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PD Magazine Tackles Human Rights Advocacy [1]

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As the field of public diplomacy expands, there is a great need to engage with the diverse actors who shape the discipline in theory as well as practice. Like any emerging discipline, public diplomacy can be referenced in a number of different publications, but having a forum entirely dedicated to this one subject is immensely beneficial. From its first issue in January 2009, PD Magazine has created such a setting, where a dynamic and innovative discussion of public diplomacy can take place. The magazine's audience is as diverse as the topics covered, allowing intellectual exchanges that extend beyond state, political and socio-economic boundaries.

Such creative freedom risks leading to disarray, but with the publication of the fourth issue of PD Magazine, a clear pattern is emerging in the respective themes being addressed. The yearly publication cycle is divided between an edition that focuses on thematic issues in public diplomacy, and an edition that deals with the theoretical side of the field. This pattern allows for both a scholarly debate on the positioning of the field relative to traditional diplomacy and other areas of international communication, and also gives voice to the numerous creative areas in which public diplomacy is incorporated.

PD Magazine's Summer 2010 issue examines nonstate actors and their efforts to advance the promotion of human rights. When first selected, this theme lent itself to studying the programs presented by large and well-known international human rights organizations. However, inquiring into the world of human rights advocacy quickly uncovered a multitude of small and mid-sized organizations around the world whose work not only covered major topics of human rights violations, but also revealed remarkable innovation and use of public diplomacy tools in an effort to combat such abuses. While there were countless organizations and human rights programs to choose from for this issue, only a small sampling could be represented in the issue. Like many nonstate actors, many of the organizations highlighted do not necessarily consider themselves public diplomacy practitioners, and are therefore not always aware of the public diplomacy power that they wield. Regardless of their self-definition, the initiatives described in this issue offer thought-provoking subjects to further the debate on public diplomacy.

The decision to examine human rights stemmed from the common linkage that the organizations highlight in this issue. Human rights is also a topic which can offer a more nuanced understanding of where public diplomacy is used, as well as those who benefit from its execution. Tackling this issue typically garners nonstate actors the dubious distinction of dealing in low politics, but the importance of the matter demands a space where this view can be explored, challenged and discussed in the hopes of reevaluating what issues are deemed to fall under the distinctions of "high politics" and "low politics." This is an important discussion

for practitioners of public diplomacy, and gives shape to the work being done in the future. Assisting the effort to expand this idea is the main article written by Australian diplomat and professor Geoffrey Wiseman, who describes the interaction of state and nonstate entities engaged in diplomacy. Also included in the lead section is an article by Dr. Dieter Fleck, former Director of International Agreements & Policy at the German Ministry of Defense. Dr. Fleck's piece sheds light on the interconnected nature of conducting public diplomacy and adhering to international legal procedures and principles. These articles establish a broad scholarly framework while the case studies and perspective pieces add additional insights through specific examples.

Among the articles presented is a piece from the International Justice Mission (IJM) in the Perspectives section, which touches on the role of transnational advocacy networks with non-secular mandates. The IJM article raises awareness about the historical importance of human rights organizations sustained on religious principles, and their present role in defending human rights. Programs by burgeoning nonstate organizations targeting support from younger audiences and drawing on new technological tools to disseminate their messages are also highlighted. The organization Invisible Children and the work being done by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Guatemala utilize such social media and audience targeting to raise awareness about particular human rights issues.

Finally, this edition of PD Magazine concludes with an endnote by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Jody Williams, who won the illustrious prize for her work with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. She describes her own experiences advocating human rights issues that have often been considered controversial by the same state actors who speak glowingly of human rights rhetoric, only to retreat when human rights issues begin encroaching on politically sensitive issues. She further notes how civil society has turned to public diplomacy when its calls for change have been ignored in traditional diplomatic channels.

The articles in this issue raise many questions and open doors for debate. The challenges for effecting change on human rights issues are great, but finding all available tools and drawing lessons from past efforts is critical. Please visit http://www.publicdiplomacymagazine.org to read the issue in its entirety, and to interact and exchange comments with other public diplomacy enthusiasts sharing their own experiences.

Tala Mohebi recently received her Master of Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California. She is Editor-in-Chief of PD Magazine, a bi-annual publication that brings together works from scholars and practitioners in the field of public diplomacy.