

## PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

**Natalia Ablova** (Kyrgyzstan) is the director of the Kyrgyz-American Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law. A journalist by trade, she has published articles on a variety of human rights and political issues. In 1993, she created the NGO Monitoring and Advisory Group, which functions as an aid watch and civil society coalition. She first graduated from Kyrgyz State University with a major in English language and literature and then proceeded to Birmingham University, where she majored in human rights law and practice.

**Maria Luisa Acosta** (Nicaragua) advocates the realization of full legal rights for indigenous peoples as the coordinator to the Center for Legal Assistance to Indigenous Peoples. She has previously served as the legal advisor in a claim for demarcation of communal lands before the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of American States. She also has served as the coordinator of the technical committee of the Coordinating Commission for the Demarcation of Indigenous Lands, working on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast. She received a juris doctor and master's degree in comparative law from the University of Iowa, a master's degree in studies of natural resources and environment from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain, a postgraduate degree in public administration and the legal regime of autonomy from the Universidad de Barcelona, and a law degree from Bogotá, Colombia.

**Ghanim Alnajjar** (Kuwait/Iraq) is a professor of political science at Kuwait University and a U.N. independent expert on human rights in Somalia. For the past 18 years, he has conducted numerous international investigative missions. From 1988-1992, he was a member of Amnesty International mandate review committee in Iraq, where he monitored the human rights violations that existed in the country. Following his imprisonment in Iraq for his monitoring work in 1991, he was awarded the International Human Rights Award in December 1991. He recently organized the first mission of Amnesty International to Iraq following the removal of Saddam Hussein. The delegation monitored all the actions of the occupying forces as well as documented past human rights violations including mass graves.

**Curt Arnson** (Israel) is responsible for the expansion and development of new programs at HaMoked: Center for the Defense of the Individual, an Israeli NGO that offers free legal aid and advocacy to Palestinian residents in the Israel-occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. He has created programs that offer educational and residential services to 1,000 individuals with mental retardation and has helped establish the first educational facility for profoundly multi-handicapped children in East Jerusalem. He formerly has served as a desk director at the Jerusalem Foundation, specializing in developing services within the city. He graduated from Oberlin College.

**Ashley Barr** (USA/Carter Center) manages human rights initiatives at The Carter Center and is also a senior program associate of the Center's Democracy Program. The human rights office initiates interventions by President and Mrs. Carter in response to human rights violations around the world and undertakes projects in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international partners. Barr also has managed Democracy Program rule-of-law, civil society, and election projects in Guatemala, Guyana, Bangladesh, and Sierra Leone. Before coming to the Center, she worked as a consultant to The Asia Foundation and the International Human Rights Law Group in Cambodia, and the National Democratic Institute and PACT in Ethiopia. She taught law at the University of Peshawar as a Fulbright Fellow and worked for local legal aid agencies in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. She earned her law degree at Harvard Law School.

**Mustafa Barghouthi** (Palestine) is the secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative (Mubadara), a recently established democratic opposition movement within Palestinian domestic politics. He also has served as a delegate to the 1991 Madrid Peace negotiations and as a member of the steering committee that helped establish various Palestinian Ministries. In 1979, Barghouthi co-founded the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, a nongovernmental organization providing health and community services to more than 1 million people. He is also a founder and director of the Ramallah-based Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute that focuses on health and public policy research. He also is a co-founder of the Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People, a program that aims to protect Palestinians through the presence of international civilians.

**Juan Antonio Blanco** (Canada/Cuba) is the director of international cooperation at Human Rights Internet. Prior to his being elected to the board of directors of Human Rights Internet, Blanco was a professor of philosophy at the

University of Havana, a Cuban diplomat and foreign policy analyst, and the executive director of the nongovernmental organization, Centro Felix Varela of Cuba. He has helped to organize several major international conferences on human rights, including the World Forum of Human Rights NGOs, the Latin American and Caribbean U.N. Consultation on the World Conference Against Racism, and the First Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Citizen Diplomacy. Blanco holds a master's degree in philosophy and a doctorate in history of international relations.

**Gillian Caldwell** (USA) is executive director of WITNESS, a global organization that advances human rights advocacy through the use of video and communications technology. In partnership with nongovernmental organizations and activists, WITNESS helps create and use video as evidence before courts and the United Nations, as a tool for public education, and as a deterrent to further abuse. Caldwell is a filmmaker and an attorney with experience in the areas of international human rights, civil rights, intellectual property, contracts, and family law.

**Andres Canizález** (Venezuela) is an investigator associated with the Human Rights Center of Andrés Bello Catholic University and director of the Venezuelan Press and Society Institute. Together with Carlos Correa, he published the 2002 and 2003 Report on the Freedom of Expression in Venezuela. Canizalez formerly was an investigator for the Annual Report of the Venezuelan Education and Action Program in Human Rights, focusing on the theme of the right to freedom of expression and information. He holds a degree in social communication and a master's degree in political science.

**Santiago Canton** (Argentina) is the executive director of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. He also has previously served the OAS as a special rapporteur for freedom of expression and as a director of public information. From 1994 to 1998, he was the director for Latin America and the Caribbean of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a democratic development institute based in Washington, D.C. He also has served as a political advisor The Carter Center in the election processes in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. He holds a law degree from the University of Buenos Aires and a master's degree in international law from American University's Washington College of Law.

**Sandra Carvalho** (Brazil) raises awareness of human rights violations in Brazil through the national and international press. She has coordinated the Teotônio Vilela Commission on Human Rights at the University of São Paulo and served as the executive secretary to the Commission on Human Rights of the São Paulo Legislative Assembly. Her research and advocacy work on such human rights violations as Neo-Nazism, police brutality, and political and judicial corruption in Brazil have all received significant national print and broadcast media attention. She studied social sciences at the University of São Paulo.

**Iscra Mercedes Chavez Loaiza** (Peru) is the founder and executive director of the Association for Life and Human Dignity, which is associated with the National Human Rights Coalition of Peru. Founded in 1997, APORVIDHA is dedicated to the defense of those accused of terrorism. In 2002 she was a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the South Andes. She attended the National University of San Antonio Abad of Cusco.

**Ozlem Dalkiran** (Turkey) is the founder and chair for Amnesty International's Turkey Office. She recently traveled to Baghdad for a month as a member of an Amnesty International delegation researching the human rights and the rule of law situation in the country. She also is a member of Peace Initiative Turkey, an anti-violence organization. She has served as a film assistant director, as a director in her own film production company, and as a member of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly. She studied with the translation faculty at Bosphorus University.

**Lorna Davidson** (USA) is the senior associate of the human rights defenders program for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. Previously, she worked for the U.N. war crimes tribunal at The Hague and as a legal researcher and director of projects to investigate violations of international humanitarian law committed in Kosovo. She holds a law degree from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, a master of laws from the University of Cambridge, England, and a master of law from Columbia University Law School. She continues to be enrolled at Columbia Law School as a doctoral candidate, focusing her research on legal theory, human rights, and the laws of war. While at Columbia, she taught classes on human rights advocacy and assisted Professor Louis Henkin in his work on the U.N. Human Rights Committee.

**Serge Davidyants** (Tajikistan) is the head of the Khujand branch of the Republican Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. He has served as the local law expert for the U.N. Tajikistan Organization for Peacebuilding, a professor of international law and human rights at the Tajik Modern University for the Humanities, and as the second assistant of the head of the economy and international relations department for the Chkalovsk City Hall in Tajikistan. Davidyants obtained his law degree from Tajik State University of Law, Business, and Policy.

**Ana Maria Díaz** (Colombia) is the coordinator for investigations at the Colombian Jurists Commission and has also formerly served as an investigator of economic, social and cultural rights at the commission. She is an attorney from the University of the Andes and specialized in judicial institutions at the National University of Colombia.

**Halina Drebezova** (Belarus) is the chair of the Association of Women Lawyers of Belarus, which is engaged in protecting the rights of women, ending domestic violence, and rendering free legal assistance to needy citizens. The organization also participates in many international human rights conferences and activities, including the OSCE sessions on human rights in Vienna and the Conference on Human Rights Defenders in Dublin. Drebezova previously served as a legal advisor to private businesses and as a legal advisor in the Brest region of Belarus. She received her law degree from Belarusian State University.

**Azizulla Gaziev** (Uzbekistan) is a research fellow at Princeton University and is writing a policy paper entitled “Muslim Republics of Central Asia: Governance as Reflection of History, Culture, and Religion.” He previously served as a political analyst for the International Crisis Group, writing reports on the political and socio-economic situation in the republics of Central Asia. He was detained for questioning by the Uzbek security forces because of his pro-democracy work, forcing him to flee Uzbekistan in August 2003. He holds a master’s degree in international policy studies from Monterey Institute for International Studies in California.

**Vrinda Grover** (India) is the portfolio manager of Human Security, Citizenship and the Law at AMAN Trust, where she currently coordinates legal aid and works to create an independent and professional office of the Public Prosecutor in India. She has been associated with several significant legal cases in India, such as the trial for the murder of the Trade Union leader Shankar Guha Niyogi and as a defense attorney for suspected Parliament attacker S.A.R. Geelani, the first major trial in India under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. She has conducted workshops on laws pertaining to women, caste, and human rights with marginalized communities, as well as training workshops with police officers. She obtained her law degree from Delhi University.

**Ernest Guevarra** (Philippines) is a physician and human rights activist who provides medical care to villagers caught in the conflict between the Philippine military and a fringe rebel group and on ensuring that Muslims detained for alleged ties to terrorists are given proper medical treatment. He is the recipient of the Reebok Human Rights Award in 2003. He co-founded Medical Students for Social Responsibility, which advocates for the inclusion of human rights in the medical curriculum. He also was a student representative with International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, where he helped form a network of students for peace, disarmament, and human rights advocacy. Guevarra was a student at the University of the Philippines.

**Sudarshana Gunawardana** (Sri Lanka) is the program coordinator of INFORM, a human rights documentation center in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He served as the project director for the Movement for Free and Fair Elections and as the training manager and legal officer for the Movement for the Defense of Democratic Rights, focusing primarily on free and fair elections in Sri Lanka. He also has been an election observer, an organizer, facilitator and trainer for every election conducted in Sri Lanka in the past 10 years.

**Neil Hicks** (USA) directs the Lawyers Committee’s Human Rights Defender program, which assists human rights advocates. He also created the Middle East Initiative that assists defenders within the closed societies. He previously worked for the Middle East department of Amnesty International in London and as a human rights project officer of Birzeit University in the West Bank. Hicks was a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, where he wrote the forthcoming book, “The Crisis of Human Rights Implementation in the Middle East.” He is the author of many reports and scholarly articles, most recently, “Human Rights in Turkey, Some Legal Aspects” in *Human Rights Review* (January 2002). He holds a bachelor’s degree in modern Middle Eastern studies from St. Cuthbert’s Society, University of Durham and studied international refugee law at Oxford University.

**Hameeda Hossain** (Bangladesh) is the founder of Ain o Salish Kendra, a legal aid and human rights organization based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. She also edits *Human Rights in Bangladesh*, an annual ASK report. She started as the editor of *Forum*, a political weekly that was banned by the Pakistan army in 1971. She also has written on women's rights particularly on workers in garment export factories, in handicraft production, and migrant workers. She recently co-authored a study on violence against women and the legal system in Bangladesh, and was co-editor of a volume on women's oral histories in the war of liberation in 1971. She graduated from Wellesley College and obtained her doctorate in modern history from Oxford University.

**Rana Hussein** (Jordan) received a Reebok Human Rights Award for her investigation into honor killings, where women are slain by family members as punishment for perceived immorality. Despite threats to her life, she reported that honor killings actually account for the majority murders in Jordan every year. She is currently at work on a book about the ongoing tragedy of honor killing and her commitment to ending this brutal practice. She received the Reebok Human Rights Award in 1998.

**Hauwa Ibrahim** (Nigeria) is the 2003-04 Humphrey Fellow for American University College of Law in Washington D.C. She recently served as a pro bono defense counsel to Amina Lawal, a woman sentenced to death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock in Nigeria. Since 1999, she has been defense counsel in more than 40 Shari'ah related cases. Ibrahim previously served as a prosecutor and defense counsel for the Ministry of Justice in Bauchi State Nigeria and as a senior partner at the Aries Law Firm in Abuja, Nigeria. She also helped to write the draft of the constitution of the Pan African Lawyers Union and she was a consultant to the European Union Commission in Nigeria on implementation and application of the new Islamic Shari'ah legal system in Nigeria. She holds a certificate in American and international laws and a master's degree in international law and diplomacy.

**Saad Eddin Ibrahim** (Egypt) is a professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo who has faced government harassment and persecution for speaking out on the human rights situation in Egypt and the Middle East. He has served as the secretary general of the Egyptian Independent Commission for Electoral Review, an advisor on civil society to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, a director of the Center for Arab Unity Studies, and secretary-general of the Arab Organization for Human Rights. He has received numerous awards, including the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament, the Lawyers Committee on Human Rights International Human Rights Award, and the 2002 Whistleblower Award. He obtained his undergraduate degree with honors from Cairo University and a doctorate from the University of Washington.

**Ivan Ivanov** (Bulgaria/Hungary) is an attorney with the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest, Hungary. The EERC monitors the human rights situation of Roma and provides defense in cases of human rights abuses. He has been involved in litigating cases of Roma rights abuse and discrimination in Central and East European Countries dealing with police brutality, racial segregation, and discrimination in areas like education, housing, health care, and employment. He also was a visiting scholar at Columbia University's law school in New York, doing research and writing articles on Roma rights. He received a degree in medicine in 1989 and a master's degree in law in 1999.

**Hina Jilani** (Pakistan/UN) is the U.N. Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders. She has practiced law since 1979 and opened the first women's law firm in Pakistan in 1980. She specializes in human rights litigation and is especially concerned with the human rights of women, children, minorities, and prisoners. She was a founding member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the Women's Action Forum. Over the past two decades, she has been involved with the U.N. Center for Human Rights, The Carter Center, and the U.N. Conference on Women. She has received several awards for her human rights work from organizations such as the American Bar Association and Human Rights Watch.

**Tanya Lokshina** (Russia) is the executive director of the Moscow Helsinki Group. She serves as the long-term expert of the International Helsinki Federation on the TACIS-funded project "Legal Protection of Individual Rights." She received a master's degree in translation from Brandeis University.

**Helen Mack** (Guatemala) is the executive director of the Myrna Mack Foundation, an organization dedicated to defeating impunity and defending human rights in Guatemala. Myrna Mack, Helen's sister studied the problems of people displaced by the Guatemalan civil war and was assassinated in 1990 by military commandos. She has since sought to bring to justice those responsible for the death of her sister. In addition to presiding over the foundation,

Mack is a member of the Commission for the Strengthening of Justice, which makes recommendations for reform of the judicial system.

**Tom Malinowski** (USA) is the Washington advocacy director for Human Rights Watch. Previously, he was special assistant to President Bill Clinton, and senior director for foreign policy speechwriting at the National Security Council. From 1994 to 1998, he was a speechwriter for Secretaries of State Christopher and Albright and a member of the State Department policy planning staff.

**Omar Mestiri** (Tunisia) has worked to end the torture of individuals through the Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights in Tunisia since 1981 and the Tunisian section of Amnesty International since 1994. In 1998, he also co-founded the National Council for Liberties in Tunisia. For his work in this area, he has endured constant harassment and repression from state forces, including deprivations of his passport and phone lines.

**Willy Mutunga** (Kenya) is an advocate of the High Court in Kenya and the executive director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission, a member the National Convention Executive Council, and a director of the board of the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development. He also has served previously as a member of the December Twelfth Movement and chairman of the Law Society of Kenya. He is the author of “The Rights of An Arrested and An Accused Person” and “ Constitution-Making From the Middle: Civil Society and Transition Politics in Kenya, 1992-1997.” He studied law at the University of Dar Es Salaam and at York University’s Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Canada.

**Martin O’Brien** (Ireland) is the co-coordinator of the Committee on the Administration of Justice, Northern Ireland’s leading human rights NGO. He was particularly active in securing strong human rights protections in the historic Good Friday Peace Agreement. In recognition of his contributions to the peace process in Northern Ireland, he was awarded the prestigious Council of Europe Human Rights Prize in June 1998 and the Reebok Human Rights Award in 1992. In 1999, Notre Dame College presented him with an honorary doctorate. He currently serves on the international advisory boards of the Global Citizens Circle, Frontline, the Human Rights Centre at Queen’s University Belfast, and the International Trauma Centre Project. O’Brien was a Reebok Human Rights Award winner in 1992.

**Charles Onyango-Obbo** (Uganda) is the owner and managing editor for media convergence and syndication for the Nation Media Group in Nairobi, Kenya. Previously, he was the managing editor of The Monitor, Uganda’s only independent daily newspaper. Throughout his career, he has been arrested several times for his outspoken advocacy of democracy and governmental transparency and has been taken to court more than 120 times. He still travels back to Kampala to attend court every month over a case the state brought against The Monitor last year. He attended Makerere University in Kampala and received a master’s degree in journalism from the American University in Cairo, Egypt, in 1985. He attended Harvard University as a Nieman Fellow in 1992.

**Rachland Nashidik** (Indonesia) represents political cases for his organization, Imparsial.

**Vitaly Ponomarev** (Uzbekistan) researches the political and human rights situation in ex-Soviet Union nations. Following his involvement in the democratic movement during the perestroika period in the U.S.S.R., he went to work for Panorama, the Information Group, and the Central Asian Human Rights Society. He is the author or co-author of seven books including “The Religious, Economic and Political Situation in Uzbekistan,” “Human Rights in Turkmenistan,” and “Islam Karimov against Hizb-ut-Tahrir.” As a result of his work, Ponomarev has been deported from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. He graduated from Moscow University in 1986.

**Soussan Raadi** (U.N.) is chief of the Special Procedures branch of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**Bertrand Ramcharan** (U.N.) was recently named the acting United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights after previously serving as the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations. During his 30 years of service to the United Nations, Ramcharan has worked as a special assistant to the director of the Centre for Human Rights, as the chief speechwriter for the secretary-general, and as a political advisor to the peace negotiations in the Yugoslav conflict. He has taught international human rights law at Columbia

University and has been a prolific author, penning some 20 books. He holds a doctorate in international law from the London School of Economics and Political Science.

**Karin Ryan** (USA/Carter Center) was the assistant director for human rights at The Carter Center until 2000 and is now an advisor for the conference. She represented the Center in negotiations to draft the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights Defenders and was an expert member of the U.S. delegation to the Commission on Human Rights in 2000 where she represented the United States in negotiations to create the mandate for the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders.

**Sima Samar** (Afghanistan) is the chair of Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, a position she assumed after serving as the deputy chair in the interim administration of Afghanistan and as the first ever Minister of Women's Affairs. She obtained these posts following a 15-year exile in Pakistan. While in exile, she founded the Shuhada Organization, which works for the welfare of Afghan refugees. The Shuhada Organization runs three hospitals, 12 clinics, and more than 60 schools. She has received numerous human rights awards, including the Roman Magsaysay Award, the Paul Gruniger Human Rights Award, the John Humphrey Freedom Award, the International Human Rights Award, and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights Human Rights Award.

**Mandira Sharma** (Nepal) is the executive director for Advocacy Forum, an organization in Nepal that analyzes incidents of torture and illegal detention and documents human rights violations such as extra-judicial killings and disappearances. During her undergraduate years, she began providing medical and legal counsel to victims of torture and rape. She received a master's degree in international human rights law in the University of Essex in the United Kingdom.

**Arnold Tsunga** (Zimbabwe) is the executive director of the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. He also fights for the rights of individuals in the Manicaland Province of Zimbabwe through his work as the director of the Manicaland Board of Executors Limited and the national chairperson of ZIMRIGHTS, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association. He is a board member for Voice of the People, an independent broadcaster in Zimbabwe, as well as a board member for the Zimbabwe National Students Association, a national student's movement.

**Mariclaire Acosta Urquidi** (Mexico) recently stepped down as the deputy secretary for human rights and democracy at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She previously served as special ambassador for human rights and democracy in Mexico and as advisor to the Social Convergence Working Group for Civil Organizations for then President-Elect Vicente Fox. Additionally, she has published numerous articles regarding the human rights situation in Mexico and has represented Mexican human rights organizations before parliaments, governments, and international organizations.

**Samuel Kofi Woods** (Liberia) is associated with the Justice and Peace Commission in Liberia and the Foundation for International Dignity in Sierra Leone. To combat the growing tide of mass human rights abuses during Liberia's civil war, JPC to monitor the human rights situation in the country and instituted a program to train a new generation of judges and lawyers so as to reform the Liberian prison system. He also gathers data and resources and advocates for the protection of refugees in West Africa. He received his law degree from Leiden University in the Netherlands. Woods won the Reebok Human Rights Award in 1994.

**Xu Wenli** (China) is a senior fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. He was first imprisoned in 1981, on charges accusing him of printing an unauthorized political journal. After being released 12 years later, he returned to his pro-democracy activities. He was imprisoned again in 1998 for trying to establish an opposition party. Although he received a 13-year sentence, he was released from prison December 2002 and exiled to the United States.

**Yevgeniy Zhovtis** (Kazakhstan) is the director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, which draws attention to democratic and economic transformation, human rights, and the rule of law in Kazakhstan. He is also the co-chairman of the Forum of Democratic Forces in Kazakhstan. He previously has served as vice-president of the Independent Trade Union Center of Kazakhstan, senior researcher for the Institute for Mining Researches at the Academy of Sciences, and as chairman of the board of directors of the Soros-Kazakhstan Foundation. He was the recipient of the 1999 International League for Human Rights Award.