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## Letter from the Editors

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**T**HE RECENT POLITICAL CRISIS IN PAKISTAN illuminates deep-seated problems within the government that have led to a frontal assault on fundamental human rights and the rule of law. Dismissing Supreme Court judges who threatened his controversial re-election in November 2007, General Pervez Musharraf imposed emergency rule over Pakistan, suspended the constitution, and filled the Court with supportive judges to ensure his continued rule. As protests took place, the government cracked down on Pakistani lawyers, and arbitrary arrests and detentions ensued. Although emergency rule has been lifted, elections re-scheduled for February due to the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto were widely expected to be rigged. The *Human Rights Brief* interviews Nadeem Azam, Professor of Law at the Law College at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan, and Director of Pakistan's only human rights studies center, the Human Rights Studies Center at the University of Peshawar, on recent events and the state of human rights in Pakistan.

As hybrid or internationalized courts such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the War Crimes Chamber of Bosnia-Herzegovina produce more international criminal jurisprudence and the International Criminal Court increases its caseload, issues have surfaced highlighting the need for more attention to crucial fair trial rights, such as access to defense counsel and resources. Washington College of Law Professor Richard J. Wilson examines various issues confronting defense counsel in international criminal trials and makes suggestions for future improvements.

The Alien Torts Statute (ATS) case brought by two detained Chinese activists against Yahoo! is an example of a recent trend in human rights litigation in the United States, calling for corporate actors to be held accountable for human rights abuses. Theresa Harris, Director of the International Justice Project at World Organization for Human Rights USA, examines what happens when parties reach settlements in ATS corporate accountability cases through the lens of the Yahoo! case.

The ongoing conflict in Chechnya is continually one of the most underreported human rights crises of today. Ole Solvang explores some of the legal ramifications of a troubling phenomenon for those victims of Russian abuses in Chechnya who attempt to seek redress before the European Court of Human Rights — the Russian government's reticence to provide that Court with official documents necessary to move forward with these human rights cases. Examining two recent cases, Solvang notes that the Court looks unfavorably on Russian non-cooperation, but that this is not always sufficient to implicate Russian forces in the complained of abuses.

Over the past several years, the *Human Rights Brief* has published numerous articles that turn a critical eye on human rights issues connected to the so-called Global War on Terror. In this issue, Ryan J. Vogel takes on another, unique issue in this context. He examines the potential freedom of speech violations raised by the Military Commissions Act's provisions permitting the U.S. government to prosecute persons suspected of providing "material support" to terrorist organizations by questioning exactly what this vague term means.

Although the issue of child soldiers receives a great deal of media attention, the particular role of girls in conflict is less frequently studied. Priya Pillai examines the deficiencies of international law and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs in addressing the unique experiences and needs of female child soldiers. In doing so, she uncovers and discusses some internal inconsistencies of international law prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in conflict.

Finally, the Editors-in-Chief wish to thank the following individuals for their expert advice on the articles in this issue: Jacqueline O'Neill, Maria Pulzetti, Stephen I. Vladeck, and Richard J. Wilson. **HRB**

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