



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
OF
ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

Summary – Ninth Biennial Meeting

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**International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies
May 21-23, 2009, Rabat, Morocco**

The International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies, (H.R. Network), created in 1993, met for its ninth biennial meeting from May 21-23, 2009, in Rabat, Morocco. The meeting was held under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI and was graciously hosted by the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Representatives of 37 national scientific academies and scholarly societies around the world attended the meeting. (See attached list.) This meeting, the first to be held by the H.R. Network in an African, Arab, and Islamic country, began with a day-long symposium titled, *Scientists and Scholars: Advancing Human Rights*. (See attached program.) In addition to meeting participants, many government ministers and members of the Moroccan academy were in attendance. Symposium speakers included guests from Somaliland, Palestine, and Tunisia. Although there were questions from the audience following certain talks during the symposium, they are not included here but will appear in the forthcoming proceedings of the meeting.

The following day and a half were devoted to workshops (see attached agenda). The status of the H.R. Network's "cases" (professional colleagues who have been unjustly imprisoned) was reviewed, and meeting participants were gratified by the confirmation that, since the H.R. Network's 2007 meeting, the cases of 21 colleagues in 8 countries had been successfully resolved. Sadly, one colleague, an engineer who had been imprisoned for 6½ years, was denied critical medical care while in custody and allowed to die, despite repeated pleas by participants in the H.R. Network.

In addition to a review of current cases of prisoners and discussions of strategies by which to gain their release from prison, a large number of human rights topics were discussed—ranging from *Science Education and Capacity Building in the Developing World* to *The Network's Relations with International and Regional Organizations of Academies and Scholarly Societies*; from *The Status of International Human Rights Law across the Regions* to *Academic Freedom under Threat: International Law, Terrorism and Current Trends*.

A proceedings of the meeting is forthcoming.

The International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies works to address grave issues of science and human rights. These academies and scholarly societies act with full autonomy and at their own discretion on cases and issues brought to their attention on a regular basis by the Network's secretariat. Primarily, the Network assists colleagues who are unjustly detained or imprisoned for the nonviolent exercise of their basic human rights. Its work is grounded in the principles set forth in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For more information see: www.nationalacademies.org/humanrights/Network_Description.html.

Welcome

The symposium was opened with a message from His Majesty King Mohammed VI who noted that the H.R. Network is “in the forefront of the struggle for the promotion of human rights across the world and of the ideals underlying them.” He described the commitment of his grandfather, the late King Mohammed V, to the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)—principles subsequently enshrined and endorsed in the Kingdom’s constitution.

He called upon the network to make certain that it keep paces with rapid developments in science and technology, commended it for its “solidarity with fellow scholars and scientists whose rights are violated and threatened,” and urged it “to uphold the ideals of solidarity and cooperation among academics and to support the lofty values of peace, progress, tolerance, and dignified life that humankind is seeking to embody.”

Abdellatif Berbich, the permanent secretary of the Moroccan academy, welcomed the participants and expressed his hope that the event “will contribute to the strengthening of our human relations, to our convictions, and our faith in a world of dialogue and tolerance.” He pointed out the importance of democracy, knowledge, and the necessary institutions for development and noted that the Moroccan academy strives to promote the development of research and thought and to foster constant symbiosis in respect to fundamental ethical values.

H.R. Network’s Operations

Its purpose

H.R. Network Executive Committee Member Ida Nicolaisen, an anthropologist from the Danish academy, described the purpose of the network and explained that its activities are grounded in the UDHR. She reminded the audience that “today, dozens of scientists, engineers, lawyers, and health professionals around the world are unjustly imprisoned. Most of them have done nothing more than express their opinions in a peaceful manner. Many of these, our colleagues, are held without trial. Others have received harsh sentences and are confined under deplorable conditions, often in solitary confinement, sometimes for many years. Some have been tortured, most have been mistreated, and many are despondent and in very poor health.”

Nicolaisen reminded the audience that academies worldwide are in a unique position to help gain the freedom of unjustly detained or imprisoned professional colleagues. “Governments tend to hold academies and their prestigious members in high esteem. They are recognized for their integrity and objectivity. They often have powerful international contacts, and their members have high name recognition. Thus, polite, respectful appeals by national academies to government officials and embassy visits made by their officers or members, seeking the release of imprisoned professional colleagues, can be uniquely influential and carry weight far greater than their numbers.”

The UDHR

Yuan T. Lee, a Nobel Laureate and longstanding Taiwanese participant in the H.R. Network, talked in detail about the UDHR, which underpins the activities of the H.R. Network. Lee prefaced his talk about the 60th Anniversary of the UDHR by pointing out that “many parts of the world still face the threat of the H1N1 epidemic” and noting that the epidemic had already caused more than 100 casualties and is spreading quickly. “Although the situation is not as dire as that in 2003, when SARS struck, it signifies that we live in a world fraught with high risks,” he said, and added that “we have no choice but to work together to confront those risks.”

Lee raised the problem of the unbalanced development of the world and that “some parts of the world obviously suffer from a scarcity of resources to fight epidemic diseases, which contributed to the unnecessary loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives in the past.” He said that it is therefore significant that we gather today in Rabat to rethink the ideals and visions of human rights set down by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 60 years ago.” Lee described the UDHR as “a brilliant document that has aged well.” He noted that although the rights that it encompasses are as important today as they were in 1948, they continue to be commonly abused. “Our Network exists because many of our professional colleagues continue to be subject to arbitrary arrest, torture, and forced disappearance for their beliefs, ethnicity, association, and opinions.”

Lee described the importance of both negative and positive rights, saying that one cannot exist without the other. He added, “I see our Network as serving and promoting the entire UDHR. The members of the national academies affiliated with our work have made and continue to make significant contributions to social, economic, and cultural developments around the world through the daily application of their work and activities and skills as scientists, engineers, and health professionals. At the same time, through the activities of our Network, we help our professional colleagues who are deprived of their civil and political rights. We point out when rights under the UDHR are being violated and we hold governments accountable for actions that undermine or fail to meet these standards. Our interventions help return our colleagues to their important work and to make vital contributions to the positive rights of society and of each and every individual in it.”

Unjustly Imprisoned Professional Colleagues

H.R. Network’s efforts are important – an example from Somalia

Ahmed Esa, an immunologist and long-time human rights advocate from Somaliland, assured the participants that “the work that your academies do in protecting the civil and human rights of scientists and others is not futile.” He described the plight of 20 Somalis who were arrested in the 1980’s and spent 8 years in solitary confinement. He then went on to tell how he and the Committee on Human Rights of the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and of the Institute of Medicine worked together to gain the release of these men and what the former prisoners of conscience are doing today. (The H.R. Network was not created until 1993.)

Esa ended his talk by reminding the audience that human rights are universal and that “the first constitution that is recorded in history was the Medina Constitution, written by the Prophet Muhammad, one year after the Hijra.” He said that “it was a constitution that the warring tribes of Medina needed so that they could live together under the rule of law.” Human rights advocates in developing countries are often told that they are imitating Western democracies and principles, he said. “We have to remind them all the time that that’s not the case; we all have the same rights.”

H.R. Network’s efforts continue to be needed – an example from India

Sri Lankan surgeon and member of the network’s Executive Committee Arjuna Aluwihare provided an introduction to the case of Binayak Sen, an unjustly imprisoned medical doctor in Raipur, Chhattisgarh State, India. [Aluwihare, in the company of NAS member and Nobel Laureate Robert Curl and H.R. Network Executive Director Carol Corillon, undertook a private mission to the region in late 2008 to visit Dr. Sen in prison, meet government officials involved in the case, as well as scientific colleagues, and visit Dr. Sen’s clinic.] Aluwihare described the enormous mineral wealth and dense teak forests in the young State, the forced displacement without compensation of the indigenous peoples (adivasis) living in these regions, and how they are caught in the middle of fighting among the state militias, vigilante groups (Salwa Judum), and Maoist rebels as a result of which they are often injured and sometimes killed.

“There are huge aluminum companies that may be indirectly contributing to the fact that a social-rights activist such as Dr. Sen is kept in prison, totally unjustly, merely because he is speaking, in a nonviolent manner, about the injustices that go on.” Aluwihare said that people like Dr. Sen, who go into these areas, are not only socially active and critical of the killing that goes on in the name of development or government control of Maoists but also put in a lot of effort and their life’s work to develop the people who are being displaced. Dr. Sen and others like him have helped the displaced with construction, to foster the establishment of places where the children are looked after and to set up clinics, as Dr. Sen has done, in which, at relatively low cost, health needs can be met and medicines used which are effective, but not necessarily proprietary or very expensive.

Dr. Sen’s wife Ilina Sen, who is dean of the School of Culture at the Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University at Warda, spoke about the generally pitiful situation of the indigenous people in Chhattisgarh State, the lack of independence of the judiciary there, and the plight of her husband, Binayak Sen, who had been unjustly imprisoned by the State for more than two years.

Ilina Sen described how Binayak’s human rights work began. Confronted with hunger deaths of indigenous peoples, he supported—with information and statistics—a Supreme Court case brought by an NGO requesting that grain stocks be released to the people through antipoverty or food-aid programs. Although the case is still in court, grain has now been made available, particularly to children in schools throughout the country.

Ilina Sen also questioned many of the land acquisitions of indigenous people taking place in Chhattisgarh. Although their lands are constitutionally protected, as local companies and multi-nationals acquired land, the district and state administrations often

became their partners. The indigenous people “felt that it was their country, their government, their state, their village, and that they deserved a more sympathetic hearing.”

Binayak, who had become the state secretary of the People’s Union for Civil Liberties, publicly opposed the land acquisitions which had led to the displacement of more than 640 villages. “People were taken to camps, where they had no livelihood, no health care, and no education—extremely dangerous conditions. At the end of 2005, Binayak protested their plight, and he drew the attention of human rights organizations across India to what was happening. The first human rights investigation into the Salwa Judum took place at his insistence. I think from that time, he was a marked person,” she said.

“The ordeal that we have gone through for the last two years really began with [Binayak’s] arrest. The police in the state of Chhattisgarh have also received huge funding for the anti-Maoist operations. So it was the kind of situation where a very small group of people was voicing the concerns of the many indigenous communities that were being dispossessed and marginalized, and it was the might of the state which stood in the way. Ultimately, a case was fabricated against Binayak by the police. Because he visited prisoners in jail, including Maoist prisoners, the case that was made against him claimed that he was smuggling letters from the Maoist prisoners in jail to those outside, and that his actions had led to an increase in Maoist violence, so, in a sense, he was an aider and abettor of Maoist terrorism.”

Irina Sen was told by the session chairman that her husband’s case was considered the most important of the H.R. Network and that constructive interventions by the network would be considered the following day during the workshops.

Talks by Speakers Invited by the Moroccan Academy

Protecting human rights in Morocco

Noting that “scientists are in the best-suited position to protect and defend human rights for the prosperity and well-being of present and future generations,” Minister-Secretary General of the Moroccan government and long-standing Moroccan academy representative to the H.R. Network Driss Dahak reviewed scientific discoveries and presented his personal views of tensions between scientific advancement and human rights, specifically mentioning therapeutic cloning and stem cells, modern telecommunications and right to information, genetic manipulation and food production, creationism and evolution. “How can we protect human rights at the same time as we continue advancing in these sciences”? he asked.

Saying that the H.R. Network’s role in monitoring human rights and in advancing science “is crucial,” he urged the network’s members to strike a balance between the advancement of science and the protection of human rights and to ensure that scientific development promotes the development of human well-being. “I believe that it behooves us all to ensure that this is realized. We are, in fact, the best place to contribute effectively and profoundly in protecting and upholding human rights at all levels, especially at the international level.”

The evolution of human rights in Morocco

Ahmed Harzanni, president of the Advisory Council on Human Rights of Morocco, was selected by the Moroccan academy to give the Keynote Address—*The Evolution of Human Rights in Morocco and the Science that Helped Make it Possible*. Harzanni described the links that exist between science and human rights in everyday life, both from the point of “method” and “philosophy.” He advocated a more humble humanism and spoke about the reconciliation and restitution program in Morocco as an example. He noted that this program made use of history, sociology, anthropology, law, medicine, information technology, documentation, computer science, elementary mathematics, psychology, social sciences, forensic medicine, physical anthropology, and genetic analysis. “In the Moroccan experience, as in, certainly, other experiences as well, the link between human rights and science is a very strong link.”

Harzanni said that individual and collective victims have adhered to the process of reconciliation; they have expressed their views and continue to do so, freely. He said that “the truth has been elucidated in most cases, and in-depth reform of justice is expected. . . . An area of social dialect which is inclusive will emerge in the near future. . . . I do not intend to praise the Moroccan experience in the field of reconciliation and promotion of human rights. If it was able to do so more or less successfully, that was because, in substance, scientific activity and promotion of human rights obey one single ethic—the ethic of rigor and humility.”

Science, human rights, and religion: a Muslim perspective

Ahmed Abbadi, the secretary-general of the Mohammedan League of Scholars and professor of comparative religion and Islamic thought at Qadi Ayyad University in Marrakech, spoke first of human rights and science and secondly of human rights and religion. He claimed that “all the debates over the universality of international human rights and its norms are too constrained.” He said that the three most popular theories in the universality debate are universalism (untenable), strict cultural relativism (unsatisfactory), and moderate cultural relativism (dangerous neocolonialist implications). He expounded on a theory of “reverse moderate relativism” [a theory developed by Jason G. Morgan-Foster, University of Michigan; see *Reverse Moderate Relativism Applied: Third Generation International Human Rights from an Islamic Perspective*.] Abbadi explained that the theory seeks “to develop a core set of shared rights concepts across cultures, but does so in reverse, beginning with the legal systems as the neutral benchmark locally.” He spoke of “solidarity rights,” calling them third generation rights—right to development, healthy ecology, and peace—all of which are related to science. “So,” Abbadi said, “science can be of service in a very functional way, yoked to human rights.” Abbadi said that an inherent component within those rights is duty.

He spoke of “categorization of duties,” individual duties, collective duties, and “dosage of duties.” In ending he said that humans realize “that we are one extended family and we should strive jointly, in a functional manner, to be living on a globe where the rights are provided to all humans, and when all humans do feel that they have duties regarding those rights.”

Islamic law and universal standards: women's rights in Morocco

Rahma Bourqia began her talk by saying that the “question of whether the universal standards could meet Islamic law when it comes to women’s rights” is misleading. In 2003 Morocco began, through a careful, lengthy, scholarly, and inclusive process, to reform family law. The reform “led to a radical change in the family law.” She stressed that Islamic law is not the only thing that matters in meeting universal standards; social, cultural and political practices matter too. She said that there was a realization that to make reforms, it was necessary to make “a paradigm shift from the patriarchal system to an egalitarian system when it comes to gender relations.” She also noted that “Universal values and standards were introduced in the new reform” and said that “the challenge for Muslim society is how to remain a good Muslim and at the same time, embrace modernity.”

Bourqia explained that four factors led to reform—change in Moroccan society itself, the role played by women and the women’s movement advocating for universal standards and values, academic knowledge, and political will of the King in managing Islamic heritage and interpretation of religion. “We have to make a difference between the values carried by Islam as an ideal and the interpretation given to the social relationship between men and women,” she said. “The scholarship and the intellectual activities carried out by researchers in different fields—in Islamic studies, sociology, anthropology and history—have sustained the movement to reform the family law and have contributed in advancing gender equality.”

Talks Given by Speakers Invited by the Network

Human rights and the rule of law

Netherlands Council of State Judge and network Executive Committee member Pieter van Dijk spoke of human rights problems created after the September 11, 2001, tragedy and how some of the measures taken by the United States and the United Kingdom in response weakened and, in some cases, set aside guarantees of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights. He noted that, in both instances, such misguided rules were reversed or mitigated by courageous judicial review.

Van Dijk spoke of the necessity of authorities to act within the law and in conformity with human rights treaties, but he also acknowledged the need, on some occasions, to set limitations on human rights, but within the conditions on which they may be justified. Proportionality, guarantees against the misuse of power, and speedy and effective international supervision all serve as safeguards. The dilemma of balancing security and human rights has to be achieved by striking a balance between the different human rights at stake. Without certain temporal restrictions of human rights, threats cannot be effectively fought against and, if not stopped or prevented, will or may restrict these rights and freedoms even further, he said. Terrorism is sometimes given a definition without giving due consideration to the conditions of oppressing social needs and proportionality.

“The very concept of human rights implies a balancing between freedoms and responsibility, between rights and duties, between individual interests and the general

interest, and between one's own rights and those of others. A general attitude of tolerance does not clear the way to terrorism, but, on the contrary, takes away [its] main causes." "On the one hand, scholars and scientists have the power to manipulate reality, create wrong impressions, and provoke unjustified reactions. But on the other hand, they may effectively contribute to prevention and suppression of prejudice and intolerance."

Science and Human Rights in Times of Crisis (panel discussion)

Ahmed Esa from Somaliland, Christopher Magadza from Zimbabwe and Yousef Najajreh from Palestine participated in this panel discussion, led by Abdallah S. Daar, Canadian professor of public health sciences and surgery at the University of Toronto.

Esa told of attending a scientific conference in 1992 at the University of Harare in Zimbabwe. "The university was well run. The medical school was working very well. There was a disease-control laboratory that was also functioning. At that time, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe was less than 1 percent. Today, with all the problems that Zimbabwe has, the prevalence of HIV is above 25 percent. That's the sort of problem that you have when institutions don't work." He said that practical problems destroy institutional controls. "Normally, such controls are not fatal, but when you are talking about science, whether you are a structural engineer trying to build structures according to normal norms and standards or whether you are a public health officer trying to run surveys for the control of disease, you cannot do your work halfway."

Esa also mentioned the problem of brain-drain which, he said, is "pervasive in times of crisis and conflict." "We lose our ability to generate new scientists, new scholars. . . . We lose three or four generations in the process of trying to resolve the political crisis." Lastly, he spoke about a problem with potential grave repercussions—the production in times of crisis of false medicines.

Magadza, an emeritus professor of freshwater biology at the University of Zimbabwe, provided details on the terrible state of his university today. He said that "in the mid-1980's, it was ranked among the top five universities in Africa—in fact, third, after the University of Witwatersrand in Cape Town." But, by the year 2000, "it was among the first 50 universities in Africa, and now it has gone off the radar screen altogether." He said, "we used to train medical graduates, who were highly sought after, not just in Africa, but around the world. Now we produce doctors who fail to diagnose malaria and who treat it with antibiotics." He described non-existent university salaries, the inability of professors to get to work because of lack of transportation and money for gasoline, complete deterioration of university facilities, lack of communication, and the dangers of the deteriorating quality of water treatment supplying the city of Harare. He said that two years ago he had predicted the risk of a cholera outbreak in Harare if the water supply were not properly treated. The water was not treated, and the cholera which he had predicted broke out and quickly became a sub-regional problem, affecting South Africa, Malawi, and, in fact, southern Africa as a whole, he said.

Najajreh, a medical chemist who runs a cancer research lab at Al-Quds University, East Jerusalem, said that it is not so much scientific research that is threatened at Al-Quds but all of academic life by a whole variety of actions. He spoke about financial instability. "I am coming from a university where for the last three years we are paid less

than 80 percent of our own salary.” The diplomas of students who graduate from Al-Quds University are not recognized. Palestinian students from the West Bank and Gaza are not permitted to travel to the Al-Quds campus in East Jerusalem. Two years ago, an internal fight between Palestinians broke out, and students were not permitted to leave Gaza—some have not been allowed to leave since then, he said.

He described an internal fight between the Palestinians themselves in Gaza that damaged some of the university buildings and then the total destruction of the faculty of science and engineering by Israeli missiles. “The Faculty of Public Health of Al-Quds University was also attacked, under the accusation that they were serving or used by what Israelis are calling terrorists.” There is no national budget for scientific research. The infrastructure for scientific research discussions is unavailable, and what is available is very basic, with limitations and restrictions on movement of academics and researchers for field studies. The obstacles to purchasing chemical and biological reagents are huge.

He quoted President of Al-Quds University Sari Nusseibeh, who has said “doing scientific research under such conditions is like doing miracles.” Despite all of the problems, Najajreh said, “we have some shining spots” that you will hear later today. “All should be done in order not to turn them off, but to enlarge those promising shining spots.”

Israeli-Palestinian Science Organization (IPSO) (panel discussion)

This panel discussion was moderated by French physicist and Nobel Laureate Claude Cohen-Tannoudji. Discussants were Amiram Goldblum, Israel; Jamal Mahajna, Palestinian living in Israel; Mukhles Sowwan, Palestine; and Danny Porath, Israel.

Cohen-Tannoudji, a member of IPSO’s International Scientific Council, introduced the panel, saying “We heard the testimonial of Professor Yousef Najajreh, who depicted the difficulties faced by Palestinian academics in working and also in simply getting around their country. This afternoon we will look at a more hopeful situation involving various experiences in which scientists have been able to work together on joint scientific research and to engage in dialogue and to better understand each other.” He noted that the first call for proposals resulted in 75 requests from Israeli and Palestinian scientists interested in working together on joint research. Unfortunately, we were not able to fund all of these projects, due to the lack of funds, he said. Nine proposals have been funded so far. Two will be presented today—one on leukemia and one on nanotechnology.

Professor Amiram Goldblum of Hebrew University told of the leukemia research that he is doing with Palestinian Yousef Najajreh (who spoke earlier about times of crisis and who is at Al-Quds University) and Jamal Mahajna, a Palestinian living in Israel. Goldblum told of numerous meetings in offices, over the phone, in email messages and outside of Israel. Together, the three of them are trying to develop novel drugs against chronic myeloid leukemia. Goldblum’s group devises *in silico* design of molecules by algorithms. Then, Najajreh synthesizes the chemicals in his lab at Al Quds University and, finally, Mahajna tests them in his *in vitro* systems at his lab in the North of Israel. Mahajna went on to describe leukemia—how their work has such relevance and the problems caused by acquired resistance. The group’s original cooperation was

extended to include a German colleague who is responsible for testing the compounds in animals.

Danny Porath led the discussion on scientific cooperation in nanotechnology, characterizing his cooperation with Mukhles Sowwan, a Palestinian, as “collaboration between two friends who concentrate on trying to do good science together and enjoy it, despite some environmental difficulties.” He told how Sowwan’s Ph.D. thesis, which he wrote at Hebrew University, was published in *Nature Materials* as a cover story, but, nevertheless, Porath encountered concern from some of the Israeli scientists in his lab when he wanted to bring Sowwan into their team. “He joined the group and he did very well on the scientific side, but, much more important, he became a friend of all of us.” “He ceased to be the Palestinian working with the Israelis and became simply Mukhles.” After establishing his own lab at Al-Quds University, Porath said Sowwan got a lot of help from Hebrew University, but “then, after some incubation period of joint work in and with the help of IPSO supported Porath lab, he stood on his feet and very impressively did new types of experiments and got new equipment.” “His success is fascinating.” He is now working mostly in an independent manner while maintaining a high scientific level of excellence, including publication of articles in prestigious journals. Porath said that he and Sowwan are “trying to . . . miniaturize the current microelectronics devices into small transistors” in several different ways, which he described.

Sowwan said how much “Palestinians want to participate in the coming revolution of nanotechnology” and related the progress made, including many good papers in prestigious scientific journals and filing for patents, since he established the first nanotechnology lab in Palestine in 2006, with generous grants from IPSO and the German Research Foundation. “We are successful, if we compare ourselves to other labs around the world.” He explained that his lab is now working independently on other projects with scientists around the world, in particular a project “about bioorganic nanoparticles, nanodevices, and drug-delivery systems.” Sowwan explained that nanoparticles are very small so “you need atomic-force microscopes, scanning electron tunneling microscopes, which are expensive tools. Luckily, we got them through the grants that we got from IPSO and the German Research Foundation.” He described the work that they now know how to do and said that “recently, Intel, the giant semiconductor company is interested in my work, and they have promised us support.” All five researchers thanked the many International Scientific Council members of IPSO for the generous start-up funding they had received and thanked the H.R. Network for gaining the endorsement of IPSO from many national academies.

With regard to rights issues, Goldblum mentioned rising racism on both sides and his fear of “the contribution of religious extremism by some groups on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides to the violence and to the bloodshed.” Mahajna mentioned that although he is Israeli, “the Palestinian people living inside Israel suffer a great deal of discrimination.” Porath said that the “trend for financial support of joint Israeli-Palestinian collaboration has severely declined the last years, even before the economic crisis . . . but more so after it.” He asked the meeting participants to seek ways to promote financial and other support for Palestinian-Israeli cooperation in particular and scientific collaboration in conflict areas in general. He said that “the language of science is a fantastic one. It is a language of facts and it is spoken in the same way everywhere.” Sowwan said that what motivates him is “the hope in the eyes of my students. It’s very important to them to feel that they have the opportunity to do as high

a level of scientific research as they can do in the Israeli universities or at Harvard or Cambridge or other universities all over the world.”

When Galileo meets Allah

Faouzia Charfi, professor emeritus of physics at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Tunis, spoke of her concerns about “the intrusion of religion in science,” pointing out that through this is not something new, “it has become . . . increasingly strong, with the increase in influence of religious groups.” She cited the theory of evolution as an example of “scientific theories that are considered to be incompatible with religious views.”

She decried the “indoctrination” of “an increasing number of Muslims who fall prey to the influence of television and radio run by Islamists.” She said that, “as a professor at the University of Tunis, I witnessed firsthand this expansion and this increase in influence of extremist movements.” As an example, she told of teaching Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, which in the past had not been objected to, but now, because extremists claim that the speed of light cannot be infinite, her students tell her they have read that the theory is wrong; just as Ronald Reagan had claimed that evolution was “mere scientific theory.” Over the years in the United States, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and John McCain supported the teaching of creationist theories in public schools. She spoke of the introduction of creationist theories in Turkey after the 1980 coup, when there were discussions of introducing “creationist theories as an alternative to evolutionary theories in science education.”

Charfi advocated educating youth on the history of science and religion and that scientists “regain the sphere of education, a sphere that has been kidnapped by fundamentalists.”

Max Perutz Memorial Lecture

Introduction: Remembering Max Perutz

Carol Corillon, Executive Director of the H.R. Network, worked closely for nine years with Perutz, one of the four founding members of the H.R. Network. [The other three were Nobel Laureates François Jacob and Torsten Wiesel and Netherlands Council of State members Pieter van Dijk.] She told of Perutz’s work in hemoglobin crystals at Cambridge University and how he was interned as a citizen of Austria by the British government during World War II, despite that he was a Jew. She said that the “same determination that brought him the Nobel Prize distinguished him as a true defender of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

She then described their correspondence, his all written in longhand. In his letters “he was passionate about life, compassionate about his fellow man, and full of fascinating and often humorous stories,” she said. On December 23, 2001, Perutz wrote to say he was enormously pleased because he had solved the structure of the protein fibers that make up the plaques in the brain of Alzheimers’ patients, but he also wrote that he had a rare cancer, and all attempts to contain it had failed. She then described her last visit with him, two weeks before he died.

Darwin and Lincoln: their legacy of human dignity

Felton Earls spoke of the 2009 bicentennial celebration of Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln and noted that “despite the differences in origins of Darwin and Lincoln, there were captivating similarities in their life courses.” He reviewed these similarities but stressed that his remarks would “dwell on the significance of the ideas of Darwin and Lincoln in forging the modern interpretation of human rights.”

“It becomes not just an intriguing coincidence, but a stunning one, that the man who freed our minds to think of ourselves as a variety of equals was born on the same day as the man who, more than anyone else in the United States’ history, established the legal basis for human equality.”

Earls reviewed the context in which the two men worked and viewed their achievements “through the prism of the historical period in which they lived;” he related how his own story as a scientist, doctor, and activist had been informed and guided by them; and he then asked the audience to imagine, along with him, “what noble causes and courageous actions the darwins and lincolns born on this day, May 24, 2009, might assume as they face the moral challenges of the next 100 years.”

In discussing Darwin’s legacy, Earls said that “Darwin took strong exception to the idea that the mental faculties of modern man were subject to natural selection and that this justified unequal treatment based on superficial features of physiognomy. The evidence compiled and carefully weighed in the *Descent* [***Descent of Man and Selection by Means of Sex (1871)***] is meant to discard this “polygenist” theory once and for all.”

Lincoln’s legacy “was to correct, while at the same time preserve, the Constitution of the United States.” Earls pointed out that “before the Civil War, reference to the United States was made as, the States are, while after the Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation, the United States is referred to in the singular, is. Similarly, as Americans, we now refer to ourselves as one people, not as owners and as property.”

Earls then talked about his “own life course as an African-American,” in part motivated “in response to this moment in history. The world is witnessing the ascendancy of Barak Obama to the presidency of the United States with a sense of amazement and great anticipation. It is a moment when we dare feel an ounce of compensation for the assassinations of Lincoln and King and the countless others who have sacrificed their lives in the struggle for racial equality in the United States.”

Earls ended his lecture by quoting Eleanor Roosevelt. “Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”