



معهد جنيف لحقوق الإنسان والشؤون الإنسانية
Geneva Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs

GIHR ANNUAL REPORT

2009

Promoting Human Rights to Effect Social Change

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is with great pleasure that I share with you our annual report for 2009. Despite the global recession and financial unsettlement, 2009 has been a year of many activities and accomplishments. GIHR has also grown in capacity, in particular with new staff members that have joined our dedicated team. We have also expanded our technical resource persons who have worked together with our staff endeavouring to continue the momentum gained from the work accomplished in 2008, ensuring that knowledge and technical assistance on human rights issues reached as many beneficiaries as possible.

All together, GIHR has worked in 9 countries, including Switzerland, Syria, Sudan, Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen and Doha. The work has been both inspiring and encouraging, as most organizations have commended our work and have provided the institute with the moral support and encouragement that we are providing them with technical information which has kept them updated with most International human rights principals and mechanisms including the Universal periodic Review and the work of the Human Rights Council.

For the first time, GIHR has conducted work in two new countries, Lebanon and Kuwait, thus expanding our outreach to countries in the Middle East. The Institute has also concentrated on provision of technical assistance for reporting and monitoring the Universal Periodic Review, playing a pivotal role in the preparation of the UPR reports for Yemen, Jordan and Kuwait for governmental and non-governmental organizations.

We have also made some expansion in offices, through opening a Regional office in Amman, Jordan and have moved our office in Geneva to a larger office, to accommodate for our increasing workload.

The establishment of an effective human rights mechanism is an integral element of good governance, but for some emerging States it is not an easy task to accomplish. Our role in GIHR has become

pivotal in translating the meanings and principals of human rights mechanisms and standards to civil society organizations and governmental and non governmental institutions at the grassroots.

All together the programme had some major challenges in particular given the effects of the global recession, which has affected most non-governmental organizations. The financial situation has hindered some of the activities which we had planned in 2009, but we were able to cross through the many hurdles, smoothly. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team for their dedication to the work of the Institute and to also welcome the newly appointed staff members.

We are also gratified and encouraged by the support provided by the Swiss government and our other donors, including a new partnership with the Netherlands Embassy in Syria who kindly supported our work with the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs. The support provided has been vital to GIHR's success. Our work could not have been achieved without the financial assistance provided.

Yours Truly

Nazar Abdelgadir

Executive Director

ABOUT GIHR

The Geneva Institute for Human Rights is a non-governmental, non – profit organization governed by the present Articles of Association and all subsequent Articles of the Swiss Civil Code. The Institute is an academic study and research institution that is independent from all governments, political parties, organizations and philosophical or religious groups.

Since its establishment in 2004, the Institute has provided Human Rights trainings in North Africa and the Middle East to human rights defenders and public institutions, empowering them to access and use International Human Rights procedures, standards and mechanisms. GIHR has also delivered capacity building and advocacy services to different governmental and non-governmental organizations that protect the rights of individuals with a special focus on women and children in the African and Arab Region.

A strong need has been expressed for a better understanding of International Human Rights instruments by different governmental and non governmental institutions and civil society organizations within the Arab region. The knowledge gained can be effectively used in their advocacy and implementation at the national and grassroots level. Filling in the knowledge gap forms the crux of the work of GIHR, as through promoting knowledge and information exchange on human rights, social change will be achieved.

GIHR has strived to demonstrate its commitment towards the promotion and the dissemination of international human rights, acquainting concerned institutions with these principals.

OBJECTIVES OF GIHR

1. Promotion and dissemination of the principles of international human rights as expressed in international declaration on human rights and others human rights related covenants, and acquainting concerned civil society and governmental institutions with those principles.

2. Contributing to the process of reviewing legislations and laws, and presentation of practical proposals to keep them in conformity with the International Bill of Human Rights and related international declarations and conventions.
3. Creating a statistical and informational database on human rights related international and regional declarations, conventions and covenants.
4. Serving as a democratic forum for dialogue, orchestration and integration of efforts exerted by human rights related NGOs and governmental organizations, in order to establish the rule of law and institutions and a democratic human society.
5. Assisting NGOs and governmental organizations to practically monitor and document the status of human rights, in addition to promoting and developing these rights at all legislative and practical levels.
6. Providing advisory services to human rights related governmental and non-governmental bodies, as well as to whoever requires such services.
7. Paying specific attention to women, children and variable groups to enable their active contribution to professional life and decision-making process.

MISSION AND VALUES OF GIHR

GIHR Mission

Geneva Institute for Human Rights (GIHR) is dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of the principals of international human rights to all, through the provision of training, consultation and research services to civil society, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other actors in the public and private sphere. The work of GIHR seeks to ensure that the principles of equality, dignity and respect are incorporated into practice and policy at all levels of public service.

Our Values

Dignity and Respect- Every human being is entitled to have their dignity and human rights respected equally whatever their gender, age, religion or disability

Knowledge – knowledge is an asset, through promotion of human rights principals effective social change can occur.

Integrity - Transparency, democracy and integrity are crucial to enable empowerment of the community.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF 2009

Provision of technical assistance for reporting on the Universal Periodic Review:

GIHR has played a pivotal role in working with different organizations on raising awareness on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). In 2009, the institute has worked with NGO's and governmental organizations in Jordan, Yemen and Kuwait for their sessions on the UPR.

Collaborating with Aljazeera network:

For the first time, GIHR has collaborated with AlJazeera network, through conducting two trainings for them on human rights for their staff members. The positive results of the unique training was that AlJazeera network provided live coverage on the UN Special session on the Goldstone report, in September.

Expansion of outreach:

GIHR expanded its outreach to countries to include Morocco, Lebanon and Kuwait.

Organization of the Islamic Conference:

As a result of our continued work with the Organization of the Islamic Conference since 2006, a committee of experts was created to undertake follow up on all issues related to human rights.

Establishing a Regional office:

A new office was established in Amman, Jordan, the geographical location of the regional office is ideal as Jordan is currently the base for the majority of the UN agencies and other human rights and humanitarian international organizations offices in the Middle East region. Amman also serves as a midpoint location for the Institute in the region.

WHAT WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED IN 2009

For 2009, the journey of GIHR has been both challenging and difficult, in particular with the challenge of the global financial recession, which has threatened most organizations in being able to conduct their projects. But the team at GIHR were able to overcome any difficulties faced, through dedication and perseverance. The accomplishments achieved have been surprising as well as encouraging.

The Institute has also built and maintained long term relationships and trust with countries in the Middle East and the African Regions. Our work has become crucial as a non political, human rights organization providing the much needed capacity building on international human rights standards and their principals to civil society organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Drawing on the principals set by International UN instruments and frameworks our number one priority has been to familiarise and empower national governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions in the Arab region on these different UN mechanisms to enable them to use these mechanisms in their future work.

As an example, GIHR's role has been pivotal in working with different organizations on raising awareness on the Universal Periodic Review. The Universal Periodic review has been adopted by the UN General Assembly since March 2006, and since 2008 GIHR has been working with various NGOs on the follow up of the recommendations of the UPR.

We believe that our work with governmental institutions in particular is detrimental to the realisation of human rights in different countries. We were also able to balance our work so as to make sure that members of civil society organizations were also included in our work, in addition to ensuring that the gender balance was kept within our trainings.

We have passed the year through the following crucial steps, **promotion of human rights** and **promotion of knowledge sharing and information exchange...**

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS

“It has long been recognized that an essential element in protecting human rights was a widespread knowledge among the population of what their rights are and how they can be defended.” Boutros Boutros-Ghali the Sixth UN Secretary General, 1992-1996.

In the Arab region there are several challenges which have limited the progress towards human rights for all citizens. One of the most prominent challenges is the existence of conflict and political instability within countries and across borders. According to the second annual report by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights the status of human rights in the Arab region has in fact deteriorated throughout the region in the past year.⁽¹⁾

Beyond the legal protection of citizens through International, Regional and State laws, there is a need to promote human rights knowledge and information on human rights to all stakeholders in society. Civil society organizations, governmental and non-governmental institutions are accountable to the promotion of peace and security to protect citizens. Having a law without the understanding of what a human beings rights are, would not achieve the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognized that human rights are, by their nature universal and that every human was entitled to.

To fulfil its role in promoting human rights during 2009 GIHR delivered consultancy and training services to 290 participants from 20 different countries from the Arab region, with the ratio of male to female being 199:91⁽²⁾; these included 130 representatives from governmental institutions, 2 from National Human Rights institutions and 150 participants from NGOs and human rights defenders. We also expanded our outreach to three further countries, Lebanon, Kuwait and Morocco. We also provided much needed technical assistance for NGOs and governmental organizations in Jordan, Yemen and Kuwait for their sessions on the UPR in 2009.

(1) Second Annual report, “Bastion of Impunity, Mirage of Reform 2009 Report on Human Rights in the Arab Region”, Cairo Institute for Human Rights, December 2009.

(2) What is noted is a larger participation of women from the previous year, where the ratio of male to females was 221:63

GIHR's current roster of resource persons has increased to 102 experts, representing 19 countries from all over the globe, who have provided their valuable time and expertise to participate in the trainings conducted.

Syria

The work of the Geneva Institute for Human Rights in Syria has been both groundbreaking and unique. GIHR has been the only international human rights organization that has been able to work with such a crucial body as the Syrian Ministry of Interior. For 2009 we have worked with a major stakeholder that monitors and reports the status of the rights of women and children: The Syrian Commission for Family Affairs (SCFA), a crucial governmental body in Syria that ensures that CEDAW and the CRC are implemented. The work for this year has been in collaboration with the SCFA, with the execution of two five day training courses on the international protection system of the rights of the child for staff members of the SCFA and representatives of the Syrian government (all focal persons for the SCFA). All together 21 participants were trained including; 7 staff members of the SCFA; 14 representatives from various Ministries and 3 representatives from other governmental bodies.

In the training, 7 resource persons participated including two experts from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as other human rights experts and NGO representatives. A third advanced training is planned to be held in Geneva in 2010, with 5 of the participants.

GIHR also continued its work with the Syrian Ministry of Interior, with the second Training of Trainers for 10 members of the police force, this was conducted in Geneva and was supported by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The main goal of the institute is to work in partnership and collaboration with various stakeholders to achieve human rights for all. As such, it is crucial to our work that the relationships we create in a country are built with trust and transparency. GIHR believes that when able to access a country or group we enter it with commitment and perseverance. As such our trainings are usually not just one – off trainings but a partnership which involves constant follow up that will result in sustainability of our work.

Sudan

In Sudan a replica of our pioneering work with the Syrian police force through a series of three consecutive trainings for 100 police officers of differing ranks was conducted. This was in collaboration with the Sudanese Ministry of Interior, altogether 48 participants were trained from various ranks and departments, including 45 males and 3 females. This is the start of a long-term commitment with the Sudanese Ministry of Interior, with GIHR providing members of the police force with the much needed knowledge and skills in understanding human rights and international human rights mechanisms.

Qatar

In Doha, GIHR organized two unique trainings for the first time with staff members of Al Jazeera network. Al Jazeera is considered as one of the major independent news network in the Middle East. Renowned for its state of the art television broadcast of news covering current affairs. It has coverage of major issues and broadcasts in two news channels, Arabic and English, as well as other channels, including Al Jazeera Mobashir (live) and Documentary. It is believed that there are at least 40 million viewers who watch the channel, thus making it one of the most important channels to portray worldwide news. In 2009, GIHR trained 41 members of Al Jazeera crew on media and international human rights standards and mechanisms.

Morocco

For the first time GIHR expanded its geographical outreach to Morocco, where in collaboration with the Moroccan Ministry of Justice, two training courses were conducted with members of the judiciary system, all together 38 judges. The training was on international human rights protection mechanisms.

Lebanon

Again Lebanon was one of the new countries that GIHR worked in. This was training on international human rights standers for 17 Iraqi human rights activists representing 8 provinces from Iraq. The training was organized by the Iraqi human rights network with full support by the Foundation for the Future organization. Access to Iraq is not easy due to the current security situation, it was due to this reason that Lebanon was chosen as a safer option to convene this crucial training.

Kuwait

The last country that has newly been outreached by GIHR in 2009 was Kuwait. In Kuwait we conducted a unique training with 26 Kuwait representatives from more than 20 non-governmental organizations. The training was on the role of the UN working group of the Human Rights Council on the UPR. This training was ideal in particular as it provided a complete orientation to the NGOs and what the UPR would mean them and to the nation of Kuwait.

Yemen

In Yemen a training was conducted on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This was organized by the Yemen Centre for Human Rights Activists.

Switzerland

Regional Training Courses in Geneva

Yearly the Institute conducts three trainings in Geneva, where participants from the Middle East and Northern African Region can attend the fourteen days training courses at the heart of the headquarters of some of the most pivotal International organizations working on human rights. In these courses participants are able to realize how the different UN mechanisms work on international human rights, attending crucial meetings of UN Committees.

The trainings conducted are in collaboration with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. GIHR has been able throughout the years to distinguish its trainings from other organizations by being in both Arabic and English (thus reaching out to a larger group) and by its commitment to networking and continual partnerships. All participants trained receive regular updates and information on International Human Rights.

In 2009, nineteen participants from several Arab countries attended two regional trainings in Geneva. The trainings coincided with –

- The 5th Session of the UPR and was on the role of the UN Working Group of the Human Rights Council on the UPR.

- The 6th Session of the UPR and was on the role of the UN Working Group of the Human Rights Council on the UPR.

In addition to the yearly training courses conducted in Geneva, Three special training courses were also held in Geneva:

1. Two special training courses on the role of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the role of the UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies was conducted for 27 Sudanese lawyers, from the Sudanese Bar Union, the trainings coincided with the 10th Session of the UN Human Rights Council and the 73rd Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination .
2. A Geneva Study Tour that was organized with Freedom House for human rights defenders from the Arab region on the International Human Rights Mechanisms. Altogether there were 30 participants representing various NGOs; this coincided with the 10th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Further Outreach

GIHR also participated in two International conferences:

1. "Security Sector Governance in the Arab Region: What Role for Civil Society?" **Paper presented by GIHR: "How can training strengthen and reinforce oversight of the security sector", Amman, 22nd-23rd June 2009.**
2. 6th Annual International Human Rights Summit 2009; organized by the Youth for Human Rights International and Village Suisse ONG. GIHR paper " **Solving Global Human Rights Issues through Education**", **Geneva, 28th August 2009.**

PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

“Sharing knowledge is not about giving people something, or getting something from them. That is only valid for information sharing. Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes.” Dr. Peter Senge, American scientist and director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

Since its establishment in 2004, one of the main objectives of GIHR has been to be able to share its knowledge and expertise to aid different stakeholders in the region. Our being situated in Switzerland is also unique in enabling us to be at the heart of where the main international human rights organizations are.

One of the major contribution to GIHR on knowledge sharing and information exchange for 2009 was our provision of technical assistance and expertise in the Universal Periodic Review. In 2009 our work has been pivotal in raising awareness and promoting knowledge on the UPR. GIHR engaged with non-governmental and governmental organizations in Yemen, Jordan and Kuwait to assist them in the preparation of their reports. The reports were presented at the Human Rights Council in the scheduled UPR Sessions for the countries.

To further promote knowledge sharing on human rights issues it has been crucial for the Institute to be on the top of current and latest issues and events on human rights. As such, we have also participated actively at meetings in the United Nations Human Rights Council and the UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies.

2009 also saw the revamp of GIHR’s website. The newly revised website is currently in both English and French languages. It also provides more detailed and informative information on our work and gives access to important data on the status of Arab countries with regards to international Treaty Monitoring Bodies. The content of the website also includes details of activities that the institute has conducted both past and present.

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

“Search for the truth is the noblest occupation of man, its publication is a duty.” Madame de Stael, French political activist 1766-1817.

Publications are important tools for outreach. In 2009 we have published:

GIHR TEAM

GIHR Board members

Chairperson:	Mr. Alain Bovard
Vice Chairperson:	Mr. Mohamed Cherif
Treasurer:	Dr. Karl Hanson
Member:	Mr. Paulo David
Executive Director:	Mr. Nazar Abdelgadir

GIHR Advisory Team

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Head of the Children’s Rights Unit	Ms. Walaa Abbas
Head of Training Unit	Mr. Kamal Ahmed
Head of the Universities Program	Ms. Anna Saunders
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Program Officer (Administration)	Ms. Eva Humbel
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