

NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Richardson Law Students Weigh in on Global Human Rights Abuses**

Honolulu - Upperclass law students in an international human rights seminar at the William S. Richardson School of Law are attempting to affect change in issues ranging from the treatment of prisoners in Cambodia through the unfair methods of food assistance provided to the poor in Canada to cases of “corrective rape” in South Africa.

Students are taking action including petitioning the United Nations, filing briefs in law cases on the other side of the Pacific, and maneuvering to alter labor laws in areas of the Middle East with the hope of easing discriminatory hiring practices.

Allison Williams, for example, is preparing recommendations she will send to South African delegates at the United Nations to increase their understanding of the practice referred to as “corrective rape” - acts perpetrated against gay women by men determined to change their sexual orientation.

“This is not being tracked now,” said Williams.

Tom Villalon hopes to promote awareness both in the U.S. and internationally to support abolishing the death penalty. “Thirty-three states still have the death penalty,” said Villalon. “I plan to contact key policy makers individually, sending them a memorandum outlining the legal, economic, and social arguments against it.”

Lindsay Larkins will be writing to the Australian prosecutor regarding a current court case of female genital mutilation. “If the courts begin to utilize existing laws to actually criminalize this behavior,” wrote Larkin, “it may make a difference and help eradicate female genital mutilation in areas that openly condemn the practice but do not enforce the laws.”

Meanwhile Spencer Jim On is researching a new legislative effort in Egypt to restrict the activity of human rights groups in that country, while Eliza Browning is looking into ways to encourage the Obama Administration to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These and an additional half dozen concerted efforts to affect change in other areas of human rights abuses are part of a course taught by Professor Tae-Ung Baik, who was himself a “prisoner of conscience” in South Korea in the 1990s.

In 1992 Baik was arrested and charged with violating South Korea's National Security Law because of his leadership of the South Korean Socialist Coalition of Workers. He suffered weeks of interrogation and torture. Because of intervention by Amnesty International, his sentence first of life imprisonment and then of 15 years imprisonment, was reduced to six years and three months. He was freed in 1998.

Baik joined the Richardson School of Law in 2011 after eight years as an assistant law professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada. He also worked a year as a legal research intern and consultant for Human Rights Watch in New York.

"We are very lucky to have persuaded Professor Baik to join our faculty," said Richardson Law School Dean Avi Soifer. "He is a very strong scholar and his deep knowledge of Korean Law combined with his abiding grasp of international human rights make him a major catch for our Law School."

In the next academic year, Professor Baik expects to launch an international human rights "clinic course" at Richardson, enabling students to take even more active positions in fighting human rights abuses globally.

With Baik's encouragement, Hawai'i law students are weighing in on human rights abuses with passion and insight, while taking steps to produce change. "My hope is to see some bigger things grow from this," Baik explained.

**(For interviews with students, Prof. Tae-Ung Baik can be reached at either (808) 956-7838 or [tubaik@hawaii.edu](mailto:tubaik@hawaii.edu).)**