

Reflecting on 2006: The Castan Centre's Annual Human Rights Wrap Up

By Katie Mitchell

2006 has brought a range of human rights issues and questions bubbling to the surface and the Castan Centre's annual 'Year in Review' conference, to be held on December 1 at the Malthouse, aims to address some of the most pertinent ones.

Headlining the 2006 conference are Malcolm Langford (below) and C Raj Kumar (on right). Malcolm is a human rights lawyer and Senior Legal Officer at the Centre on Housing Rights and Eviction in Geneva. Malcolm also acts as an advisor to a number of UN agencies and is heavily involved in litigation and advocacy projects at a grass roots level, working with local organisations across the globe to further social rights. Malcolm will be discussing the extent to which human rights offer a coherent framework for re-shaping our understanding and response to the world water crisis.



Malcolm Langford

Mr C Raj Kumar is a law lecturer at City University of Hong Kong and the Deputy Director of the WTO Law and Dispute Resolution Centre. Raj is also a member of the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor and the author of a research project entitled "Corruption and Human Rights - Promoting Transparency in Governance in Hong Kong, Japan and India." He will be attending the conference as a Holding Redlich Distinguished Visiting Fellow, examining the way in which corruption contributes to the violation of human

rights and exploring how corruption might be addressed through a human rights framework.



C Raj Kumar

The Australian government's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees continues to raise crucial human rights issues. Azadeh Dastyari, from the Monash Law Faculty, considers what role Australia's model of offshore processing plays in the growing global phenomena of denying territorial access to those seeking protection. Dr Scott Burchill and Alex Tilman will also address regional issues. Dr Burchill of the School of International & Political Studies, Deakin University, asks how the Australian government can formally acknowledge that political persecution exists in West Papua yet continue to avoid the greater issue of Indonesia's persecution of independence activists there? Mr Tilman, Melbourne Representative of FRETILIN, will be exploring how justice can be achieved for East Timor.

The recent enactment of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities in Victoria raises significant questions about the role, meaning and impact of such Charters for communities and individuals, particularly in the current political climate. Dr Julie Debeljak, Deputy Director of the Castan Centre, will examine the judicial interpretative obligation under the Charter, considering whether this obligation will act to preserve parliamentary sover-

eignty and general institutional dialogue. And while 2006 has seen the enactment of this Charter of Rights the development of counter terrorism legislation has also cast a shadow over the protection of human rights. Associate Professor Di Otto and Dr Joo-Cheong Tham from the Faculty of Law at Melbourne University will examine how these counter-terrorism laws threaten human rights in Australia and to what extent they are inconsistent with Australia's international legal obligations. Taking up from this examination of Australia's international legal obligations Paula Gerber, will address the vital issue of community awareness and knowledge of human rights. Paula is a Deputy Director of the Castan Centre and will be exploring the level of human rights education currently received by secondary school students and proposing ways in which we can ensure that young people learn about and understand human rights.

The extent of influence and force exerted by international law over the enjoyment of rights is always a hot human rights issue. Dr Carolyn Evans, Director of the Centre for Comparative Constitutional Studies, University of Melbourne will explore the extent to which principles of religious freedom, outlined in the UN Declaration on Religious Freedom, can assist in resolving problems, such as the erosion of social cohesion posed by religious hatred.

This annual conference gives all individuals interested in human rights the opportunity to come together in order to learn, to be challenged and to exchange ideas and experiences. It is through such occasions and sharing that individuals and groups working for human rights can become more connected and from which a human rights culture begins to grow. We invite you to be a part of this and hope to see you at the conference.

For further details about the conference, including prices and registration details, please see our website at www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre