

## Report to Executive Committee IFSW Seoul June 2016

This has been a period of consolidation for the Human Rights Commission with links made with each of the regions and contact persons identified. We now have the following HR Regional Commissioners:

- Secretary to the Human Rights Commission: Nigel Hall
- Europe contact persons: Graça Maria André (Portugal (supporting team: Gonca Polat (Turkey), Manane Petrosyan (Armenia)
- Asia-Pacific contact person: Ng Shui Lai
- Latin America/Caribbean contact person: Verónica Silva
- North America contact person: Dr Colleen Lundy
- African contact person: Kgomotso Jongman

Meeting at regular intervals is an ongoing problem for the Commission. However, the Europe region met with Nigel Hall on 7 September 2015 at the IFSW Edinburgh Europe regional meeting and agreed the following strategy:

(1) The HRC should continue to focus on wider issues (in addition to human rights concerns for social workers facing persecution), which will be determined through agreement with the full HRC.

(2) Europe has identified the area of social work and marginalisation in particular relating to the ongoing austerity programme to focus on, particularly relating to the HR concerns of both social workers and users. The Europe members will work on developing a proposal for further discussion.

(3) This could be a focus for the next European Conference to be held in 2017 in Iceland, depending on further discussions of the HR Commission.

(4) A workshop on Human Rights should always be available at the European and Global Conferences and we should lobby to have this agreed.

### Activities

Some members of the Commission attended a human rights seminar *Networking and Engagement with Stakeholders*, which considered the field of social work intervention in relation to human rights in several European countries. organised by the Europe HR region and held at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow during the IFSW European Conference and Social Services Expo, 6-9 Sept 2015.

In addition to some other activities the European region has organized a seminar on *Human Rights violations and Challenges of Social Workers across Europe* to take place after the Delegates Meeting in Zagreb, Croatia on 16 May, 2016. At this workshop the results of their questionnaire on the Human Rights of Social Workers will be presented.

The Latin America and the Caribbean region has presented their own very detailed report to the Executive Meeting and in this they explain results from a survey of a variety of Associations, Federations and Councils that are part of IFSW/FITS in their region. The objectives of this survey were to document the actions taken in the field

of human rights in the various countries, and report and disseminate these through the Commission on Human Rights of the LAC region.

### **Statements June 2014-June 2016**

In the 2014/16 period the second key Agenda commitment – *Promoting the dignity and worth of the person* – is a key commitment to developing human rights and this formed the basis for the statements made. A variety of statements in support of various issues have been presented by the HRC during this period:

- IFSW supports the **International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims** (24<sup>th</sup> March 2016)
- IFSW supports the United Nations in **ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** (released on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016).
- IFSW supports **Turkish social work academic facing detention** (released on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016).
- **Palestinian Social Workers Stand Against Child Detention** (released on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016).
- IFSW Statement on the **detention of Palestinian colleagues** who are on hunger strike (released on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2015).
- A letter of concern was sent to the Maldives Ambassador to the United Nations expressing concern over the **situation of Maldives for acts of reprisal** by the Government against the Human Rights Commission of Maldives (sent on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015).
- IFSW Statement on the **Deaths of Immigrants in the Mediterranean** (released on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015).
- Statement from the Human Rights Commission of IFSW on **World Social Work Day 2015** (released on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2015).
- Statement on the **Detention of Palestinian Children** (released on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014).

### **Future cooperation with IASSW**

The Commission is reviewing its mandate and in particular is establishing links with the IASSW via Vasilios Iokimedes, Chair of the IASSW human rights committee. Discussions so far have indicated interest in reframing human rights in a wider context rooted in the social justice tradition, which our own HRC has indicated should be a key part of its focus and which has been previously. This could help us reframe human rights violations as social justice issues where structural concerns don't escape our attention. This still needs to be discussed with the Board of

Directors of IASSW, although the mandate to “carry out an international human rights agenda on behalf of the Federation” is already part of the HRC’s role.

There are three areas of priority identified for this joint cooperation:

- 1) Monitor and record human rights and social justice violations affecting social work educators, practitioners and students.
- 2) Identify and co-ordinate broader campaigns, petitions, coalitions promoting social justice, in line with the strategic priorities of IFSW and IASSW and the recommendation of our respective memberships.
- 3) Encourage, promote and facilitate opportunities for human rights and social justice informed curricula.

It is agreed that as a matter of policy we should keep our respective Commissions informed of any concerns on the human rights or social justice front and where possible issue joint statements, which should strengthen our “voice” such as it is. As suggested by our IFSW Europe HR team we could send out statements in support of selected UN days, which would have the advantage of maintaining a regular presence on our respective websites and bringing HR and particularly social justice concerns to the fore.

Nigel Hall  
Secretary to Human Rights Commission  
May 2016