



Stanley Tretick

# Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights

## *Visionaries In Action (VIA)*

### Monthly Newsletter

July 2004

*“Few will have the greatness to bend history; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.” RFK 1966*

This is a monthly newsletter that gives you a brief report, summarizing the work of our Robert F. Kennedy program officers. The mission of the RFK Center for Human Rights is to support the work of its Human Rights Award laureates. We work as partners with the laureates to help them achieve the change they are seeking. We campaign and advocate, in various forums with Congress, the State Department, United Nations and international financial institutions, heightening awareness of injustices and encouraging international organizations and corporations to adopt policies that ensure respect for law. We maintain close effective working relationships with our laureates, to ensure that significant tangible progress is being made in their specific goals and actions. This publication informs you of what we do as an organization, as an active force, to promote the change our laureates seek.

### **Lucas Benitez, Julia Gabriel, & Romeo Ramirez (2003 - USA) Coalition of Immokalee Workers**

- Modern-day slavery and hyper-exploitation of migrant workers in U.S. agricultural industry

On July 22, the Center for Human Rights (CHR) organized a briefing in the U.S. Capitol at which five members of the CIW – including two of the 2003 RFK Human Right Laureates, Lucas Benitez and Romeo Ramirez – testified about their personal experiences of slavery and exploitation in Florida’s tomato fields. The event was co-sponsored by Representatives Raul Grijalva (AZ), Hilda Solis (CA), Robert Wexler (FL) and Linda Sanchez (CA). In addition to telling their own stories, the



Photo by Erick Veliz

Romeo Ramirez a 2003 Human Rights Award Laureate of the CIW and farm worker, testify of the modern-day slavery and sub poverty wages they face working in the US fields on Capitol Hill July 22, 2004. Also pictured, activist and translator Julia Perkins.

speakers appealed to Representatives to sign on to a letter that will be sent in August to Yum Brands, Inc. and other quick-serve industry leaders asking them to work with the CIW towards a more sustainable and socially responsible agricultural industry.

Following the briefing, the farm workers and CHR staff

met with Representatives or staff persons in the offices of Senator Bill Graham and Representatives Alcee Hastings and Mario Diaz-Balart to ask their support of the letter. That evening, the CHR hosted a dinner for the members of the CIW, 1995 RFK Human Rights Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, and CHR staff. The three Laureates - Benitez, Ramirez, and Satyarthi - all work to eliminate modern-day slavery and human trafficking and had the opportunity to share stories of their work, learn from each other's experiences, and discuss strategies they employ in combating these practices in the U.S. and India, respectively.

This month, CHR staff members met with representatives from the Organization of American States to discuss the possibility of requesting a hearing or filing a petition on behalf of the CIW regarding violations of the internationally-recognized rights to health, to associate and bargain collectively. Additionally, the CHR worked with student leaders at UCLA and at the Student Farm worker Alliance (the student group closely affiliated with the CIW) to give more information to the board deciding whether or not to keep a Taco Bell on UCLA's campus.

*For more information on actions relating to the CIW, please contact:*  
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## Loune Viaud (2002 - Haiti)

- Health as a human right

CHR is advocating for a change in the UN mission's mandate and budget. Specifically, CHR is beginning to advocate directly to UN member states to call for a General Assembly (GA) discussion on the current state of the mission. CHR is calling on the GA to discuss the need for more resources to implement on the ground programs, addressing right to health, water and education. The UN is currently spending close to \$260 million on peace-keeping troops and UN staff, with less than 1% of its budget going towards programs to deal with the true violence in Haiti, widespread daily violations of the right to health, water, and related rights.

CHR hosted a meeting during the Democratic National Convention which brought together Haitian-American elected officials and prominent members of the Haitian community. They discussed the current UN mission to Haiti and the need for human rights based approach with respect to health and water rights for the aid schedule to flow into Haiti.



Photo by Mildred Boivert

CHR Director Todd Howland meets with Brazilian UN troops in Hinche, Haiti to discuss the need for human rights based programs.

CHR continues both plaintiff development and legal work on the potential legal action against the Inter-American Development Bank and US government. (See June VIA update for further details).

CHR staff and support group members will travel to Haiti in August to begin implementing a human rights pilot project. (See June VIA update for further details)

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## Darci Frigo (2001 - Brazil)

- Land reform; modern-day slavery; GMOs; sustainable agriculture; agroecology

The CHR made further progress on a draft of a *white paper* on financing Brazilian land reform. The paper looks at two models of land reform -- “market-based” and human rights-based -- and encourages the social movements to press President Lula to seek additional funding for the latter, as currently the Brazilian government’s constitutionally-mandated land reform agency receives only federal funding (amounting to insufficient resources needed to carry out its work). The paper proposes that Lula consider requesting equal funding from the World Bank for both agricultural models for the purposes of later ascertaining the most appropriate in the Brazilian

context. The CHR worked with American University Professor Miguel Carter, a member of the Frigo support group, to develop a research project that would be undertaken by Miguel’s students in the upcoming fall semester focused on the World Bank’s funding of “market-based” land reform initiatives in Brazil. The research will be useful to the CHR as work on the *white paper* proceeds.

Sections of the Frigo portion of the RFK webpage were translated into Portuguese. This will be a useful tool for TDD, Frigo’s organization, in broadcasting the work it does until such time as it has its own webpage.

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## Martin Macwan (2000 - India)

- Discrimination against *Dalits* (“untouchable” class in Indian society)

The Water Justice and Information Management Projects continue to move forward. Dr. Davenport has begun working on archiving and organizing information that he and Dr. Stam gathered while in India in December. They are also preparing a website for Navsarjan. Dr. Stam is finalizing sample surveys questionnaires to be used in the 3100 villages where Navsarjan works. The survey will help track the impact of Navsarjan’s campaigns on the individual human rights of dalits in these 3100 villages.

Drs. Rajagopal and Murcott finalized a revised implementation framework for the Water Justice project incorporating the findings from Dr. Murcott’s recent visit to India. The goal of the project is to not simply “invent” a new technology that can eradicate manual scavenging, but to do so in a manner that is sustainable from an environmental and human rights perspective. They are currently seeking funding to begin the first phase of implementation which would include a team of graduate students traveling to India and conducting an integrated assessment of existing sanitation options.

*For further information about these projects, please contact:*

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## Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis (1999 - Liberia)

- Strengthening of civil society in Liberia/ respect for human rights as a basis for sustainable peace

### RFK DELEGATION TRAVELS TO LIBERIA

**Liberia: Liberians need to be fully involved in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) program and empowered to take ownership of the rehabilitation and reintegration process, a delegation of the CHR tells local and international media in Monrovia, Liberia.**

At the request of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the Archdiocese of Monrovia and the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia, the Center for Human rights and the Archbishop

Despite their very important potential and capacity, the very positive role they played during the 14 years of civil war and social unrest, civil society organizations including religious organizations are not being involved in the peace process.

Michael Francis Support Group organized a delegation to Liberia July 10 - 18. The delegation led by Kerry Kennedy and composed of Todd Howland Director of the Center for Human Rights and Abdelilah Kadili witnessed first hand, people's camps displaced as well as disarmament cantonments.

The discussions members of the delegation had with militiamen, child soldiers and with victims of the civil war and based on their visits to health and educational facilities, the local prison, a slum in Monrovia. We also met with government authorities, Liberian and international NGO's and UN officials.



Photo by Todd Howland

Kerry Kennedy, head of the delegation of the Center for Human Rights and the Archbishop Michael Francis Support Group are interviewed by a member of the Liberian media after the delegation's visit to the JFK Hospital in Monrovia. Seen in photo are Senior CHR Program Officer Abdelilah Kadili and Sister Mary Laurene (seen on the right of the picture) President of the Don Bosco Polytechnic College. The college is run by the Archdiocese of Monrovia, run by the Robert F. Kennedy 1999 Human Rights Award Laureate Archbishop Michael Kpakala Francis.

Few of the resources allocated by the international community for the reconstruction of the country have reached the Liberian people and the civil society organizations have been marginalized related to the resources that have arrived. Kerry Kennedy and members of the CHR delegation called on the Liberian people to make demands on United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTLG), to stand for their right to be involved and empowered to take ownership of the process.

The CHR will soon release a report outlining the findings and recommendations of the delegation.

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## Sezgin Tanrikulu (1997 - Turkey)

- Ending discrimination against Kurdish population in Turkey

The CHR established an outline for request for funding of Sezgin's two-year plan "Justice for Everyone," the CHR is focusing on bringing Sezgin to DC to meet with support group members and to formulate a detailed plan for a "Journey's for Justice" delegation to Turkey. Following the most recent conference call to Sezgin, the CHR has invited Sezgin to visit the US for the opportunity to meet with Support Group members and work in partnership with the CHR on his long-term projects. However, with the recent passing of a law allowing citizens to file cases against the Turkish government; Sezgin is occupied with

continuing to train his lawyers so that the cases can be filed starting the end of August.

The CHR is preparing for Sezgin to come to the United States in mid-November, following the release of the EU Commissioner's report in October. By waiting until after the release of the report, it will allow Sezgin time to concentrate on developing a specific agenda for his long-term project. In addition, the CHR will be able to tailor the project, taking into account impending issues after the report's release. CHR maintains contact with Sezgin on a biweekly basis.

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## Dr. Nguyen Dan Que (1995 - Viet Nam)

- Advocate for political reform and freedom of expression

Dr. Que was convicted on 29 July in a trial that violated numerous international standards. The result of the closed trial on July 29<sup>th</sup> was a travesty of justice for the non-violent human rights movement founder. The Ho Chi Minh People's court, found Dr. Que guilty of "abusing democratic rights to jeopardize the interests of the state, and the legitimate rights and interests of social organizations and citizens." Dr. Que has been sentenced to two years in jail. His was denied access to counsel as well as visit of his family. The

court has acted in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Vietnam is a state party, sentencing Dr. Que to prison and by denying him counsel.

In response to the verdict, the CHR has called upon the Vietnamese Government for the immediate release of Dr. Que, and for the elimination of arrests of persons who exercises their international freedom of expression. The CHR maintains regular contact with Dr. Que's immediate family.

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## Kailash Satyarthi (1995 - India)

- Ending child labor practices, promoting right to education

Following the brutal attack on Kailash's life on June 15<sup>th</sup> during a raid to free Nepalese child workers from the Great Roman Circus in Uttar Pradesh, India; Kailash was released from the hospital and continued his recovery at his home in New Delhi. After three weeks of recovery, Kailash had recuperated enough to keep to the original dates planned for his visit to the U.S. Presently, child workers Kailash risked his life to release have been freed from the circus; and are either in rehabilitation centers or back in their native Nepal.

Kailash, accompanied by his two children, arrived in DC on July 16<sup>th</sup>. His son, a lawyer and also present during the attack, and daughter have traveled with their father to escape the dangers of remaining in New Delhi. The Indian Government has yet to provide protection for Kailash and his family, despite the numerous threats on his life made by

the circus owners during his visit. Kailash has attended meetings with State Department officials regarding his work with child labor and trafficking issues in India. Kailash is also working very closely with the CHR, in developing short-term initiatives to combat child labor; as well as discussing in detail the upcoming "Journeys for Justice" delegation to Nepal and other long-term initiatives.



Bhuvan, his son, an attorney in India is instrumental to Kailash's work. Bhuvan is remaining in the US to work more closely with the CHR, as well as continuing to meet with Congress and State Department officials. The CHR is in contact with Kailash on a weekly basis.

Human rights laureate Kailash Satyarthi and Program Officer Hemlal Kafle, attend meetings promoting his social change agenda, right to education, through World Banks' Education for All Initiative, in Washington, D.C.

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### SAVE THE DATE! **RFK MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT** FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2004



The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual RFK Golf Tournament in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts will be held Friday, October 15, 2004. For more information, or to sign up, contact, Courtney Stamm, RFK Special Programs and Events Coordinator, at (202) 463-7575 ext. 234 or [stamm@rfkmemorial.org](mailto:stamm@rfkmemorial.org)

## Bambang Widjojanto (1993 - Indonesia)

- Human rights violations of indigenous people in West Papua

The CHR witnessed the first round of Indonesia's presidential election on July 5<sup>th</sup>. Program Officer Miriam Young was an international observer with The Carter Center's election monitoring delegation. The PO traveled to West Papua to observe the election in the area of the provincial capital, Jayapura. Permission to observe in West Papua was only given shortly before the election itself, and then only in restricted areas. While in West Papua the PO met with NGO and church leaders to discuss the current issues facing Papuans. She then returned to Jakarta to deliver her election observations and attend a press conference with President Carter, and former Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai and co-leaders of the delegation.

In Jakarta, the PO held two meetings with RFK 1993 Laureate Bambang Widjojanto. This was the first direct meeting between RFK and our Laureate in several years. Bambang was involved in the election process, serving as counsel to the national election monitoring commission, as well as filing a case in the administrative court on the implementation of the election in West Papua. Bambang's work focuses on corruption and governance issues. He is the lawyer for the Papua legislature which is challenging the constitutionality of President Megawati's 2002 decree to divide the province into three.

RFK Human Rights Laureate Bambang Widjojanto with CHR Program Officer Miriam Young in Jakarta. Bambang served as counsel to the Indonesian election monitoring organization *Panwaslu*.



A polling station in Jayapura, West Papua sets up for presidential elections on July 5<sup>th</sup>. CHR Program Officer Miriam Young observed the voting as part of the Carter Center's election monitoring delegation.



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## **Amilcar Méndez Urizar (1990 - Guatemala)**

- Human rights violations of Guatemala's indigenous people

Work continued by members of the Amilcar Urizar Support Group on researching the possibility of filing a petition before the IACHR, UN Special Rapporteurs, UNESCO, and/or other legal forums. The groups is showing that Guatemala's paucity of indigenous representation in all levels of the Guatemalan educational system is an example of how inaccessible and discriminatory many of society's services are to Guatemala's majority indigenous population. Research -- including investigation to ascertain whether local (Guatemalan) legal measures have been exhausted in any similar case in the past -- is expected to continue for another few months before a decision is made regarding what to employ and the timing of the filing.

The CHR developed a section for the Amilcar portion of the RFK webpage -- in English and Spanish -- detailing CERJ's recent work accompanying the exhumation of a clandestine 1980s-era cemetery in Chichicastenango, accompanied by photos [http://www.rfkmemorial.org/human\\_rights/1990.ht](http://www.rfkmemorial.org/human_rights/1990.ht). Such work is a new focus of CERJ's efforts in the human rights field and represents an important facet of Guatemala's process of emotional, political, and religious closure of the terror and human rights violations that occurred during the "scorched-earth" campaign of General Efraín Ríos Montt and others.

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## **Dr. Gibson Kamau Kuria (1988 - Kenya)**

- Rule of law and constitutional reform

**Kenya: The International Center for Constitutional Research and Governance created by Dr. Kuria and fully supported by the CHR and the Gibson Kuria support group has a substantial influence on the constitutional review process in Kenya.**

The Center for Human Rights and the Gibson Kuria support group have supported the creation of Dr. Kuria's Nairobi based initiative, the International Center for Constitutional Research and Governance (ICCRG) it is now fully operational. The ICCRG is a non profit international organization that is dedicated to the promotion of the rule of law, constitutionalism,

and democracy through research and the exchange of knowledge and experiences. In two months the ICCRG has had a substantial influence on the constitutional review process in Kenya and is making its voice heard on other issues that promote the rule of law in Kenya.



The ICCRG has presented a Draft Bill To Provide For The Democratic Comprehensive Review Of The Constitution By The People Of Kenya And Memorandum Of Objects And Reasons to parliament as an alternative bill to that already before parliament submitted by the Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs. The ICCRG draft bill is in consideration of the bill presented by the Minister, the current Constitution of Kenya Review Act and the High Court of Kenya's holding in the Njoya case which found the Boma's constitutional review process.

The CHR and the Gibson support group work directly with the ICCRG on four major areas: Transitional justice, asset recovery and the fight against corruption, police force reform and electoral redistricting. The support group created four sub-groups each one focused on a particular area. Sub-groups are conducting research and will organize conferences on the four topics to be held at the ICCRG in Nairobi.

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### We partner with:

2003	U.S.A.	<a href="#">Lucas Benitez</a> , <a href="#">Julia Gabriel</a> , and <a href="#">Romeo Ramirez</a>
2002	Haiti	<a href="#">Loune Viaud</a>
2001	Brazil	<a href="#">Darci Frigo</a>
2000	India	<a href="#">Martin Chhotubhal Macwan</a>
1999	Liberia	<a href="#">Michael Kpakala Francis</a>
1998	Colombia	<a href="#">Mario Humberto Calixto</a> , <a href="#">Berenice Celeyta Alayón</a> , <a href="#">Gloria Inés Flórez Schneider</a> and <a href="#">Jaime Prieto Méndez</a>
1997	Turkey	<a href="#">Senal Sarihan</a> and <a href="#">M. Sezgin Tanrikulu</a>
1996	Sudan	<a href="#">Anonymous</a>
1995	Vietnam	<a href="#">Doan Viet Hoat</a> and <a href="#">Nguyen Dan Que</a>
	India	<a href="#">Kailash Satyarthi</a>
1994	China	<a href="#">Ren Wanding</a> and <a href="#">Wei Jingsheng</a>
1993	Indonesia	<a href="#">Bambang Widjojanto</a>
1992	Malawi	<a href="#">Chakufwa Chihana</a>
1991	Israel	<a href="#">Avigdor Feldman</a>
	Gaza	<a href="#">Raji Sourani</a>
1990	Guatemala	<a href="#">Amilcar Méndez Urizar</a>
1989	China	<a href="#">Fang Li-Zhi</a>
1988	Kenya	<a href="#">Gibson Kamau Kuria</a>
1987	South Korea	<a href="#">Kim Geun Tae</a> and <a href="#">In Jae Keun</a>
1986	Poland	<a href="#">Zbigniew Bujak</a> and <a href="#">Adam Michnik</a>
1985	South Africa	<a href="#">Allan A. Boesak</a> , <a href="#">C.F. Beyers Naudé</a> , and <a href="#">Winnie Madikizela Mandela</a>
1984	El Salvador	<a href="#">CoMadres</a>

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