

## Foreword

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The Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex was established in 1983. It was first part of the Law Department and host to the LLM in the International Law of Human Rights. Since then, it has become a multi-disciplinary Centre with members of academic staff drawn from the Departments of Law, Government, Philosophy, Sociology, and Economics. It is now host to the *MA in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights* and a suite of undergraduate degree schemes in human rights. Currently, the BA programme, MA programme, and the LLM in the Law Department each have over sixty students, while approximately fifteen students are pursuing their PhDs within one of the participating departments on topics related to human rights. Taken together, there are approximately two hundred human rights students per year studying throughout the University.

Over the years, human rights students at Essex have initiated a number of different projects on women's rights, human rights in Brazil, Roma rights, trade and human rights, among others. They have formed a Human Rights Association to coordinate these projects, activities to celebrate human rights day every 10<sup>th</sup> of December, and a human rights film series. During the 2003-2004 academic year, a series of students met and established the *Essex Human Rights Review*, which is an entirely student-run on-line journal with articles, essays, interviews, and other works on a series of wide-ranging issues concerning the theory and practice of human rights. Much akin to the student run law journals in the United States, the *Essex Human Rights Review* reflects the multi-disciplinary tradition of human rights scholarship at Essex, is dedicated to careful analysis of contemporary human rights issues, and provides a forum for scholars and practitioners to make a contribution to current debates in the field.

The diversity of topics and multi-disciplinarity are immediately evident in the collection of contributions comprising this inaugural issue. The volume opens with an essay by Professor Kevin Boyle, former Director of the Human Rights Centre and Professor in the Law Department, on the conflicts among democracy, secularism, and human rights using the Refah Party case in Turkey. This article is followed by a section on the rights of Roma in the UK and the larger Europe. The next section is devoted to issues concerning various human rights issues in Africa, including articles on the value of national human rights commissions using the case of Kenya, minority and indigenous rights and the role that Minority Rights Group has played in advocating for such rights in the region, the Special Court for crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone, and a summary report on the Essex conference on conflict in West Africa. The volume concludes with an interview conducted with Arjun Sengupta on the right to development.

This collection of articles and reportage demonstrates a widely diverse attention to human rights issues crossing the disciplines of law, political science, cultural theory, economics, and sociology. Rights issues are problematized in different contexts across different substantive thematic areas using different theoretical perspectives. Human

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rights scholars and practitioners alike will gain valuable insights into the complexity of human rights issues and human rights arguments.

I warmly welcome this initiative and its editorial team have put mechanisms in place to guarantee its future longevity and continuity. The Human Rights Centre supports the journal financially and logistically, but the opinions, arguments, and comments contained within the journal are solely those of the contributors and remain independent of the Human Rights Centre and the University of Essex.