and a graduate of the Notre Dame Kroc Institute’s program on peace studies), and by Andrew Seaton, British Consul General for the Midwest, on British legal responses to terrorism; and
- A series of lectures by Judge António Cançado Trindade, former president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in connection with his visit to the Law School as the Judge James J. Clynes Jr. Visiting Chair in the Ethics of Litigation within the Judicial Process.

