



**HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS RISING AND EDUCATION PROJECT:  
MEDAC Human Rights Summer Course in Malta 2014**

Sarajevo, September 2014.

## ■ Introduction

Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) was engaged in “Human Rights Awareness Rising and Education Project: Selection and participation of representatives from B&H to MEDAC Human Rights Summer School in Malta” in cooperation with the Embassy of Switzerland in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2008. For the seventh year, Embassy of Switzerland provided financial support and granted full scholarships for candidates from Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate at the summer training course in Malta on human rights, identities and gender.

## ■ Goals and Objectives

- Offer a possibility to young persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina actively engaged in human rights issues to attend this high quality course, develop new connections, and apply the knowledge and skills in their future work in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Stimulate interest for human rights matters among the youth and future leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## ■ Project Implementation

ADI has received 27 very well filled applications, which proves high interest for participation on this training. After reviewing all the applications and interviewing shortlisted candidates, selection committee

decided to select two best candidates, Ms. Mia Karamehić from Sarajevo and Mr. Emil Balavac from Jablanica. The topic of this year's training was "Human Rights, Faith and Belief" and it was held between June 10<sup>th</sup> and June 18<sup>th</sup> 2014 in Sliema. Scholarship of Embassy of Switzerland fully covered the course fee – accommodation in a 4 star hotel, *per diems* and travel expenses.

## ■ Reports of participants 2014

### ***Report of Mia Karamehić, Sarajevo***



The program began on June 10<sup>th</sup> with an introductory session followed by a two-stage session „Personal Human Rights Stories“ in which the participants shared personal experiences in human rights violations which motivated their interest in the topic and shaped their views on the most important HR infringements in their respective context. The aim of the exercise was to introduce each participant and get a grasp of their background, experience and to achieve group cohesion in the beginning of the programme. The second day brought lectures on the historical and contemporary overview of HR (Omar Grech) and the relation between faith, belief and politics (Richard Rubenstein) followed by an introduction of a unique methodological instrument – using art to express the topics covered by the lectures. Clifton Rooney, a lecturer with a PhD in International Law lead a three day afternoon workshop „Human Rights Through a Visual Lens“ in which the participants created a book of drawings and collages depicting the positive and negative aspects of HR in relation to faith and belief.

The originality of the approach was welcomed by all participants and provided a positive and relaxed environment for dealing with sensitive topics and an array of different worldviews.

Parallel to the art workshop, the morning lectures dealt with topics related to religion such as the relation between law and religion (Omar Grech) and freedom of speech and religion delivered by Martyn Turner, a renowned political cartoonist (in)famous by his cartoons depicting different negative aspects of organised religion.



The debate after Mr. Turner's lecture was quite interesting given the participant's different perceptions of the line between freedom of speech and offense in various cultural and religious settings.



Another interesting presentation was delivered by Sharif Bakr, an Egyptian publisher, who spoke about rights, religion and politics in Egypt focusing mainly on the period during and after the Arab Spring. The lecture was attended by the Egyptian ambassador in Malta HE Magda Baraka who contributed to the discussion with valuable input both from a professional and an academic point of view given that she has studied Sheria Law – the legal framework of Islam also incorporated into

Egypt's legislation. The focus of the discussion were women's rights and participants and lecturers shared concern for the deterioration of women's rights in the post Arab Spring period which are often politically driven as women in Egypt demonstrated significant power during the protests on Tahrir Square in Cairo.

Aside from the lectures, MEDAC staff organised a series of extracurricular activities including the cultural tour of Malta and formal and informal receptions which gave the participants the opportunity to socialise and network with lecturers and guests and further improve their knowledge on topics of their interest.

The second week of the Summer Training Course started with an examination of freedom of belief as a human right (Brice Dickson) through a review of a series of cases brought forth the ECtHR as well as of





hypothetical cases. The lecture was quite engaging and gave the participants the opportunity to concretely link legal norms protecting HR and the practice of the ECtHR.

Professor of International Law and an appointed judge of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, David Attard continued with an introduction to international law which pointed out the differences between domestic and international legal regulation. The afternoon session was a continuation of the unique methodological approach using art to examine the topics at hand – this time through drama and acting. Daniel Mercieca lead the two-day workshop in

which, through a series of exercises in acting, directing and drama, the participants played out different situations where religion and faith interjected personal freedom and rights.

Day eight of the course was, in my personal opinion, the most interesting day in terms of lectures and topics starting with a lecture of Patrick Dodson, an Australian Aborigineese HR activist who provided a grasping lecture on the history of Aborigine rights infringement, persecution and discrimination committed by the state of Australia from the early days of immigration to the present day. Violations against rights of indigenous peoples and social-economic consequences for their communities in Australia were both striking and concerning. Mr. Dodson also delivered a speech at the Australian High Commission in Malta and presented the High Commissioner with a documentary film depicting the struggle of the indigenous communities in Australia. The lecture was attended by diplomats, guests and participants of the MEDAC Summer Training Course.

After Mr Dodson's excellent lecture, Dr. Mejda Mrah gave a comprehensive lecture entitled „Women's Rights and Beliefs“ examining the position of women in early ancient polytheistic religions and cults as well as in monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam). Dr. Mrah's lecture, in my opinion, perfectly captured a crucial aspect of the relationship between faith, belief and human rights portraying the cultural, historical and religious background of negative phenomena such as male chauvinism and misogyny. Following the historical path of emergence, development of dogma and contemporary interpretation of religions, cults and sects, the lecture explored the development of the role of women in societies and different levels of rights and influence women had in their respective communities. From the role of matriarch and deity in the early religions to the disadvantaged position of „necessary evil“ women occupied and, in some monotheistic religions, still occupy today.

The final session featured impressions of the participants and their views of possible improvement. In my view, improvements can be made in the approach to teaching human rights and education since the focus is dominantly on (personal) activism without dealing with institutional approaches (NHRI's, HR curriculum in schools, education of government officials etc.). An institutional approach is of vast importance in light of the context and background of countries the participants come from where, unlike in the EU, human rights do not form a cornerstone of the political system. Overall, the course was exceptionally well organised and executed with an interesting and intellectually stimulating program. A special mention goes to Mrs Audrey Cassar for her efforts and devoted attention to detail making our stay in Malta most agreeable.

## ***Report of Emil Balavac, Jablanica***



The 2014 Summer School was a 15-day school organized by the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies in cooperation with 80:20 – Educating and Acting for a Better World. It was supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It took place in the city of Sliema, Malta from 10 to 18 of June.

This year's topics of the school were human rights, faith and belief. We have first listened and discussed the basics of topics. We, participants, were given opportunity to explore the legal foundations of international human rights treaties

and declarations. Then, in more than 20 sessions we have looked at these topics from different perspectives, trying to find correlations, differences and similarities between human rights, faith and belief and how these impacted each other. Together with a variety of lecturers we have discussed the complex relationship between human rights values and practice and the personal and collective faiths and beliefs. We have shared personal stories and stories of our countries and communities.





Apart from these, we have listened and learned about correlation between law and religion, about cartoons, freedom of expression and their relation with religion and beliefs touching upon the international incidents and diplomatic scandals that shock the public in recent years. Furthermore, apart from history and historical events, topics also covered recent happenings such as Arab Spring (the case of Egypt) and what role politics has when we speak about rights and religion. Then we also discussed about minority rights, women's rights, international law, courts, religious tribunals etc. Important topic also discussed was how to practice human rights, what does it mean and who can do it.

School organizers invited variety of lecturers, from distinguished professors, leaders in the communities, experts from different fields, judges and leaders of international organizations to famous cartoonists. Some of the names include David Attard (director of International maritime law institute and judge at International tribunal for the Law of the sea), Patrick Dodson (leader of the Aborigines people of Australia), Brice Dickson (professor of law at Queen's University of Belfast and former member of Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission),



Susan Hirsch (legal anthropologist and professor at George Mason University), Martyn Turner (famous cartoonist). This variety gave us unique chance to see different perspectives on the same topics, see how life functions in distant and remote societies, learn about different solutions to similar problems and search for common denominator for future.

Variety of methods was used to make knowledge easier to absorb and encourage participants to speak, share, discuss and challenge others. We had lectures, questions and answers sessions, discussions, presentations by lecturers and participants, sharing experiences, and case studies. We were at all times invited to share and ask. We also worked individually and in groups to find possible solutions for different problems. Participants were given space and time to learn from each other, and not only from lecturers. Apart from these methods which can be considered as regular on these types of activities and for these topics, organizers introduced two additional, unusual methods – drama and arts. For most participants this was the first time to use these methods (and their tools) to work on human rights, faith and belief. These were used as a means of exploring human rights issues in relation to faith and belief.

This year school had 13 participants from 10 different countries of the Mediterranean region. Participants of different background (age, sex, religion, nationality, etc.) represented different ministries and other governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations or were advanced students and researchers of law/ political science/ international relations/ education.

This diversity offered a huge learning opportunity and together with variety of lecturers was one of most valuable aspects of the school. Sharing firsthand experience and best practices gave us an insight into daily lives of distant communities and many events we knew about only from media. Organization of a Summer school was very good, from registration to departure. All aspects of the School worked perfectly. Lectures and lecturers perfectly corresponded with the topic of the School. Materials

distributed were relevant and on time, food was diverse and good and the venue was excellent for both, work and socializing. Staff was friendly and very helpful. A certificate of attendance was given to all participants based on participation.



## ■ Participants from B&H in previous years:

1. Amra Mujkić and Anđela Lalović, 2008;
2. Armin Pihljak, 2009;
3. Šemsudin Maljević, 2010;
4. Saša Krivošić, 2011;
5. Nina Šeremet and Nenad Galić, 2012;
6. Larisa Musulin and Enesa Mahmić, 2013;
7. Mia Karamehić and Emil Balavac, 2014.

## ■ Experiences of participants from previous years

While applying for this Summer School my first thought upon seeing the title of the school was - I hope that this will be something on experiencing the other side of human rights and their implementation in real life, not in books. I got more than what I expected. I learned a lot from other participants about their own experiences and things they had to face up within their own societies. Being there for those two weeks has enriched my life in every sense. When you encounter people from different countries, different cultures and societies, you have the opportunity to share and to receive knowledge, to widen your horizons. If before the school you only had two-dimensional glasses for looking at the world after it you have a new pair of three-dimensional glasses offering you a whole new picture. This school is not just about learning and understanding human rights or other cultures but it's also about discovering yourself and realising that you still have got a lot to learn about everything starting from yourself, your

society, other cultures and of course, human rights. That's what I got in the Malta Human Rights Summer School and others will just have to try it in order to understand what I'm talking about.

Anđela Lalović, 2008.

The 'Malta experience' in total was a huge professional and personal enrichment for me. Not only that the overall course was satisfactory in its delivery, with dedicated lecturers and excellent organizers which stirred up the debate - with specific praise that goes to the two main responsible figures: Colm Regan and Omar Grech respectfully - but that interaction with people from different sides of the globe (that participated at the course) amounted to an additional surplus value within the seminar's equation, as it usually is with these type of educational events. The occasion to share experiences with the organizers and hosts, guest lecturers, participants and other people from various different cultural backgrounds opens up broad horizons of discovery and in the end amounts to the very realization of the program's aim in relation to exploring diverse human rights concerns. Moreover, besides expanding ones' professional networking base, people create close friendly ties, as it happened in this case with me. In addition, the full beauty of the Malta's archipelago and the social richness of our daily/nightly events further enhance the positive impression of the whole summer school experience.

Nenad Galić, 2012.

This was a great opportunity for me to learn more about human rights with emphasis on women's rights and gender identities. This school enabled me to see different perspectives on the topic and meet



interesting people. The aim of the school was to bring together participants from Mediterranean countries with the different background and develop discussion on the topics from different perspectives... This was a remarkable and wonderful experience and I hope this project will continue in the future.

Larisa Musulin, 2013.

### ■ Cultural and historical tour of Malta

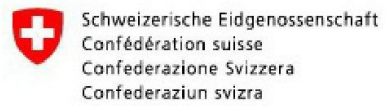


■ **Formal receptions of participants**



Prepared by:  
Association for Democratic Initiatives  
Zmaja od Bosne 8  
Sarajevo  
Tel: 033 262 415, Fax: 033 262 416  
E-mail:  
[snjezana@adi.org.ba](mailto:snjezana@adi.org.ba)  
[bozana@adi.org.ba](mailto:bozana@adi.org.ba)  
[ada.hamidovic@adi.org.ba](mailto:ada.hamidovic@adi.org.ba)  
[www.adi.org.ba](http://www.adi.org.ba)

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