

International Conference - Transitional Justice: Cyprus in a Global Context

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Estimates of mass violence and disappearances in Mexico are worrisome. Nevertheless, the notion of transitional justice is not necessarily given a predominant place in universities in the country. It thus remains a subject discussed mainly by those directly affected by mass violence or by the specialists. Students and faculty often say that they have not heard the term “transitional justice”, or that they are not sure of its meaning and less of its connection with their own reality. Furthermore, some resistance has been expressed regarding the introduction of the notion of transitional justice because of its “strong political dimension”.

The lack of knowledge regarding transitional justice, its particular relevance in the contemporary Mexican context, and its rather successful implementation in countries such as Cyprus, inspired the A.G. Leventis-Anáhuac Chair on Cyprus Studies to organize a two-day international conference “Transitional justice: Cyprus in a global context” on September 24-25, 2018 with the aim of introducing this particularly relevant topic at Anáhuac University in Mexico.

The International Conference on transitional justice included a panel with four international and local experts from City, University of London, Wellesley college, MA, Conflict Textiles, Ulster University, Northern Ireland, and Universidad de las Américas Puebla, Mexico. Close to 100 students and university professors attended this panel. Scholars and experts –Iosif Kovras, Roberta Bacic, Marjorie Agosín, Gerardo Rodríguez Sánchez Lara- examined the meaning and scope of transitional justice from disciplines such as political science, poetry and textile art, and in several locations around the world: Cyprus, Chile, and Mexico. Thus showing that it is both a topic of concern at the national and international levels that requires a comparative perspective.

Close to 60 university students, teachers and the general public participated in the inauguration of the exhibition “Transitional Justice – Textile Art” which opened on September 24th at the lobby of the main library. Several university departments and schools –Faculty of Global Studies, Faculty of Humanities, School of Arts, Library- collaborated in the organization of the exhibit. The exhibit stayed open for one month and was visited by close to 1,000 individuals. International Relations students were asked to write an assignment on transitional justice that included a visit to the exhibit and their own interpretation of one of the *arpilleras*.

Olaf Alastair Ronzón Montes, first semester International Relations student at the Faculty of Global Studies, called his essay “Cloth of Truth”. About the *arpillera* “Retorno de los Exiliados”, made by Victoria Días, he wrote: *The sun rises triumphant in the horizon, shedding light on a new Chile, bathing everything that exists inside its borders, from mountains to cities, valleys and towns and even a father, a husband, a man and a mother, a wife, children; it illuminates the forgotten conjugation of letters, darkened and punished for years by terror and death. It is the word family that resonates again in the encounter of the distanced, melancholia and sadness have disappeared when the old word is said, light has given tonalities long disappeared, happiness is what the new day brings.”*

The International Conference on Transitional Justice concluded with a Faculty seminar on September 25th. In this seminar, Professor Iosif Kovras explained why he chose to write a book on this topic and why it was important to address the Cyprus case in a challenging context of territorial and national separation. Professor Juan Espíndola explored the scope of measures such as amnesty while Conflict Textiles' curator Roberta Bacic emphasized the importance of looking at textile language as a complementary way of constructing transitional justice when other practices –such as Truth Commissions- might seem limited. Through the reading of her poetry, professor Marjorie Agosín reminded us of the importance of holding human empathy towards the Others' loss and pain. Agosín also talked about the occurrence of disappearances by the State or other political actors not only in the present, but also in the often forgotten past –during both the Holocaust and Chile's dictatorship. The Faculty seminar then opened an intellectually stimulating discussion among university professors as well as museum professionals and NGO activists.

The two-day journey at Anáhuac University created a new reflective space for the academic community to think and exchange ideas about transitional justice in local and global contexts, as well as from different disciplinary perspectives thus allowing individuals to open their minds and hearts to a complex concept and multi-faceted practice very much needed in our days.



Professor Iosif Kovras, City University of London, presents the case of Cyprus in the International Conference on Transitional Justice. September 24th, 2018, Anáhuac University, Mexico City.



First panel, Transitional Justice: Cyprus in a Global Context: Carlos Camacho Gaos, Director of the Faculty of Global Studies, Anáhuac University; Curator Roberta Bacic, Conflict Textiles; Yael Siman, Head of the A.G. Leventis-Anáhuac Chair on Cyprus Studies; Marjorie Agosín, Wellesley college; Iosif Kovras, City, University of London; Gerardo Rodríguez Sánchez Lara, Universidad de las Américas Puebla. September 24th, 2018, Anáhuac University, Mexico City.



Roberta Bacic, curator of Conflict Textiles, describes an arpilleras to university authorities, professors, students and the general public at the inauguration of the exhibit “Transitional Justice – Textile Art”. September 24th, 2018, Anáhuac University, Mexico City.



Curator Roberta Bacic describes the arpillera *Rescue of Jewish children* to Holocaust survivor of the Lodz ghetto, Bronislaw Zajbert. September 24th, 2018. Anáhuac University, Mexico City.