



International Bridges to Justice

Promoting Human Rights Through a Commitment to Criminal Justice

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A Window of Opportunity...

Everyday in countries throughout the world, citizens are arbitrarily detained, tortured, and denied access to a fair trial.

In recent years, countries such as China, Cambodia and Vietnam have demonstrated their commitment to improving their legal systems by signing international conventions and implementing domestic laws to safeguard citizen rights. Unfortunately, many of these new laws remain unenforced due to a lack of trained lawyers, awareness and resources.



*On-site legal advice for ethnic Mongolian Chinese citizens
Liaoning, China December 2003*

Public defenders and legal aid lawyers have made urgent requests for international assistance. Governments have shown their willingness to act. There now exists a unique opportunity to effect lasting change in the legal systems of developing countries.

To Build Fair Criminal Justice Systems in Asia

International Bridges to Justice (IBJ) is a non-profit organization founded specifically to mobilize international efforts to support legal aid organizations and public defenders working to effect change in the practical application of new laws.

A certified U.S. 501(c)(3) public charity, IBJ focuses on the creation and support of just and reliable legal systems, which encourage stable and secure societies.



*Poster Advertising IBJ's December 2005
"Long March to Justice Campaign"*

By Supporting Public Defenders

IBJ develops on-site skills training, delivered by international legal experts, for legal aid lawyers and public defenders. IBJ also supplies support resources, such as reference manuals targeted at the local defender population, regional IBJ Resource Centers and infrastructural assistance for legal aid offices.



*Legal Rights Awareness Campaign
Tibet, China, December 2004*

And Promoting Legal Rights

Working with legal aid organizations, the government, police, government prosecutors and the judiciary, IBJ educates ordinary citizens to increase awareness of their basic legal rights. Hundreds of thousands of posters and brochures, in national and regional languages, have been developed and distributed during annual legal rights awareness campaigns.





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IBJ in China

Recent reforms in China's legal system provide a clear framework for the basic legal rights of Chinese citizens and empower the courts to enforce these rights.

To implement legal aid at a local level, National Legal Aid of China (NLAC) was established under the auspices of the Chinese Ministry of Justice in 1996. Over 3,200 legal aid centers have been set up throughout China to date.

Working closely with the Ministry of Justice, NLAC, and other partners, IBJ has:

- Organized training conferences for 700+ defenders;
- Produced posters and brochures to promote legal rights in Mandarin and other regional languages, such as Tibetan, Mongolian and Yuighur
- Conducted rights awareness days across China;
- Produced a practical "how-to" manual for public defenders;
- Set up a website resource for local Chinese legal aid centers and defense lawyers; and
- Organized roundtable discussions that bring together police, defenders, prosecutors and judges to promote discussion and understanding and break down barriers to change.

Four years ago police stations and courts in China featured banners with large red letters saying:

Confess - Better Treatment; Resist - Harsher Treatment



Legal Aid visits a prison, Gansu province, China, 2003. The old characters on the wall in the background of the photograph read: "Confess - Better Treatment."

Today, IBJ-NLAC posters announce:

If You Are Arrested, Know Your Rights!

...and go on to specify those basic legal rights. This is an example of changes encouraged and supported by IBJ.



IBJ Rights Promotion Poster in Chinese and other regional languages

Resource Centers

IBJ has recently established a National Resource Center in Beijing to coordinate programs on a national level. IBJ is also establishing Regional Resource Centers to conduct training, provide ongoing support to defenders and facilitate roundtable discussions on law implementation between legal aid lawyers, local judges, prosecutors, police and government officials. A pilot Center has already been opened in Anhui province.

The Centers are a safe and neutral meeting place, also housing a library and case investigation tools. The Centers electronically document cases, permitting the tracking and sharing of case histories and precedents across China. Additionally, IBJ mentors individual defenders, guiding them through selected cases.



Chinese legal aid lawyers at work in an IBJ Resource Center.

Minority Criminal Legal Aid Project

One of IBJ's latest initiatives in China is the Minority Criminal Legal Aid Project (MCLAP). Launched in cooperation with the Renmin University of China, the project aims to systematically improve the quality and scope of representation to accused persons in five underdeveloped and underserved ethnic minority regions in China.

The pilot site for MCLAP is in Lijiang City, Yunnan Province. Home to 25 ethnic minorities, Yunnan is China's most diverse province, and also one of its poorest. Many of Yunnan's ethnic minorities live in rural areas, and are isolated, uneducated and ignorant of their rights, making them particularly vulnerable if accused of a crime.

In January 2006, IBJ hosted the "Lijiang Local Criminal Advocacy Skills Training Workshop" to help teach and reinforce pre-trial advocacy and litigation skills to local legal aid attorneys and private criminal defense lawyers, with a special emphasis on meeting the needs of minority clients.



IBJ/Renmin University Lijiang Workshop January 2006





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IBJ in Cambodia

Cambodia's legal system was completely destroyed during the terror of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979). Many judges, prosecutors and lawyers were either executed or died as a result of forced labor, starvation or disease. The legal profession was deeply undermined at every level, and legal professionals were virtually driven into extinction. Consequently, even today—more than 25 years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge—Cambodia continues to suffer from a significant shortage of lawyers and trained legal professionals to provide legal services.

In 1994, a team of international lawyers—including IBJ Founder Karen Tse—arrived in Phnom Penh and trained the first cadre of public defenders to represent Cambodia's poor. After 10 months of instruction and preparation, Legal Aid of Cambodia (LAC) opened the first in-country defender offices to offer professional legal services to the poor in both civil and criminal matters.



IBJ Founder Karen Tse with Cambodian prisoners.

LAC has invited IBJ to join in their important efforts to rebuild Cambodia's legal system, and in September 2005, IBJ partnered with LAC to open a new office in Rattanakiri, a remote province located in north-eastern Cambodia. Many Rattanakiri inhabitants are ethnic minorities who do not speak Khmer and a large majority of the population is illiterate, making them susceptible to rights violations.

Since its opening, the LAC Rattanakiri office has processed over 50 civil and criminal cases, and worked to inform villagers about the permanent availability of legal aid in the province through an innovative "street law" program. Using informal public forums, LAC staff respond to questions from villagers about existing laws and proper legal procedures, reaching hundreds of participants with whom lawyers might not otherwise have a chance to consult. In addition to street law sessions, the LAC Rattanakiri office also engages clients through court appointments, monthly prison visits, and recommendations from NGOs.



LAC Staff meeting with Clients

IBJ in Vietnam

In 1986, the Vietnamese government adopted a policy of "Doi Moi," or renovation, signaling the beginning of its transition from a centrally planned to a market-responsive economy. Foreign legal assistance, particularly in the area of economic legal reform, was enthusiastically welcomed.

The challenge now lies in building a legal environment that moves beyond market reforms to one that enables citizens to exercise their basic constitutional rights.

To help bring about this change, IBJ has instituted the Vietnam Defender Program. Working in conjunction with the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice, the Hanoi Bar Association and the Vietnam Lawyers Association, the program includes the following major components:

- Training conferences for criminal defense lawyers (the first was held in Hanoi in April, 2004 with over 200 defenders being trained over three days);
- Legal rights awareness campaigns to ordinary citizens;
- A practical "how-to" manual for public defenders with accompanying website resources; and
- Resource centers to provide ongoing support to Vietnamese defenders.



IBJ Defender Resource Manual Workshop with Vietnamese Ministry of Justice — Hanoi, Vietnam

Recent News & Events

Over the last year, IBJ's many accomplishments and its contributions towards creating a more just world have been recognized by a variety of sources:

- In April 2006, IBJ Founder and CEO Karen Tse was a featured speaker at the 5th Annual Global Philanthropy Forum in Washington, DC.
- In March 2006, IBJ won the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship, which is bestowed on organizations who "whose work has the potential for large-scale influence on critical challenges of our time."
- During 2005, IBJ and Karen Tse were profiled in several diverse publications, including *Forbes*, *Madame Figaro (Japan)*, *China Youth Daily*, *South China Morning Post (Hong Kong)*, and the *International Herald Tribune*.

Please see www.ibj.org for more information, or to make a donation to help us carry on our important work.

