

Department of Health Law, Bioethics & Human Rights  
Boston University School of Public Health

## GLOBAL LAWYERS AND PHYSICIANS

JANUARY 2010



In his September 29, 2009 address to the United Nations General Assembly, President Obama told the world that for those “who question the character and cause of my nation” two concrete actions should be taken as proof that the USA really has changed: the prohibition, “without exception or equivocation” of the use of torture and ordering the prison at Guantanamo Bay to be closed. GLP has consistently applauded both moves, but ordering torture ended has proven much easier to do than closing Guantanamo. As we begin 2010, it seems highly unlikely that Guantanamo will close in this year, and at the earliest the closure will come sometime after the 2010 midterm elections, most likely in 2011. In the meantime, hunger strikers at Guantanamo (approximately two dozen at any one time) continue to be force fed in a manner that directly violates international human rights and medical ethics standards, as noted in two articles published by GLP (the first with PHR) in 2009. In addition, as noted elsewhere, a physician associated with GLP has twice visited Guantanamo during 2009 to evaluate the physical condition of one of the hunger strikers, and the difficulty of doing such an evaluation highlights the basic point that conditions at the prison camp at Guantanamo, and the treatment of hunger strikers, remains substantially the same as it was under the Bush administration. In short, much more work needs to be done to try to prevent the harsh and unethical practices of the Bush administration from becoming the norm for US military medicine.

**GLP** worked in the U.S. assisting law firms on several amicus briefs on human rights issues concerning female genital mutilation and grounds for political asylum, reproductive rights and pregnant women prosecuted for

substance use, and helped represent GTMO prisoners on hunger strikes, and worked to hold perpetrators of torture accountable to international law. We also continued our program of workshops on military medical ethics which bring together human rights groups with retired and active-duty military physicians.

Internationally, **GLP** participated in educational programs in Poland, and Israel. **GLP** hosted visitors from Israel, Netherlands, Holland, Nepal, India, Tibet, Bhutan, South Korea, Iraq and Iran. The Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights (**BCRHHR**), a project of **GLP**, actively cared for the medical, psychological, legal and social needs of 350 clients from more than 50 countries. **GLP** has continued collaborating with **PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS** in conducting forensic medical exams in Istanbul, Turkey of former Abu Ghraib prisoners.

### **BOSTON CENTER FOR REFUGEE HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS (BCRHHR)**

**BCRHHR** at Boston Medical Center, formed at the initiative of **GLP**, fills a serious gap in the healthcare safety net in New England by reaching out to survivors of torture, those seeking asylum, and traumatized refugees.

The **BCRHHR** was formed to serve as a focus for **GLP** advocacy on issues of refugee torture and humanitarian law. These high-risk populations often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and/or depression and typically need, but rarely receive, a complex set of medical and psychosocial services in order to successfully integrate into society. The **BCRHHR** currently provides a broad range of medical, legal, psychological and social services to survivors of torture and related trauma arrived in Boston and throughout the region.

The **BCRHHR** brings together the expertise of several clinical departments at Boston Medical Center including Psychiatry, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Ob/Gyn, Dental, and Primary Care. The **BCRHHR** also represents a collaboration of the Boston University Schools of Medicine, Public Health, Law, and Dentistry. In 2009, the Center served more than 450 clients from over 50 different countries this year including: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Congo, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tibet and Uganda. Ninety percent were survivors of

torture. **BCRHHR** had a 98% success rate of clients being granted asylum.

The **BCRHHR** continues to be supported by the Volunteer Fund for Torture Victims and the Office for Refugee Resettlement, HHS grant “Treatment for Torture Victims,” as well as by foundations and individual donations.

## **DETENTION**

GLP continues to conduct medical evaluation on behalf of refugees in detention.

## **GUANTANAMO**

**GLP** continues to work with law firms representing prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and is involved with medical record review, consultation on cases with military doctors, and preparation of affidavits for legal proceedings, primarily related to the physical and psychological impact of force feeding on hunger strikers.

Sondra Crosby is one of our senior department members who travelled twice to Guantanamo to examine clients and advise about their healthcare and wrote a report.

## **COURSES**

For the past eleven years George Annas and Michael Grodin have taught a **Human Rights and Health** course at the Boston University School of Public Health. This year, the course will be taught in the Fall and Spring semesters offered to both undergraduate and graduate students.

The course syllabus is posted at:

<http://www.globallawyersandphysicians.org/educational-resources/>

Comments are welcome.

## **SELECTED PRESENTATIONS**

George Annas

Studying Suicide in the Military: Medical Ethics Considerations, Defense Health Board Medical Ethics Subcommittee, Washington, DC, August 25, 2009

George Annas

International Conference on Vaccination, 'Human Rights and Informed Consent to Vaccination', Washington, DC, October, 2009

George Annas

Rules for International Research Trials, APHA Convention, Philadelphia, November 10, 2009

George Annas

Rules for Emergency Research, Heart Rhythm Society, Orlando, Florida, November 15, 2009

George Annas

International Rules for Military Medical Ethics, Workshop on Medical Ethics in Military Detention Facilities, New York, December 14, 2009.

George Annas

Biology and Law, "The Genomics Revolution in the Shadow of Auschwitz," Jagellonica University, Krakow, Poland, December 5, 2009

Michael Grodin

Holocaust in Contemporary Bioethics Program, "Mad, Bad, or Evil: How Physician Healers Turn to Torture and Murder," University of Colorado, Denver, Colorado, April 21, 2009

Michael Grodin

Silberman Seminar, "Medicine on the Holocaust," sponsored by the, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C., June 2009.

Michael Grodin

International Holocaust Seminar, "Eugenics in the Shadow of the Holocaust," Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, Israel, July 1, 2009

Michael Grodin

Schaleman Lecture, "Caring for Refugee for Survivors of Torture: Lessons from the Holocaust," University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, FL, November 12, 2009

## HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS (HHRC)

**HHRC** at the Boston University School of Public Health is a student-led organization that dedicates its efforts to exploring and supporting health and human rights concerns through education, collaboration, and action in the local, national, and global milieu. Students in the **HHRC** work together to identify, discuss, and help raise awareness of human rights issues in our community and world. The HHRC is a very hands-on and interactive group; each semester its members choose from among the important issues of the day, and focus their energy on those they feel are most deserving of exploration, understanding, action, and aid.

In 2009, **HHRC** organized a film screening of *Afghan Idol* to help promote public health and human rights to the undergraduate student body. **HHRC** co-sponsored and co-organized a Panel Discussion with *Rotaract* on Human Trafficking and raised money to donate to *Free the Slaves*, an organization dedicated to freeing slaves and eradicating the practice of human slavery. HHRC also raised money to help the vocational programs of the Boston Center for Refugees Health and Human Rights.

## OTHER VOICES

**Michael Grodin** was featured on the front page of the *Boston Globe*, March 13, 2009, in a story, *West Treats East*, about his blending Eastern healing and Western medicine to treat Tibetan monks suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

You can read this article at:

<http://www.globallawyersandphysicians.org/news-and-events/>

**Sondra Crosby** is one of the four members of the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) field team that went to the Farchana refugee camp in Chad in November 2008 to gather the data for the new PHR report, [Nowhere to Turn: : Failure to Protect, Support and Assure Justice for Darfuri Women](#).

The report documents the impact of rape and sexual violence on Darfuri women refugees living in Chad. Sondra Crosby's story, "**Tracking the war on women in Darfur**," was featured on the Boston Globe on May 31, 2009.

You can read this article at:

<http://www.globallawyersandphysicians.org/news-and-events/>

## **AMICUS BRIEFS**

GLP website provides copies of its amicus briefs. Read them at

<http://www.globallawyersandphysicians.org/amicus-briefs>.

## **COLLABORATIONS**

Michael Grodin serves on the Board of Advisor to Dali Lama Center for Transformative Ethics.

George Annas serves as a member of the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academics.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Annas GJ. American Bioethics (Oxford, NY, 2009, Paperback Ed).

Annas GJ. Force-feeding prisoners and the role of physicians. *Lancet* . 2009; 374: 1737

Annas GJ. The American right to health. *Hastings Center Report*. 2009; 3.

Annas GJ. Bioethics and genomics (in) Clapham, A & Robinson, M., *Realizing the Right to Health*, Ruffer & Rub, Zurich. 2009; 321-330.

Annas GJ. Protecting privacy and the public – limits on police use of bioidentifiers in Europe. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2009; 361: 196-201.

Annas GJ, Rubenstein L. Medical ethics at Guantanamo Bay Detention Centre and in the US military: a time for reform. *Lancet*. 2009; 374: 353–55.

Annas GJ. Globalized clinical trials and informed consent. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2009; 360: 2050-2.

Annas CL, Annas GJ. Enhancing the fighting force: Medical research on American soldiers. *J. of Contemporary Health Law & Policy*. 2009; 25: 283-308.

Annas GJ. Human rights and American bioethics: Resistance is futile. *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*. 2010; 19: 133-141.

Benedict A, Grodin M, Mancini L. Struggling to meditate: contextualizing integrated treatment of traumatized Tibetan refugee monks. *Mental Health Religion and Culture*. 2009; 12: 485-499

Crosby S, Grodin M, Heeren T, Ignatius S, Piwowarczyk L. Secondary trauma in immigration judges. *Bender's Immigration Review*, 2009; 263-269.

## **SELECTED PHOTOS**



**Michael Grodin**  
**West Treats East**



**Sondra Crosby**  
**The Ongoing War in Darfur**



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