



NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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THE NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (NCHR) is a multi-disciplinary research centre under the faculty of Law of the University of Oslo. Its staff of approximately 15 researches focuses on a wide range of issues connected to human rights: legal aspects, normative foundations, and the political, social, economic and cultural contexts. Research activity is organised partly in discipline-oriented groups (law, social sciences, arts & humanities), and partly in multi-disciplinary programmes.

The essential difference between the Norwegian Centre for Human rights and non-governmental organizations like Amnesty, the Helsinki Committee or Human Rights Watch is that according to the director Geir Ulfstein that: "... the standpoints being expressed by the members of the centre are based on research."

The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights conducts a range of educational programmes, primarily at the University of Oslo: 1) International two-year degree programme, "Master of Philosophy in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights" (in English), 2) Elective subject "International Human Rights" (in Norwegian), 3) Further Education, including: a) courses on human rights and democratisation, together with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), b) regular courses in human rights for teacher-training personnel. The NCHR is currently working to expand its programme in Further Education.

ON THE 21ST OF SEPTEMBER 2001, a Royal Decree was issued which ensured the status of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights as a national human rights institution according to the Paris Principles of the United Nations, and as a follow-up of Norway's obligations under the UN General Assembly Resolution 48/134 of 20th December 1993. As a National Institution, the NCHR shall: a) conduct its own independent research, b) work together with other research communities, c) promote greater awareness of and compliance with international human rights norms in Norway, d) provide recommendations, training and information on all aspects of human rights, e) make its voice heard in the debate on human rights in Norway. The Centre may focus on particular issues, but according to Ulfstein does not take single cases: "We do not take single cases and follow them up, we just offer general advice on how individuals may secure their rights"

Through its own research as well as through agreements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORAD, the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights is engaged in projects aimed at strengthening the human rights, in Norwegian development assistance and in international cooperation. These projects cover a broad geographical and thematic range, and serve to strengthen Norwegian expertise in many fields. The NCHR currently has the



following programmes: *The "China and the Rule of Law" Programme, The Indonesia Programme, and The South Africa Programme.*

ANOTHER IMPORTANT RESOURCE of the centre is NORDEM Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights that 1) provides qualified personnel for international assignments, promoting democracy and respect for human rights, 2) recruits experts to intergovernmental organisations, 3) meets the expressed need for rapid deployment of qualified and trained people in targeted areas, 4) covers a wide range of areas, including elections, human rights monitoring, independent judiciary, media, local governance and democratic institutions. NORDEM mobilises and upgrades Norwegian human resources for quick and effective international intervention for the benefit of democracy and human rights. It initialises relevant studies in cooperation with researches at the NCHR and the broader research community. It recruits experts to intergovernmental organisations as the UN, OSCE, OAS, and EU.

NORDEM Resource Base consists of experts covering a broad range of areas including elections, democratic institutions, constitutional guarantees, independent judiciary, media, local administration and human rights education. Approximately 200 individuals are included in the NORDEM Resource Base identified through network recruitment. These people provide an important part of the NORDEM services ranging from fieldwork to consultancy.

NORDEM Stand-by Force is based on expressed needs abroad for rapid deployment of qualified and trained people. It is a co-operative project of the NCHR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The NCHR is professionally responsible in terms of assessments, reports, training, and briefing and debriefing. The NRC carries administrative responsibility, which includes bud-getting, accounting and practical arrangements for deployment. The Stand-by Force now includes 200 members within the above-mentioned categories ready to take on international assignments of 6 months' duration on short notice. A report is produced upon the completion of each assignment. Most reports are published as NORDEM Reports electronically and on paper.

WHAT MAKES NCHR UNIQUE in its social function is according to Ulfstein that: "Beside having a traditional task of research and teaching the roles as a National Institution for human rights and the human rights programmes in developing countries mean that we have a responsibility to monitor and promote human rights both in Norway and internationally, a task that no other university department ever had before."