

# UNESCO CHAIR IN HUMAN RIGHTS

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO (AUC), CAIRO, EGYPT

## **Centerpiece: Academic Program in International Human Rights Law**

The American University in Cairo (AUC) was awarded a UNESCO Chair in Human Rights for the 'International Human Rights Law MA Program' of the Political Science Department, July 2002.

Organization of the Chair: Within the Department of Political Science, there are three full time faculty members (Enid Hill, Jean Allain, Kate Rose-Sender) and two part-time faculty (Mustapha Kamel al-Sayyid, and Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron), who are involved with the International Human Rights Law (IHRL) Program. Fateh Azzam, formerly program officer for Human Rights with the Ford Foundation in Cairo, joined the Political Science Faculty in Fall 2003 as Director of FMRS and participant in the IHRL program. The UNESCO Chair is organized as a cooperative endeavour with all participating and Dr. Hill serving as coordinator.

### **Major Project of the Chair: The Academic Program**

Since no funding came with the Chair, major efforts have been directed during the past year to identify sources of funding both for the academic program and for outreach activities.

The centerpiece of the human rights program at AUC and associated activities is the academic program in International Human Rights Law (IHRL), a two-year full time course of study leading to a MA degree. This program officially began in September 2001 with sixteen students registered. In fall 2003, students working towards a MA degree totaled 40. A number of students in the other specializations of the Department regularly register for one or more of the Human Rights Law courses. Included in this student body are individuals who have graduated from Egyptian law schools employed as public prosecutors, and we also have a judge as well as members of the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice in the program. A number of students are either presently working in NGOs, INGOs, and IGOs or aspire to do so. Four students graduated during 2003, and several others have finished their course work and are working on their theses. Since many students have full-time jobs and do not take a full load of courses, they take longer than two years to complete the degree.

The academic program consists of six required courses: International Human Rights Law as the introductory course; Research and Writing for International Human Rights Law; Human Rights and the United Nations; European and Inter-American Systems of Human Rights Protection; Human Rights in the Middle East and Africa; Comparative Constitutional Law and Human Rights.

In addition, there are elective courses in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; The protection of Vulnerable Groups, Women and Children; and International Refugee Law. A thesis is required.

With funding from the *Ford Foundation*, seven scholarships have been awarded to Egyptian students graduated from the national universities, who began their studies in fall 2003. The Ford Foundation has also supported the faculty position in Human Rights Law for the past two years and will continue to do so through 2003-2004.

### **Participation in Simulation Activities**

1. The Department of Political Science has been sponsoring the Cairo International Model United Nations (CIMUN) and a Model Arab League (MAL) for the past several years. With the rise of interest among the student body in law and in human rights, these activities have come to include sessions simulating the International Court of Justice and committees discussing human rights issues.
2. AUC has sent participants to the African Human Rights Moot Court for the past five years. Last year, AUC hosted the African Moot. This past summer, it was in Cameroon with AUC students again participating. The students who participate now, usually come out of the IHRL program.

## **Participation in Pretoria University's Human Rights and Democratization LLM**

During fall 2002, the AUC and its Chair were invited to become participants in Pretoria University's all-Africa LLM program in Human Rights and Democratization, joining four other African universities (Makerere University, University of Ghana, Catholic University of Central Africa in Cameroon, and the University of the Western Cape.) Students for this program are chosen competitively from the top graduates of the law schools of Africa. The selected students study at Pretoria for their first semester (February to June), then they split up into groups of four or five and do their second semester at one of the participating universities. The five students chosen to come to AUC for the second semester arrived in Cairo during July 2003. They are doing a supervised internship, writing their dissertation required by the program, and taking the IHRL course on Human Rights in the Middle East. Our participation in this program is funded through the grants supporting the Pretoria Human Rights and Democratization LLM program.

As part of this cooperation, the Chair's faculty has made several visits to South Africa. In early November 2002, Dr. Rose-Sender and Dr. Hill attended a colloquium on the work of the African

Commission at Pretoria University, where they met the director of the Human Rights Center of Pretoria University's Law School and LLM Human Rights and Democratization program, Dr. Christof Heynes, and his staff, with whom they discussed AUC's participation in the program.

In December 2002, Dr. Allain attended the graduation in Pretoria of last year's LLM students, where he met representatives of the faculty of the other participating universities.

In April 2003, Dr. Rose-Sender met with this year's students in Pretoria, gave lectures on Human Rights Law to them, discussed their proposed thesis topics with them, and traveled with them to Kigali on their field trip. In May/June 2003, Dr. Allain accompanied the Pretoria students on their field trip to Robbin Island and discussed their thesis topics with them.

The three full time AUC faculty involved with the Human Rights Law Program and the cooperation with Pretoria University (Allain, Hill and Rose-Sender) are supervising the five theses of the Pretoria students in Cairo plus serving as outside readers for 10 theses of students doing their second semester at one of the other universities in the program.

## **Involvement with SUR Human Rights University Network of the South**

SUR is a network of academics to strengthen the voice of universities in the South on human rights and social justice, and create stronger cooperation between them and the United Nations.

Its objectives are to

- Collaborate with the United Nations to strengthen human rights programs in universities and UN agencies;
- Strengthen human rights teaching and training, and share strategies for developing human rights programs in universities in the South;
- Support, develop and promote human rights research within Southern universities;
- Develop and support human rights advocacy in the South.

Following a visit of Dr. Malak Poppovic, Consultant with the UN Foundation and leading member of Sur, to AUC in November 2002, the AUC and its UNESCO Chair were invited to join Sur and have begun to participate in the activities concerned.

Dr. Hill participated in its Second International Meeting in New York in February 2003, held at Columbia University in conjunction with a Symposium at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, where she met the leadership of Sur and its affiliate Connectas ('Human Rights Connection') and discussed the possibilities of AUC's participation in Sur activities. In May/June 2003, she participated in Sur's Third International Human Rights Colloquium in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and the third international meeting of Sur members. While there, she worked with Dr. Poppovic developing the draft proposal, prepared earlier with colleagues in Cairo, for AUC participation in Sur's forthcoming activities. AUC's UNESCO Chair hopes to establish a regional network and web node for the Middle East/North Africa with UNESCO Chairholders as core participants, highlighting human rights in development, if the funding is forthcoming.

## **Outreach Project**

As a result of a grant awarded to AUC by the US State Department, the IHRL program will shortly begin a training project for human rights workers in NGOs and INGOs in Egypt and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. This project seeks "To increase the effectiveness of the NGO and INGO communities in Egypt and the MENA region in promoting human rights, civil society and the rule of law". The project will develop training modules in substantive and procedural human rights law and will be particularly concerned to develop capacity in strategic planning for implementation of human rights work. This program will be offered to NGOs in Egypt and to members of similar organizations in other Arab countries. It is to be a two-year program providing human rights law training and legal advocacy skills for 200 plus persons from Egypt and the region, who are working in areas for which such training would have practical value. Its target is to involve not less than 30 civil society organizations and 10 international non-governmental agencies.

## **Distinguished Visiting Professor (DVP)**

Professor Henry Steiner, Director of the Human Rights Center of the Law School at Harvard University, came as the Political Science Department's Distinguished Visiting Professor for a week in May 2003 to AUC, where he gave two public lectures on "*The Turbulent Half Century of the Human Rights Movement: Expanding Reach and Changing Ambitions*" and interacted with the students of the Human Rights Law program in their seminars. While in Cairo, Professor Steiner met several of the people involved with human rights work in Egypt.

## **Participation in the World Forum of UNESCO Chairs**

Dr. Allain represented the AUC' s UNESCO Chair at the World Forum of UNESCO Chairs held in Paris, 15-17 November 2002, where he made initial contact with other UNESCO Chairholders from the region: Iran, Morocco, Jordan, Turkey, and Israel.

## **Two major problems facing the Chair' s future work:**

**Funding** of the UNESCO Chair as a full-time faculty position remains a problem. We have had discussions with and presented concept papers to a number of foundations and individuals, but without success. It appears that everyone loves outreach programs these days. However, it is our academic program and its faculty, their research and expertise, their experience with guiding learning and developing materials that are the foundation for outreach. It is strange that this is not today properly recognized.

**A Primary Need – Scholarships:** It has become exceedingly clear to us that Egyptians, whom we wish to attract to the International Human Rights Law program, not only need scholarships, but also need initial scholarship help to bring their English ability to a level whereby they can benefit from the program. Both kinds of scholarships will be a main concern for future funding efforts.

Dr. Enid Hill

Coordinator of the UNESCO Chair