Universal Declaration of Human Rights Day 2011

On Saturday December 10th the UNA-GP hosted its annual Universal Declaration of Human Rights day celebration at the Ethical Society of Philadelphia. The festivities began with a toast to Eleanor Roosevelt and a short introductory video on this year’s theme, “Are there disposable people? The case of trafficking.”

After the introductory video Hugh Organ gave a presentation, which educated attendees on the world’s second most profitable illegal business: human trafficking. Mr. Organ is the associate executive director of the Philadelphia Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition, or PATC: PATC is an organization that establishes women’s shelters around Philadelphia to help victims of human trafficking escape their situation. Covenant House, a partner in the effort, was created to provide assistance to homeless and runaway youth. Today it sees the fight against human trafficking as an important part of its mission as well.

Annually it is estimated that eighteen to twenty thousand people are illegally trafficked in the United States alone. Many of these victims are forced into prostitution by pimps in order to stay alive. Many others are forced to work as slave laborers. One of the hardest parts of this problem to understand is the fact that it happens beneath the noses of average citizens. In Philadelphia alone there are 96 suspected locations where trafficked individuals are forced to work, mostly as prostitutes. Although PATC and the FBI can identify such locations through advertisements (notably in some local free papers), it is difficult to convince the trafficked individuals to cooperate with law enforcement -- they fear for their lives and that of their family should they leave their tormenter, or they are so cowed that they can't act to escape. Others, brought here from overseas, fear deportation should they be discovered. As a result, the most effective approach is not a police raid, but rather outreach and trust building, talking to the victims when they work the streets, showing them that there are people who can help them, and encouraging them to leave when they can.
A website that is commonly used by millions of American citizens is guilty of supporting human trafficking. Under “casual encounters” on Craigslist.com one can find coded advertisements for sex with trafficked, often underage, victims. It has been estimated that annually Craigslist makes up to thirty six million dollars in profit off this type of business. As with other trafficked individuals, PATC knows what to look for in the ads to identify the problematic ones, but actually helping the individuals involved is more difficult.

**Human Rights**

The United Nations envoy for freedom of expression has called into question the United States local governments’ failure to protect the First Amendment rights of Occupy Wall Street protestors. Across the nation, local police have used pepper spray, smoke grenades, and other means of force to disrupt and disband the movements. Eyewitnesses reported the use of unnecessarily violent tactics by police during the eviction of Occupy Philadelphia protestors from Dilworth Plaza. A spokesperson for the envoy noted that, while the use of police force may be necessary to maintain urban order, it must be proportional to the threat level.

In wake of political uprisings around the world, the United Nations has called upon governments to preserve the human rights of peaceful protestors. The Human Rights Council (HRC) recently issued a report accusing the Syrian government of “crimes against humanity” including “arbitrary executions, excessive use of force, enforced disappearance, and violations of children's rights.” The report was based on interviews with victims and witnesses, although no observers were allowed inside the country. The High Commissioner for Human Rights also noted an increase in armed attacks from opposition groups, and warned that Syria faces a “full-fledged civil war” if the “continual ruthless repression” is not stopped. The General Assembly Third Committee also passed a resolution concerning human rights in Syria, with the support of many Arab states.

Last March, the General Assembly voted to suspend Libya from the HRC in response to ex-President Muammar Qadhafi’s violent crackdown on anti-government protestors. On November 18th, the

**If you think someone is a victim of Human Trafficking, call the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-3737-888.**

*Patrick J. Medeo*

**These children are victims, not criminals. They must not be treated as prostitutes who chose their profession. They need services and help, not punishment!**

Steps to combat human trafficking include, first and foremost, raising awareness of the problem, and secondly, changing the way legal authorities deal with victims of it. These children are victims, not criminals. They must not be treated as prostitutes who chose their profession. They need services and help, not punishment! Each of us can take steps to combat human trafficking. Visit the website of the Philadelphia anti-trafficking coalition [here](#) and support it and other organizations involved in the fight. Hugh Organ suggests contacting your local senators and asking them what can be done to stop Human Trafficking.

For more information about Human Trafficking, contact Associate Executive Director Hugh Organ, at 215-951-5411 or horgan@covenanthousepa.org.

*University of California, Davis Police Lt. John Pike uses pepper spray to move Occupy UC Davis protesters while blocking their exit from the school’s quad Friday in Davis, Calif., Nov. 18, 2011. Two officers involved in pepper spraying seated protesters were placed on administrative leave, Nov. 20, 2011. (Wayne Tilcock/The Enterprise/AP Photo)*
General Assembly passed a resolution to reinstate Libya's membership in the HRC after authorities promised to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.” Yet human rights in Libya remain a concern, and opponents of the resolution argue that more concrete commitments to human rights were necessary before Libya's reinstatement.

The General Assembly Third Committee also passed by consensus a resolution addressing religious intolerance. The resolution called upon governments to offer protection to places of worship from destruction and vandalism, and seeks to strengthen international norms condemning religious discrimination and abusive blasphemy laws.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is looking to garner support for human rights through social media. In honor of Human Rights Day, you can add a “Celebrate Human Rights” badge to your Facebook and Twitter photos (the badge can be found here), and “like” the OHCHR Facebook page here.

Nick Pelosi

Nobel Prize Winner Speaks Out… Divided We Stand on Human Rights

The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal was in the news again. It is a case that divides Philadelphia in stark terms and with strong convictions and emotions. We at the UNA-GP confront this case from the perspective of opposition to the death penalty and underscore the position as expressed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

On the eve of the International Human Rights Day, appearing by video from South Africa, the archbishop challenged the crowd at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia in asking District Attorney Seth Williams to ‘rise to the challenge of reconciliation, human rights, and justice: drop this case now, and allow Mumia Abu-Jamal to be immediately released, with full time served.’ While South Africa has abolished the death penalty, labeling it ‘barbaric’ and ‘inhumane’, the United States has held on to its right of executing prisoners, thereby violating its own constitution dictums.

The event, hosted by Dr. Johanna Fernandez, featured speakers, lyricists, and performers including Dr. Cornel West, Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, Pam Africa, Romona Africa, Dr. Vijay Prashad, Michelle Alexander, Immortal Technique, IMPACT Youth Repertory Theatre, Amiri Baraka and Micheal Coard, Esq. One special speaker was Harold Wilson, an exonerated death row inmate, who rallied the crowd to ‘Free Mumia’. Mr. Wilson, after being falsely accused of triple murders, spent 17 years in jail, mostly on death row; he was finally acquitted and set free in 2005.

UN News

This week Donors pledged $375 Million dollars to the United Nations fund, which ensures crisis aid as quickly as possible to those in need. The Central Emergency Response fund has dispersed over $2 billion in relief assistance in the five years it has been active in over eighty different countries.

Read the original article here.

UNA-USA Update

On December 15th Felice Gaer, Chair of UNA-USA’s Leo Nevas Human Rights Task Force, discussed the state of human rights world wide with UN representatives.

Listen to the discussion here.
In a UN report condemning the use of the death penalty in May 1998, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights repeatedly called for a global moratorium on executions. In the report, Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye claims, ‘the death penalty is unjust, racist and anti-poor.’ December 18, 2007, saw a landmark victory at the UN General Assembly, as 104 members voted in favor of halting executions. Amnesty International praised the timely resolution, recognizing 133 countries, which already abolished the death penalty. ‘The United States remains one of 25 countries where executions are still being carried out, with 1,200 lethal executions since the 1976 death penalty reinstatement and with 3,200 people living on death row,’ according to www.nodeathpenalty.org.

I believe that our chapter should work towards the abolishment of the death penalty, supporting the right to life and freedom, declaring a no tolerance policy towards torture and unfair detainment, and upholding the right to a fair trial. No exceptions, nowhere, never!!!

Miranda Alexander, UNA-GP Volunteer

ICC Seeks Arrest Warrant For Sudanese Minister: What Does It Mean In The Long Run?

On December 2nd 2011, the International Criminal Court requested an arrest warrant for Abdelrahim Mohmed Hussein under the charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. The alleged crimes that Mr. Hussein is responsible for were attacks in Kodom, Bindisi, Mukjar, Arawala, and indiscriminate bombings by the Air Force as well as providing the Janjaweed with weapons. This is the ICC’s fifth case in Sudan with other cases being against President Omar al-Bashir and rebel leaders Abdallah Banda, Saleh Jerbo, and Abu Garda for war crimes. But what does this all mean in the grand scheme of global politics and the future of Sudanese lives at stake?

The ICC’s decision to issue an arrest warrant is a positive step towards a hopeful future, but it still lacks the strength to send a significant impression to the international community on the dire severity of the Darfur conflict. Although not officially recognized by every nation, there is an overwhelming consensus among the international community on classifying Darfur as genocide. The ICC’s recent weapons funding allegations further speak to the dire circumstances of state-sponsored genocide. Furthermore, in July 2008, a BBC news report found evidence that China had been providing funding for Sudanese arms used in the genocide. The report more accurately detailed that 8% of Sudanese weapons were from Chinese manufacturers, and the vast majority (87%) are products from Russia. Please note that Sudanese oil reserves and fields were being bought by China. The international community reacted to the 2008 report with increased pressure on China to withdraw business from Sudan, but the Chinese responded by engaging in a non-interference policy and simply stated that they were just doing business. In fact, some Sudanese locals such as Emmanuel Jal view Chinese business in Sudan as a positive aspect because it fosters development in the long run which favors the potential of stability. The conflict is further complicated due to the United States’ policy of economic sanctions on Sudan; however U.S. humanitarian aid is still relatively stable to the region. Overall, the ICC, the Chinese, and the U.S. are all essentially instituting micro policies

A Shot At Life

In the last 50 years vaccines have saved more children’s lives than any other medical service. The United Nations Foundation would like your help in saving the lives of children in developing countries. Every 20 seconds a child’s life is saved by a vaccine. To learn more about this program please visit the website and give a kid a shot.

Save The Date!

All members are invited to the Mideast Regional Conference and social gathering at the UN Foundation in Washington DC March 10th and 11th. Home stays are available, so keep an eye out for more information.
for solving the conflict, whereas a multi-dimensional approach and macro-policy institutionalization should be advocated.

If one uses genocides in history as an example, there have been two successful measures. The first was initiated under Bill Clinton in reaction to the Kosovo in 1998. The administration and NATO led a bombing campaign for 78 days until Milosevic and the Serbs ceased ethnic cleansing. Critics of the administration’s decision were quick to point out that NATO campaigns were a temporary solution to solving the problem of ethnic cleansing. So would leading a NATO campaign on Darfur work? - Probably not. The second measure is the more successful method in long-term stabilization and primarily involves heavily investing in NGOs. This process is now tried in Liberia, for example. In this scenario, the work of NGOs will not simply involve humanitarian aid, but also provide peaceful institutions that can provide a framework for cooperation. These institutions include economic, political, and more importantly, cultural frameworks. Advocating for a culture median within Sudan is an issue of primary concern due to the ethnic and local differences that helped fuel the campaigns for genocide on the Janjaweed side. Such cultural medians can include traditional Sudanese festivals such as the Darfur Horse Festival which is a common cultural backdrop for both Arab and African groups. The ICC is attempting to destabilize the corrupt Sudanese regime through legal frameworks (which isn't really a problem), but the heart of conflict lies within the hatred of the common man towards his fellow. Essentially, the work in Sudan should not just de-stabilize crooked figureheads, but should destabilize hate.

Talha Malik

UNA-GP Calendar 2012

Show your support for the UNA-GP! For all donations over $10 received within the coming weeks, we will send the new 2012 UNA-GP calendar as a thanks.

Featuring photos of Philadelphia and United Nations observances, as well as US holidays, the calendar is a wonderful gift for global citizens and supporters of the United Nations and the UNA-GP.

To make your contribution and for more information, please contact info@una-gp.org or visit www.una-gp.org
A Letter From Your President

Seoul, December 5

Dear friends and members of UNA-GP,

I spent a week in Seoul, South Korea, a megalopolis of about 25 million people. Attention for Christmas is low, but the attention for the shopping season and the focus on 2012 definitely are not. Some of my many impressions are worthwhile to mention and likely to be of interest to our UNA-GP members. South Korea exists because the UN exists. There is this street photo exhibition adorned with flags of those countries that formed the military allied power under the umbrella of the UN. It is a vivid reminder of the early importance of the UN. South Korea has recently started to become involved in the development work of the UN as a donor country. During the week that I was in Seoul, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda visited to discuss bilateral aid within the framework of the UNMDG. A high-level delegation from Thailand was in town to discuss restoration help in the aftermath of the floods in Bangkok. Hillary Clinton and Ambassador Rice joined many colleagues for a UN summit discussing improvement of effectiveness of development aid. Hans Blix, former head of the IAEA was in town for preparation work related to the second Nuclear Security Summit to be held in March 2012 and to be attended by 50 countries.

And then there was the riot police!!! Several thousand young uniformed men with shields, helmets and sticks. Three days in a row. Why, I asked? Some journalist remarked that they were "showing off". As a tourist you don't push much further, but just before we left, we got a clue. The political opposition had plans to stage large demonstrations to protest the just recently signed Free Trade Agreement with the USA. There was, and is, much anger about that treaty, which seems to be good for the large American corporations and the Korean elite. There was no demonstration to speak off. With so much riot police on the street, why even begin to make noise?

Philadelphia, December 9

That same day, here in Philadelphia, the Occupy Philly encampment was cleared forcefully, also by riot police, or SWAT teams. Next to the fact that I sympathize with the general outlook of the occupiers, I just wonder whether the police forces of today are more trained to oppress public dissent then to uphold human rights such as freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Are the police forces becoming militarized? I hope not. It is not easy being a police officer; on the street they have to deal with many contradictory demands at often high temperatures. But then again, it is also not easy to have a well-functioning democracy. I am sure that no Philly cop would like to operate in a police state. Thievery, whether legal, tolerated, or illegal, and whether in Wall Street, Main Street or My Street, should be subject of public scorn and public demands for correction. It is sad when our politicians fail us in that regard and ultimately use the police to do the dirty work of maulkorbing our voices of dissent.

I am hopeful, when I see the deep seated interest of the young for global action, when I see the diversity of our student population and see the ease by which they interact in a global world.

Working for the promotion of a well-financed, well-functioning, and well-respected United Nations comes with an inner motivation of seeking fairness, seeking to expand globally our human capacity for empathy; it comes with finding great inner satisfaction with building a more just future, where respect for human rights for all becomes engrained in our behaviors and our norms. I fear for the future of my grandchildren when I see the ridiculous failures to act among the high and mighty around the problem of global warming, around the issues of food and hunger and around the problems of pollution of air and water. Yet I am hopeful, when I see the deep-seated interest of the young for global action, when I see the diversity of our student population and see the ease by which they interact in a global world.

In 2012, we will keep working for a stronger UN, supported by scores of young people who wake up and stand ready to tackle some of the world’s greatest dilemmas ever. I am ready to push on. I hope you stay on board and stay involved. May 2012 bring you all great satisfaction as global citizens.

Sincerely,

Christiaan Morssink