



Report Global Humanitarianism Research Academy (GHRA) 2016

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The 2nd [Global Humanitarianism Research Academy](#) at the Centre for Imperial and Global History, University of Exeter, and the Archives of International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva



[GHRA](#) 2016 at Reed Hall, University of Exeter, 13 July 2016

The GHRA 2016, organized by [FABIAN KLOSE](#) (Leibniz Institute of European History Mainz), [JOHANNES PAULMANN](#) (Leibniz Institute of European History Mainz), and [ANDREW THOMPSON](#) (University of Exeter) in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with support by the German Historical Institute London, took place from July 11 to 22, 2016 at the [University of Exeter](#) and the [Archives of International Committee of the Red Cross](#) in Geneva. The 2016 GHRA had eleven fellows (ten PhD candidates, one Postdoc) who were selected in a highly competitive application process. They came from Austria, Canada, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. They represented a range of disciplinary approaches from

History, International History, Politics, International Relations, and Area Studies. The Research Academy was joined by [STACEY HYND](#) (University of Exeter) and [KATHARINA STORNIG](#) (Leibniz Institute of European History) as well as [JEAN-LUC BLONDEL](#) (formerly of the ICRC) and [MARC-WILLIAM PALEN](#) (University of Exeter).

First Week: On **Day One** recent research and fundamental concepts of global humanitarianism were critically reviewed. Participants discussed crucial texts on the historiography of humanitarianism and human rights. Themes included the historical emergence of humanitarianism since the eighteenth century and the troubled relationship between humanitarianism, human rights, and humanitarian intervention. Further, twentieth century conjunctures of humanitarian aid and the colonial entanglements of human rights were discussed. Finally, recent scholarship on the genealogies of the politics of humanitarian protection and human rights since the 1970s was assessed, also with a view on the challenges for the 21st century. During **Day Two**, participants presented their own Ph.D. and Postdoc projects while getting constructive collective feedback. These projects showcased the richness and variety of research currently undertaken by a new generation of academics who are set to make a critical contribution to the field. They included topics on the Ottoman Red Crescent in the Early Stages of Global Internationalism, 1911-1927 (CEREN AYGÜL); British charities and relief for German civilians during and after the First World War (BEN HOLMES); the development of American and international child labour laws in the 1910s to the 1940s (YUKAKO OTORI); ‘early’ and ‘forced’ marriage in colonial Africa, c. 1926-1962 (RHIAN KEYSE); the Junior Red Cross in a transnational perspective during the first half of the 20th century (ANDRÉE-ANNE PLOURDE); framing ‘the Indian Famine’ and its victims, 1905-1951 (JOANNA SIMONOW); British Quaker voluntary organizations and their participation in relief efforts in Europe following Allied liberation (NERISSE AKSAMIT); medical humanitarianism in the Global South, c. 1940s-1960s (SARAH EHLERS); anticolonial internationalism, c. 1930-1970 (MARK REEVES); ecumenical human rights promotion in the World Council of Churches from the 1940s to the 1970s (BASTIAAN BOUWMAN); the Non-Aligned Movement and humanitarian intervention and human rights (PATRICK QUINTON-BROWN).

In the morning of **Day Three**, the leaders and participants of the GHRA offered the opportunity for individual tutorials. The proceedings continued with a talk by [JEAN-LUC BLONDEL](#) who until his recent retirement headed the Division Archives and Information

Management at the ICRC. He had been an ICRC delegate since 1982 and a former regional delegate in Buenos Aires, special advisor to the ICRC president 2003-2008 and Director of the [International Tracing Service](#) (ITS) at Bad Arolsen in Germany. He presented valuable insights into the ICRC work and policies in the period from 1966-1975 based on his survey of the recently opened material from these years. The afternoon was reserved for the guest lecture by Professor [RICHARD OVERY](#) (University of Exeter), who present a paper on: “To Bomb or Not to Bomb: Morality, Expediency and Necessity of British Bombing Campaign during the Second World War”. The ensuing lively discussion was enriched Professor [ANDREAS GESTRICH](#), the Director of the [German Historical Institute London](#) and a partner in the GHRA. Among the issues discussed were whether liberal states need to retain their value in face of the threat of security and emergency and if they do bomb civilians whether they should be open about this. GHRA fellows pointed out that there were similar debates at the time whether humanitarian should send relief to occupied territories. It seemed further that International Humanitarian Law was a trade-off between military necessity and humanitarianism. How stable could the concept of civilian immunity therefore be? As the bombing was debated and also opposed at the time and the broader question was raised how to get the humanitarian voice heard.

During **Day Four & Five** the GHRA worked on the [Online Atlas on Humanitarianism and Human Rights](#). This is an open access publication by the GHRA participants from successive years.



[Online Atlas on the History of Humanitarianism & Human Rights](#), an open access online publication by the GHRA

The [Online Atlas](#) consists of an interactive world map displaying locations in Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe, where significant events took place and shaped the development of humanitarianism and human rights in a crucial way. The authors define key

terms of both research fields and display the worldwide entanglement of various places across geographical borders and historical epochs. The Online Atlas addresses a broader public. It is a valuable resource for those engaged in the field of humanitarian action and human rights as well as students and academics.

Second Week: After the first week of academic training at the University of Exeter the GHRA 2016 travelled for a week of research training and discussion with ICRC members to the [Archives](#) of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. The **First Day** at Geneva started with an introduction to the public archives and library resources by ICRC staff. MICHÈLE HOU, Deputy Head of Library and Public Archives welcomed the fellows. [DANIEL PALMIERI](#), the Historical Research Officer at the ICRC, and [FABRIZIO BENSI](#), Archivist, explained the development of the holdings, particularly of the recently opened records from 1966–1975. SONIA CRENN introduced the [Library](#) with its encompassing publications on International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights, Humanitarian Action, international conflicts and crises. The ICRC also possesses a superb collection of [photographs and films](#). In the afternoon, the GHRA group started individual research in the ICRC Archives and Library.



Fellows of the GHRA 2016 working in the ICRC Library and Public Archives

On the **Second Day** the participants of the GHRA worked intensively at the archives and library. The staff members assisted them fully in tracing holdings relevant for their individual Ph.D. research. The students discovered the rich material in documents and audio-visual record; some found huge amounts of new material and will certainly return again.

The **Third Day** started with a discussion with [CHARLOTTE LINDSEY-CURTET](#), Director of Communication and Information Management at the ICRC, who in 2001 had produced the topical report [Woman Facing War](#) on the impact of armed conflict on women. She presented the challenges the ICRC is facing in regard to its relations not only with the wider public and the press but also with the parties to conflicts. In the debate with the GHRA participants, it became clear that the long-term relations which the ICRC establishes in regions of crises makes historical knowledge and research highly relevant to humanitarian action today (see report on <https://hhr.hypotheses.org/1389>). The afternoon continued with further research time and with a visit to the [International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum](#).



[Musée international de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge](#), Av. de la Paix 17, Genève

The **Fourth Day** started again with work on individual projects in the archives and continued with a workshop at the University of Geneva. [IRÈNE HERRMANN](#) (Geneva), Professor of Transnational Swiss History, delivered a stimulating paper on the ‘Concepts of Humanitarianism and their Consequences for Academic Research’. The theoretical reflection on the “magnetic concept” of humanitarianism linked the empirical leg of the GHRA week in Geneva perfectly with the discussion of recent research and fundamental concepts of global humanitarianism during the first week in Mainz. The **Fifth Day** was dedicated to a dialogue with [ANGELO GNAEDINGER](#), Director General of the ICRC from 2002 to 2010 and subsequently Executive Director and Senior Advisor for the [Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue](#) in Geneva. In 2014-15, he was appointed at the Swiss Federal

Department of Foreign Affairs as Special Representative of the OSCE-Chairperson-in-Office for the South Caucasus. The former Director General gave a presentation on his early experiences during field assignments on ICRC missions in Israel, Palestine, Southern Africa and Iraq between 1984 and 1988. The discussion with the GHRA fellows focused two fundamental dilemmas. First, how to act in a situation of ongoing violation of international humanitarian law: should the ICRC leave or continue its work? Was there a balance to be found between the principles and the prisoners' interests? Should the ICRC risk becoming an accomplice or abandon victims? Second, when should the ICRC go public about violations? How should the Committee handle confidentiality it needed in order to build a space for open conversation with authorities? What to do when abuse becomes a policy rather than individual breaches? After the discussion, the GHRA concluded with feedback on the past two weeks and the achievement of the Global Humanitarianism Research Academy 2016.

After two intensive and enjoyable weeks in Exeter and Geneva, the GHRA participants had to say good-bye but they will surely stay connected with each other and with the Research Academy. Their continued joint project is the [Online Atlas](#) of the History of Humanitarianism and Human Rights to which they will all submit an entry by the autumn.

The next GHRA will take place in July 2017, its first week this time, like in [2015](#), at the [Leibniz Institute of European History](#) in Mainz and the second week again at the ICRC in Geneva. A Call for Application will be published in September this year on the blog [Humanitarianism & Human Rights](#), the [Imperial & Global Forum](#), and the [GHRA](#) webpage.

