



August 17, 2011

Center for Justice and International Law to receive the 2011 Dodd Prize in Human Rights

Storrs, Conn—The Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL), a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to the defense and promotion of human rights in the Americas, will receive the 5th Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights on October 3, 2011.

The Dodd Prize, awarded biennially by the University of Connecticut, recognizes individuals or groups who have made significant efforts to advance the cause of international justice and global human rights.

“CEJIL embodies the ideals that the Dodd Prize stands for with their work in utilizing the legal system to bring justice to victims of human rights violations” said Brinley Franklin, Vice Provost for University Libraries.

CEJIL’s vision is that of a fully democratic hemisphere, in which the rights and dignity of all individuals are respected. To work toward this vision, CEJIL utilizes strategic litigation and engages in advocacy efforts before the Inter-American System of Human Rights (IAS) to address a wealth of the region’s most pressing human rights issues, such as gender violence, forced disappearances, torture, and indigenous land rights, among others. In order to have the greatest possible impact, CEJIL litigates emblematic cases, many of which lead to systemic change at the State level and serve as precedents for the region. Two examples of this include the cases of *Maria da Penha v. Brazil* and *Victor Hugo Maciel v. Paraguay*, as IAS decisions led to the creation of legislation regarding gender violence in the former and the revision of legislation regarding the recruitment of child soldiers in the latter.

With offices in Washington, DC, San Jose, Costa Rica, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Buenos Aires, Argentina and 300 partners throughout the region, the reach of CEJIL’s work is vast. In the last five years, CEJIL has litigated over 250 cases before the IAS, representing more than 13,000 victims and securing U.S. \$40 million in reparations. Over the years, CEJIL has emerged as one of the leading organizations working to defend and promote human rights in the hemisphere.

“This year represents the 20th Anniversary of CEJIL, and their development alongside the IAS has made a significant impact in strengthening democracies throughout the Americas” said Samuel Martinez, faculty member in UConn’s Department of Anthropology and nominator of CEJIL. Martinez, who himself has provided an expert affidavit before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in 2005, has seen the benefits of CEJIL’s work through his own fieldwork on the rights struggles of Haitian ancestry people in the Dominican Republic.

The Dodd Prize commemorates the distinguished career in public service of Thomas J. Dodd, who served as Executive Trial Counsel at the Nuremberg Trials, U.S. Representative from 1953 to 1957, and Connecticut Senator from 1959 to 1971. Thomas Dodd dedicated his entire public life to fighting against infringement and suppression of human rights in the United States and abroad.

For more information, please see <http://doddprize.uconn.edu> or contact Jean Nelson at jean.nelson@uconn.edu

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