

Editorial

This volume of the *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* consists of three parts.

The first part, 'Special focus: Selected developments in the area of children's rights', is the first time the *Journal* devotes special attention to the rights of children. In 2019, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Global Campus of Human Rights and the Right Livelihood Foundation. Its purpose is to 'promote the acknowledgement and observance of human and child rights and to strengthen the participation of children in all matters affecting their lives in the present and in the future'. The Special focus is a product of this collaboration between the Global Campus of Human Rights and the Right Livelihood Foundation.

The Global Campus of Human Rights consists of the Global Campus Europe, South East Europe, Africa, Asia Pacific, Caucasus, Latin America and the Arab World, with the participation of post-graduate students from their respective Master's programmes in Human Rights and Democracy. The Right Livelihood Foundation is a Swedish charity, whose mission it is to honour and support courageous people solving global problems. The Foundation is a politically independent and non-ideological platform for the voices of its Laureates to be heard.

The editor of this 'special focus' part of the *Journal*, Chiara Altafin, Research Manager at the Global Campus of Human Rights, gives a separate editorial introduction, which explains how the six articles reflect selected developments in the area of children's rights.

The six articles have gone through a thorough and detailed editorial process, comprising double peer reviews and an arduous process of reworking articles. The Special Focus is the result of considerable teamwork involving Chiara and other staff of the Global Campus of Human Rights: George Ulrich, Academic Director (who provided valuable comments on the substance of articles), Reina-Marie Loader, Children's Rights Project Manager (who assisted with language reviews) and Angela Melchiorre, Online Programmes Manager (who helped with identifying and securing the availability of peer reviewers, and consistently provided advice and support).

In the second part, we publish a single article of a general bearing. In this article, Chofor Che finds the root causes for the ongoing political malaise in Cameroon in the failure of that state to effectively implement the decentralisation framework provided for under the 1996 Constitution of Cameroon. The 1996 Constitution aims to address some serious contemporary challenges to governance faced by the country. A 2019 national dialogue did little to address the resentment based on persisting perceptions of the colonially-linked marginalisation of the Anglophone community. Chofor Che identifies the need for a fundamental constitutional overhaul that would provide a more effective decentralised framework for administrative, political and fiscal decentralisation.

The third part contains a regular feature of the *Journal*, a discussion of 'recent developments' in the fields of human rights and democratisation in four of the regions covered by the Global Campus of Human Rights. In this issue, developments during 2019 in the following four regions are covered: Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the 'Arab world' and the Asia Pacific. These contributions are collective endeavours, being based on the research and writing of academics or staff, and students or recent graduates of four of the regional Master's programmes forming part of the Global Campus of Human Rights.

Balnaves, Burkle, Erkan and Fischer scrutinise the results of the 2019 parliamentary elections for the European Parliament. They draw attention to the implications of the elections for human rights, and discuss tendencies towards increased 'European populism'. Nyawa, Nyemba, Nyokabi, Mathenge and White take under review a series of issues of importance and interest related to human rights and democratisation in sub-Saharan Africa during 2019. These issues include the withdrawal by Tanzania of its optional acceptance of the jurisdictional competence to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights to allow individuals and non-governmental organisations to submit cases directly to the African Court; judicial decisions on child marriage, and the monumental judgment nullifying presidential elections in Malawi. Iasmin Ait Youssef, Rana Alsheikh Ali, Elena Comaro, Elise Diana, Solène Lavigne Delville, Nouha Maaninou, Marta Pannunzio and Charlotte van der Werf paint a picture of contradictions within the Arab world during 2019: While mass mobilisations broke out throughout the Arab region and democratic consolidation took place in Tunisia, suggesting a 'second Arab Spring', authoritarian reactions and the use of different repression techniques against protesters, activists and civil society organisations also occurred. Beyond these two opposing dynamics, the socio-economic situation across the region deteriorated, thereby increasing the vulnerability women, children, stateless persons and refugees. Taking stock of developments in Asia Pacific over 2019, Ravi Prakash Vyas, Mike Hayes, Mmalinda Savirani and Pranjali Kanel conclude that, despite some promising developments,

on the whole the region has continually regressed from its democratic and human rights obligations due to the use of technology as a pretext of national security, restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association and an increase in mob violence and lynching. While there have been some positive developments, for example the increased number of Pacific Islands ratifying human rights treaties or the collective action against trafficking, the region also contains states undertaking serious human rights violations such as Myanmar, Philippines, and China.

The four articles on regional 'recent developments' demonstrate that 2019 was another year during which setbacks for human rights and democratisation increased around the globe.