

# Editorial

This is the inaugural issue of *Global Campus Human Rights Journal* (GCHRJ).

GCHRJ is an open-access journal, established and published under the auspices of the Global Campus of Master's Programmes and Diplomas in Human Rights and Democratisation (Global Campus of Human Rights). The Global Campus of Human Rights is a framework of collaboration between seven Regional Master's programmes in Human Rights and Democratisation, taking place on each of the five continents. It is a unique network of more than 100 universities with the overall aim of educating human rights defenders committed to upholding the universal values of human rights and democracy. The seven programmes are the European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation; the Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa; the European Regional Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation in South Eastern Europe; the Master's in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Master's of Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia and Pacific Regional Programme; the Regional Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus; and the Master's Programme in Democratic Governance, Human Rights and Democratisation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. For more information, see <http://www.eiuc.org/education/global-campus-regional-masters.html>. The European Union Commission supports this network financially.

Against the background of an ever-globalising world, in which regionalism has gained much traction, this journal invites focus on regions – rather than the nation states of which they are comprised – as the units of analytical comparison. Its aim is to shed light on the trends, currents and developments within regions, and across regions. From various regional perspectives, articles will no doubt interrogate trends towards both global diversification and homogenisation. This journal's aim is to stimulate the emerging discourse on comparative regionalism.

The term 'region' is open to contestation, and is for our purposes left open, so as to allow flexibility. A 'region' may, for example, be geographic in scope (such as the continent of Africa; or the 'Caribbean'); it may coalesce around membership to a particular inter-governmental organisation (such as the Council of Europe, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the League of Arab States); it may refer to a group of states sharing a particular history and contemporary challenges (such as the Eastern Partnership countries); or it may cohere around an ideology or idea (the 'Muslim' or 'Arab' region). Increasingly, regional interests are also co-ordinated around particular thematic concerns such as trade, environmentalism and human rights.

In coming to grips with issues related to human rights and democratisation in these 'regions', the list of important role players extends beyond states and constellations of states (such as inter-governmental organisations), to also include the likes of multinational companies, civil society organisations and social movements.

Representing scholars and students from all five continents, the Global Campus of Human Rights partners are very well placed to spearhead

research of this nature. Given their academic focus and network of partners focused on issues pertaining to human rights and democratisation in various parts of the world, this journal aims at stimulating the fledgling field of comparative regional human rights and democracy studies. Although the inaugural issue consists of contributions mainly by partners or associates of the Global Campus of Human Rights partners, *GCHRJ* aims at being a mouthpiece for scholarship of a much broader background. In other words, contributions to the journal are by no means restricted to those institutions forming part of this network.

*GCHRJ* is a peer-reviewed publication dedicated to serving as a forum for rigorous scholarly analysis, critical commentaries, and reports on recent developments pertaining to human rights and democratisation globally, particularly by adopting a multi- and interdisciplinary perspective, and by using comparative approaches. *Regional Perspectives* also aims at serving as a forum for fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders, including academics, activists in human rights and democratisation, non-governmental organisations and civil society.

This journal is a bi-annual publication, with issues appearing in July and December. Unsolicited manuscripts are invited and may be submitted electronically. All submissions are reviewed by the editors, and may be rejected on the basis of focus, style and depth of analysis and research. Screened submissions are subjected to peer review by at least two experts in the field. An interdisciplinary International Editorial Advisory Board, comprising not only experts from each of the Global Campus of Human Rights programmes, but also experts from outside the Global Campus, assists the editors in the review process and in guiding policy.

This inaugural issue consists of two sections: the first containing articles, and the second regional developments.

The majority of articles in this issue deal with the economic crisis of 2007-2008 and its impact on human rights. These articles largely draw on papers presented as part of the 'Global Classroom', a joint annual event bringing together students and professors from the Regional Master's programmes of the Global Campus of Human Rights as well as international experts. The Global Classroom aims at fostering closer interaction between students of the different programmes, by organising dedicated activities and providing a virtual environment, a forum for discussion and additional tools of academic interaction. By doing so, this activity intends to develop a more integrated and multilateral form of academic co-ordination across the different curricula of the programmes.

In 2015, the Global Classroom was devoted to the theme 'Economic crisis, debt and the impact on human rights'. The event took place from 11 to 15 May, in Venice, where the European Master's is based. This broadly-formulated topic provided an opportunity for researchers from different regions of the globe to explore the nexus between issues of economics, finance, development and human rights and to do so in a way most meaningful for their region. In order to provide flexibility to researchers while also creating an overall unifying structure for the different contributions, the methodology asked researchers to consider the norms, processes and the actors at play within their chosen topics and to

conclude with recommendations on how to improve the situation under review.

Articles focusing on the theme 'Economic crisis, debt and the impact on human rights' include, in respect of the African region, Orago's contribution entitled 'The impact of the global financial crisis on the realisation of socio-economic rights in sub-Saharan Africa: An analysis based on the Millennium Development Goals framework and processes'. Orago explores in both statistical and real human terms the negative consequences for the Millennium Development Goals of the global financial crisis, as well as ancillary problems of insufficient political will and corruption. In contrast, in respect of the Asian region, Mullen and his colleagues chose to bring to light an uneasy, *realpolitik* balancing of interests and power between labour, business and the state, set against the backdrop of crisis and through the lens of labour rights. The research team studying the European Union's Eastern Partnership region elected to survey the interplay between the economic crisis and debt, and their negative implications for development as it relates to socio-economic rights as per the states of the Eastern Partnership. For Europe, Ginsborg focused on underlying human rights values such as participation, transparency and accountability in the context of Europe's adoption of austerity measures in reaction to the economic crisis and debt. For the Southeast European region, Kurian and Charkiewicz surveyed the repercussions of the economic crisis and debt in the region, but focused on the unique response of people who united around their common economic woes and dismissed the parameters of previous enmity. Finally, for the Latin-American region, Kampel explored the economic crisis and debt through the lens of sovereignty and states' obligations to promote and protect human rights. In this way the overarching theme was explored, but in a context that made the most sense for each region.

However, not all articles are devoted to the global economic crisis. Abramovich's contribution – in Spanish – deals with a much broader issue of global relevance.

The second section, 'Recent regional developments', aims at providing an insight into selected developments in the area of human rights and democracy, with a regional scope, taking advantage of the worldwide presence and expertise of the Global Campus of Human Rights partners. The contributions aim at providing a picture of the most salient developments during 2015, and the way in which they have (re)shaped each region. This issue starts off by covering only four regions (Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region). In subsequent issues the ambition is to provide comprehensive coverage of all the regions in which the seven programmes are presented.

We thank the reviewers who have dedicated their time to assist in ensuring the quality of this fledgling journal.

**Editors**