

CELS Receives the Gruber Justice Prize for its Contributions to the Process of Truth and Justice

The Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) was honored as one of five recipients of the 2011 Gruber Justice Prize. For ten years the Gruber Foundation has awarded grants to individuals and organizations dedicated to human rights issues worldwide. The award recognizes the central role of CELS in denouncing and documenting cases of forced disappearance during the last dictatorship (1976-1983), and its efforts to prosecute those responsible for crimes against humanity. Since the annulment of the impunity laws and the reopening of trials in 2006, there are more than 360 active cases and 1,750 convictions throughout the country.

Horacio Verbitsky, CELS' President, stated, "This award is a tribute to the founders of CELS and to new generations. It encourages us to continue our work on trials for crimes against humanity, and to deepen the struggle for upholding human rights in democracy".

The prize recognizes CELS' historic and current efforts to document human rights violations during the dictatorship, litigate cases, and reopen legal proceedings following the "Due Obedience" and "Full Stop" impunity laws of the 1980s and the presidential pardons of the 1990s. The award also serves as an incentive to convey the Argentine experience from the perspective of a human rights organization. "We hope to share our experience vis-à-vis the search for truth and justice with other nations that have been faced with similar situations," Verbitsky added.

From its founding in 1979, CELS promoted quick and decisive actions to stop gross and systematic human rights violations. It documented state terrorism while providing legal aid and assistance to the families of victims. With the restoration of democracy in 1983, CELS' relationship with the government has combined political advocacy with institutional independence to denounce human rights violations and to bring cases before local and international courts.

The Gruber Foundation recognizes individuals and organizations that have demonstrated courage and commitment in the face of significant obstacles while seeking justice for groups that have suffered political and cultural discrimination. The prize includes an award of \$100,000, and will be accepted by CELS' President during a ceremony in Philadelphia on October 6. The other 2011 prize winners are: Barbara Arnwine, Executive Director of the National Lawyers' Committee, for her work in the defense of gender and racial equality in the United States; Morris Dees, for his work in the promotion of racial equality, especially in the US South; the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), for its promotion and defense of the rights of vulnerable communities in Israel and the occupied territories; and the Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP), which protects the civil and religious freedoms of Kurdish communities in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Russia, and Armenia.