



**International Institute for Genocide  
and Human Rights Studies**  
(A Division of the Zoryan Institute)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **198th Student Graduates with the Completion of the 2008 Genocide and Human Rights University Program**

**Toronto, Canada**—The International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (IIGHRS) in a pilot project with the University of Toronto has just completed a two week graduate course for students from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America. The program is an intense and inspiring experience. The students wrestle with the complex human realities of genocide using a multidisciplinary and comparative approach. Many of these graduates go on to studies and careers in the field of genocide studies feeling empowered to make a difference and work towards genocide prevention.

Each case studied in the course sheds light on the recognizable and therefore preventable stages of genocide. At the same time each case of mass human right violations presents challenges we as humanity have to face with this complex political and moral issue. The themes of prevention, reconciliation, and humanization were central to the discussions in the classroom.

Roger Smith, Director of the GHRUP said “I thought this seminar, our seventh, was one of the best we have had; the lecturers were excellent and the students among the most diverse. The main difference between previous students and those in this seminar had to do with how scholarship or action could contribute to the prevention of genocide. The previous group put the emphasis on explanation, the current group on action. Both need to be brought together. My expectation is that in the 2009 seminar we will be able to bring these issues together in creative and productive ways.”

Yoni Levitan, one of this year’s students and the Executive Director of STAND (Students Taking Action Now: Darfur) Canada reflected, “Knowing that there are such committed, capable minds from around the world striving to prevent genocide in their own communities heartened me. It is one thing to be a part of a group of dedicated Canadian youth motivating the Canadian government to lead the world in stopping genocide when it happens. It is another thing all-together to become part of a global network of emerging leaders, each addressing unique academic questions, but all working together to contribute to this sorely needed change.”

The IIGHRS is pleased that this international program also provides a networking opportunity for young scholars committed to



the cause. Maintaining a social and emotional support system is an essential element of sustainability in the field. Another student described the experience, "For two solid weeks we bonded through learning, discussing, listening, laughing and crying together, two dozen people from around the world who still have faith in humanity to mediate conflict in order to prevent genocide and mass violations of human rights."



The new accreditation by a major Canadian university is an important partnership in the evolution of the program. "We are very pleased that the University of Toronto recognizes the uniqueness of this program and its importance in the field of Genocide Studies", says George Shirinian, Executive Director. He continues, "Getting it to agree to participate officially in the GHRUP is something of a testimonial to the academic quality of the program. The University of Toronto is the leading teaching and research institution in

Canada, and one of the top universities in North America. We look forward to a long and fruitful collaboration. "

Current registered U of T students and graduate students from any university in Ontario may receive credit with no additional cost in tuition. In addition, undergraduate students registered at other institutions across the province may make special arrangements for the same privilege.

In summing up his experience in the program, Richard Pilkington remarked, "The two weeks proved to be both highly educational and great fun. Indeed, they have provided me with a much appreciated injection of motivation as I approach my work on comparative genocide. Thank you for all your hard work. Your tremendous effort has proved inspirational, not only to me, but also to many others. Long may it continue."

Details and registration information are available on the program's website, [www.genocidestudies.org](http://www.genocidestudies.org) or by emailing [admin@genocidestudies.org](mailto:admin@genocidestudies.org). The International Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies (A Division of the Zoryan Institute) is dedicated to the study and dissemination of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of genocide in all of its aspects. This is achieved through the GHRUP and publication of *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*, in partnership with the International Association of Genocide Scholars and University of Toronto Press.