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High-profile justices from around the globe attend York workshop

It is James Simeon's first year at York in the Atkinson School of Public Policy & Administration, but the former Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada judge has already put the University's philosophy of interdisciplinary research into practice by organizing a research workshop, titled "Critical Issues in International Refugee Law".

Over 30 accomplished academics, researchers, judges and government officials from around the world gathered on campus for the two-day workshop on May 1 and 2.



"The changes in legislation and the introduction and adoption of new measures have complicated the work of refugee law adjudicators in a number of jurisdictions," says Simeon, the principal investigator of the workshop.

These changes include the European Union's Qualification and Procedures Directives. Judges in EU member states will have to address new legislation that incorporates these new directives within their state's legislation. The European Court of Justice will be the final arbiter in any challenges with

respect to these directives, with new legal issues having to be addressed by the judges in the EU. Nonetheless, the 1951 Convention is still in force.

Another development is the establishment of the new African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights with jurisdiction over international treaties and conventions, such as the 1951 Convention. "These developments internationally and domestically were, in essence, the impetus for organizing the workshop," says Simeon.



The workshop sought to identify the most problematic of these issues, to find practical solutions to them and explore the most promising areas for further international collaborative research and development in the field.



The bringing together of academics and practitioners was high on Simeon's mind. "What is unique about this research workshop is the format. Leading academics in the field of international refugee law presented their papers on four substantive issue areas. Each of these papers were critiqued by superior or high judges from around the world. The research workshop provides an opportunity for theory and practice to come together to try to find practical solutions to key areas of international refugee law today."

Some of the high-profile justices in attendance at the workshop were: Justice Tony North from the Federal Court of Australia and the president of International Refugee Law Judges Association; Chief Justice Allan Lutfy, Justice Carolyn Layden-Stevenson and Justice Anne L. Mactavish from the Federal Court of Canada; Justice Albie Sachs from the Constitutional

Court of South Africa; Justice Harald Dorig from the Federal Administrative Court in Germany; Justice Esme Chombo from the High Court of Malawi; Justice Geoffrey Care of the UK Immigration Appeals Tribunal, a High Court judge in Zambia, the founder and first president of the International Association of Refugee Law Judges and chair of Eurasyllum's International Advisory Board; and Juan Osuna, acting chair of the US Board of Immigration Appeals.

A number of distinguished international scholars in the field of international refugee law presented papers, including Professor Guy Goodwin-Gill of Oxford University; Professor Geoff Gilbert of the University of Essex; Professor Kate Jastram of the University of California, Berkeley; and Professor Jane McAdam of the University of New South Wales in Australia.



Above: Attendees of the research workshop: Justice Allan Lutfy (back left), Geoff Gilbert, Osamu Arakaki of Kansai Gaidai University in Japan, Juan Osuna, Anne Mactavish, Carolyn Layden-Stevenson, James Simeon, Guy Goodwin-Gill, Audrey Macklin of the University of Toronto, Tony North, Joseph Rikhof of Justice Canada, Harald Dorig, Jessie Thomson of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Sharryn Aiken of Queen's University, Geoffrey Care, Susan McGrath of York's Centre for Refugee Studies, Jane McAdam, Obiora Okafor of York's Osgoode Hall Law School, and Kate Jastram (front left), York Professor Negriz Canefe, Elspeth Guild of Radboud University Nijmegen in The Netherlands, Susan Davis of the Canadian Council for Israel & Jewish Advocacy, and Esme Chombo.

Simeon admits getting the workshop set up was not easy, but being at York University and getting a helping hand was essential. "Planning and organizing this research workshop has been a tremendous challenge, but I have been very fortunate in getting the support of a number of individuals and organizations at York University who have made all this possible," he says.

For more information about the workshop, visit the [Critical Issues in International Refugee Law](#) Web site.

Submitted to YFile by York political science graduate student Hicham Safieddine.

