The fight for human rights does not take a summer break: in the Colonia Dignidad/Hartmut Hopp case, our partner lawyer has appealed the decision to close proceedings in Germany; in an open letter on the genocide of the Ovaherero and Nama in Namibia, we called on the German government to finally initiate a dialogue with those affected; furthermore, we actively await a reply from US arms firm Sierra Bullets concerning its possible aiding and abetting of war crimes in Gaza. These and other topics are covered in our June newsletter.

Torture in Syria: Survivors give evidence in Sweden

Syrian torture survivors have given witness testimonies to Sweden’s War Crimes Unit. Together with ECCHR, they submitted a criminal complaint against senior officials of the Assad government.

Factory fire at KiK supplier: Legal aid for plaintiffs refused

The plaintiffs in the case against German retailer KiK applied for legal aid in order to appeal the verdict from January 2019. However, the appeals court rejected their application.

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INTERNATIONAL CRIMES AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Torture in Syria: Swedish War Crimes Unit hears Syrian torture survivors

Swedish prosecution authorities responded promptly to our criminal complaint against torture in Syria. Since April, four of nine Syrian torture survivors involved in the case have given witness evidence to Sweden’s War Crimes Unit. Together with ECCHR, they submitted the first criminal complaint against senior officials of the Assad government in Sweden under the principle of universal jurisdiction in February 2019.

More information

US drone strikes via Ramstein: German government lodges appeal

In March, the Higher Administrative Court in Münster ruled that the German government must take action to ensure that the US respects international law in its use of Ramstein Air Base. In reaching this decision, the court found in favor of the claimants from Yemen, who are supported by ECCHR and Reprieve, on several key aspects. In May, the German government lodged an appeal against this decision. ECCHR will continue to support the claimants in the appeals proceedings.

More information

Germany and Colonia Dignidad: ECCHR partner lawyer appeals against closing of proceedings

In May, a prosecutor in Germany closed investigations into Hartmut Hopp, former doctor of the Colonia Dignidad sect. In 2011, ECCHR, together with affected persons and partner lawyer Petra Schlagenhauf, filed a criminal complaint against Hopp. Schlagenhauf has now appealed against the closing of the proceedings – Germany must address the crimes committed in the German sect in Chile.

More information
KiK case: Appeals court refuses legal aid for plaintiffs

In May, the Higher Regional Court of Hamm rejected the application for legal aid filed by Pakistani plaintiffs in the case against German textile retailer KiK. In January 2019, another court had dismissed the lawsuit, which aimed to clarify KiK’s joint responsibility for fire safety deficiencies at a supplier factory in Pakistan, citing the lapse of the statute of limitations. The plaintiffs had applied for legal aid in order to appeal the verdict.

Arms exports to Saudi Arabia: German Ministry of Finance must not compensate company for export ban

The company Lürssen Werft from Bremen (Germany) filed a lawsuit against the German government. The company, known for building military speed boats, demands it be compensated for financial losses it claims result from the ban on arms exports to Saudi Arabia issued by Germany last November. In an open letter to German Minister of Finance Olaf Scholz, ECCHR presented an analysis of relevant national and international law showing that no compensation, or, at most, only very restricted compensation, should be paid.

Civilians killed in Gaza: ECCHR awaits response from US company

Did Sierra Bullets from Missouri (USA) aid and abet war crimes by the Israeli military? The US company supplied “match bullets” to Israel, whose armed forces used them between March and December 2018 to shoot Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza. According to a UN commission report, the use of live ammunition was unlawful – and could be prosecuted as war crimes or a crime against humanity. In an open letter, ECCHR asked Sierra Bullets for a statement on these allegations.
Award for sea rescuers: ECCHR General Secretary gives speech praising ship’s crew

Refugee supporters like the crew of the German ship Iuventa, which has been rescuing refugees and migrants in the Mediterranean since 2016, are increasingly being criminalized. The awarding of the Paul Grüninger Prize to them in spring 2019 sends a strong signal against this criminalization. In his laudatory speech to the Iuventa crew, Wolfgang Kaleck, ECCHR’s General Secretary and a board member of the Paul Grüninger Stiftung, emphasized the refugee supporters’ commitment to ensuring the “right to have rights” of all people.

More information (in German only)

SUPPORT US

With your donation you can support those affected by human rights violations in their fight for justice.

INSTITUTE FOR LEGAL INTERVENTION

Genocide in Namibia: Open letter to German government

In an open letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and Minister of State Michelle Müntefering, ECCHR, together with partners, has asked the German government to finally enter into a dialogue with the descendants of those affected by the genocide against the Ovaherero and Nama peoples (1904-08). So far, negotiations between the German and Namibian governments to address the genocide and colonial injustices have neither led to solutions nor an official apology.

More information
New videos: Mutua and Nakuta speak on the “Namibia: Week of Justice”

The events held as part of “Namibia: A Week of Justice” from 25 to 29 March were the first of their kind in Namibia. Lawyers, artists, constitutional historians and civil society experts – among them Prof Makau Mutua (University at Buffalo) and Prof John Nakuta (University of Namibia) – came together to discuss ways forward for addressing the past wrongs of the German-Namibian history in a dignified manner.

More information

ECCHR

ECCHR General Secretary is awarded Bassiouni Justice Award

Wolfgang Kaleck, founder and General Secretary of ECCHR, will be awarded the M.C. Bassiouni Justice Award 2019. The prize acknowledges his courageous and vocal objection to the double standards in international criminal law, his efforts in strategic litigation and the founding of ECCHR.

More information

PUBLICATIONS

Wolfgang Kaleck / Andreas Schüller
“Universal Jurisdiction Gains Momentum”, in: FICHL Policy Brief Series 96, May 2019

Carsten Gericke / Vera Wriedt
“(Un-)Recht an der Grenze: Menschenrechtliche Interventionen gegen Push-Backs”, in: Bürgerrechte & Polizei CILIP 118/119, June 2019

Judith Hackmack

Dr Miriam Saage-Maaß
“Jabir et al vs. KiK: Do EU companies have an extraterritorial duty towards suppliers in global production chains?”, in: Cambridge Core Blog, 3 May 2019
Maria Khan
“What are the legal tools for holding corporations to account globally?”, in: Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 27 May 2019

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