

## U of M professor collects data to track human rights abuses around globe

By Eunice J. Hart Special to The Commercial Appeal

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A University of Memphis professor is using statistics to help prevent genocide in countries around the world.

Dr. David L. Richards, assistant professor of political science at the University of Memphis, is co-director of the nonprofit [CIRI Human Rights Data Project](#), which measures human rights practices by governments in 195 countries.

Policy decisions by the World Bank, United Nations and other government or private organizations are made, in part, using CIRI's annual ratings of countries.

"Countries are sensitive to the ratings we give them, and we have heard from them. We tell them if you want a better score, treat your people better," said Richards, a New Jersey native who came to Memphis three years ago.

But putting a face on human rights can be just as important as hard data.

This week, Richards has brought an international exhibit, "Lessons from Rwanda," to the U of M, where it is on display in the second-floor atrium of the school's administration building through Friday. It was produced by Aegis Trust in partnership with the United Nations.

Using stories and photos, the exhibit chronicles the events before, during and after the 1994 Rwanda genocide, which some estimate killed 800,000 Tutsis.

Richards brought the exhibit to the U of M for one of the first displays at a university in the U.S. It has been on display in Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Canada.

"It's an educational experience on genocide using Rwanda," Richards said.

The exhibit is part of Genocide Awareness Week at the U of M -- sponsored by the school's chapter of Amnesty International -- which has included panel discussions, lectures and film screenings.

Richards, who is the faculty adviser to the chapter, said the week may become an annual event.

CIRI is co-directed by Dr. David Cingranelli, professor of political science at Binghamton University in New York. Cingranelli focuses on democratic freedoms such as electoral self-determination and workers' rights, while Richards' focus is torture,

killings and women's rights.

CIRI codes and measures data from published field reports of organizations such as Amnesty International or the U.S. State Department.

Richards and his graduate research assistants are now tackling another project for CIRI, analyzing violence against women around the world. They began the project in June and expect it to take about two years to finish.

"It's really in-depth training you don't usually get as a grad student," said student Amanda Koppers.

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#### Genocide awareness

The University of Memphis chapter of Amnesty International is sponsoring a series of discussions, film screenings and other events this week as part of Genocide Awareness Week. All events are free and open to the public.

"Lessons from Rwanda," an exhibit produced by the United Nations and Aegis Trust, will remain on display through Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., at the U of M in the second-floor atrium in the administration building.

Today, there is a lecture titled "Lessons from the Holocaust" by Dr. David Patterson, from 3 to 4:30 p.m., in the Panhellenic Building, Room 200.

On Friday, "Words of Survival," a lecture by Sudan genocide survivor Caesar Lomo and featuring Voices of Africa singers, will be held in the Mitchell Hall auditorium, 3 to 5 p.m.

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