

Chapter 9

Human Rights of Statisticians and Statistics of Human Rights: Early History of the American Statistical Association’s Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights

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9.1 Introduction

One warm early summer evening in 1986, Doug Samuelson’s wife called him to their kitchen to take a phone call. When he answered, Samuelson got what he later described as “one of the nicest surprises, and overall highlights, of my entire life,” as the caller explained, “This is Victor Kipnis. I’m calling to thank you. I’m in Toronto!”

Kipnis’ release from the Soviet Union was the culmination of several years of effort on behalf of Soviet “refuseniks”—citizens who had been denied permission to emigrate—by the American Statistical Association’s Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights. Samuelson had delivered a paper by Kipnis, Eugene Grechanovsky, and Ilya Pinsker at the 1985 American Statistical Association (ASA) Annual Meetings to help dramatize their situation (Pinsker et al. 1985). The paper, smuggled out of the Soviet Union, represented work these statisticians had done in spite of pressure from the Soviet authorities. At the time of the presentation, Committee members invited those present to sign petitions to Soviet authorities on behalf of the authors. Samuelson also prepared a camera-ready copy of the paper for the proceedings volume.

Readers may find it unremarkable that ASA made such an effort to help Soviet statisticians and that it has a Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights. Yet that committee is a relatively late arrival in ASA’s 165-year history, and it was not established without opposition. In this chapter, the authors, both former chairs of the Committee¹, will describe how and why the Committee was formed in the late 1970s, and how its charge was expanded, again with some difficulty, to cover not only work on behalf of statisticians whose rights are believed to be violated, but also the encouragement of the use of sound statistical methods in monitoring the status of human rights everywhere. We will also deal briefly with attempts, which

¹ Jabine was chair from 1981 to 1984 and Samuelson from 1985 to 1988.

were less successful, to persuade the International Statistical Institute to engage in similar activities. Most of the events we describe took place between 1976 and 1988.

Except for a short paper by [Jabine \(1985a\)](#), documentation of the early days of the Committee is limited, and the authors have had to rely largely on memories of the past. We were aided in this task by reviewers of early drafts, and would like to thank Fred Leone, R. Clifton Bailey, Herbert and Louise Spiner, and Eric Stover for their valuable assistance.

9.2 A Victim of the “Dirty War”

In the mid-1970s, ASA’s Committee on International Relations in Statistics received a grant that enabled it to organize an exchange program with Latin American statistical societies. As part of this program, a delegation of ASA members visited Buenos Aires in May 1976. Carlos Noriega, who was then director of the Argentine national statistical office, was a member of the host committee. Later that year, Noriega left his post. Informal reports from colleagues indicated that he had been forced out because he refused requests from the newly established military government to tamper with official data series. He began a career as an independent professional consultant. He had a short-term assignment in Peru for the UN and UNICEF and was expecting to do additional work for the UN Statistical Office.

Early in February 1977, while on vacation in Mar del Plata with his wife and children, Noriega was detained by persons believed to be agents of the government or members of paramilitary groups. The government never acknowledged that he was in custody. Presumably, he was executed, one of the thousands of victims of Argentina’s “dirty war.”

9.3 Establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee

Fred Leone, who served as Executive Director of ASA from 1973 to 1988, had been instrumental in organizing the exchange program and was a member of the US delegation that visited Buenos Aires. When it became fairly obvious what had happened to Noriega, he was deeply concerned.² In addition, at about that time, the International Statistical Institute (ISI), which would be meeting in December 1979³ in Manila, announced tentative arrangements to accept an invitation by the Argentine government to hold its 1981 session in Buenos Aires. In view of what had happened to Noriega, should there be an attempt to persuade the ISI to choose

² Fred Leone has informed us that the ASA delegation, while in Santiago, had learned that the Chilean government was secretly maintaining a database of “subversives” in the Southern Cone of Latin America and making it available to other countries wishing to take action against those whose names were listed.

³ The ISI meets biennially, in odd-numbered years.

a different site? If such an attempt failed, what official positions, if any, should ASA take about its members' participation in the 1981 session? Leone persuaded ASA's Board of Directors to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights with the mission of determining how ASA might respond to questions arising from abuses of the human rights of fellow professionals.

One source of support for efforts of that kind was the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Several of AAAS's other constituent scientific societies were already active in advocating scientific freedom and human rights, and AAAS had a small staff collecting and disseminating information about scientists whose rights were being abused and assisting societies in preparing and coordinating their responses. R. Clifton Bailey, then serving as ASA's liaison to AAAS, joined in the effort and recommended two possible chairs for ASA's Ad Hoc Committee: Edward W. Barankin, of the University of California, Berkeley, and Dorothy Wellington, of the Environmental Protection Agency. Barankin, in particular, had been one of the first US statisticians to raise concerns about the ISI's planned meeting in Buenos Aires.

ASA's Ad Hoc Committee held its first meeting in August 1979 during ASA's annual meeting in Washington DC, and Ed Barankin was appointed chair. The Committee quickly decided that its first order of business was to propose an ASA response to the ISI's choice of meeting sites. Our recollection is that a majority of the Committee favored an organized boycott of the meeting in Buenos Aires if the situation in Argentina did not change and the ISI did not move the meeting, but no formal vote was taken at the time. Instead, the chair and ASA's Executive Director (Leone) were authorized to do their best to bring about a change in ISI's decision.

9.4 The 1981 International Statistical Institute Session in Buenos Aires

At the 1979 ISI session in Manila, during the organization's business meeting, Fred Leone and Ed Barankin argued unsuccessfully that the planned site of the 1981 session should be changed. Informed of this outcome, the Ad Hoc Committee considered various ways in which ASA might demonstrate its concern for what had happened to Carlos Noriega. Its first recommendation to the ASA Board of Directors was an official boycott of the ISI session. The Board rejected this proposal, with some members being so strongly opposed that they suggested dissolving and reconstituting the Committee. At one meeting, only a strategically timed lunch break, called by Fred Leone, kept this proposal from coming to a vote. Some members of the profession, learning of the controversy through the ASA monthly newsletter (*Amstat News*), wrote letters opposing the Committee's position, urging that science and politics should be kept separate. (Dorothy Wellington remarked dryly, "Now if someone would just convince these governments of that . . .")

Over the next several months, the Committee proposed several other measures to the Board of Directors, e.g., that the ASA would not pay for the travel of any of its members to the ISI session. This proposal was also rejected; however, by a

narrow margin, the Board approved a proposal that the Ad Hoc Committee organize activities before and during the session to show ASA members' concern about the status of Carlos Noriega and Graciela Mellibovsky, another "disappeared" Argentine statistician.

The Ad Hoc Committee was greatly aided in these activities by the Clearinghouse on Science and Human Rights⁴ of AAAS, and in particular by Bruce Kiernan and his successor Eric Stover, project directors for the Clearinghouse. Stover prepared a report, *Scientists and Human Rights in Argentina since 1976* (Stover 1981), which was included in an information packet that was made available to ASA members. The Ad Hoc Committee also drafted a petition, requesting information about the status of Noriega and Mellibovsky, to be presented to Argentine authorities at the time of the session, and circulated it to prospective participants in the session. The information packet and petition were publicized in *Amstat News*.

During the ISI session, interested ISI members met with Argentine human rights leaders (conveniently, the headquarters of a major human rights group was located across the street from the ISI meeting site) and families of disappeared scientists. A group of ISI officials met with the acting minister of interior and requested information on Noriega and Mellibovsky. Copies of the petition were delivered to Argentine authorities and to the newspapers. Surprisingly, the petition, along with the names of several signers, was published in a major Buenos Aires newspaper shortly after the session. Stover attended the session and helped to coordinate these activities. Dorothy Wellington was an active participant.

9.5 Efforts on Behalf of Other Statisticians

Regrettably, these efforts did not help Carlos Noriega or Graciela Mellibovsky. In all probability, Noriega had been executed well before the ISI meeting in Buenos Aires, and later efforts by the ASA's Ad Hoc Committee uncovered strong evidence that Mellibovsky had been executed shortly after she disappeared. But the Committee learned, from the AAAS Clearinghouse on Science and Human Rights and other sources, that there were statisticians in other countries who were apparent victims of human rights abuses. Such individuals included Abram Kagan and Yosif Begun, Soviet statisticians who were being refused permission to emigrate; Samuel Greene, a Liberian statistician who had been arrested in April 1980 following the Samuel Doe coup; and Wen-chen Chen, a professor of statistics at Carnegie-Mellon University and a Taiwanese citizen, who had died under suspicious circumstances during a visit to Taiwan in July 1981. The Committee decided that it would also be appropriate to extend its concern to scientists in disciplines closely related to statistics, one of whom was José Luís Massera, an internationally known Uruguayan mathematician who had been detained by the military government in 1975 and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for alleged subversive activities.

⁴ Later renamed the Science and Human Rights Program.

Gradually, with the help of experienced human rights advocates from the AAAS Clearinghouse, the Ad Hoc Committee developed procedures for actions that could be taken on behalf of these individuals. Specific appeals to a government that it take some action affecting one of these persons required approval of the Board of Directors. Simple requests for information from government authorities about the status of an individual could be submitted by the Committee on its own initiative and, in cases calling for quick action, such inquiries could be initiated by the Committee chair and vice-chair, with the approval of ASA's executive director. We believe that such requests for information did, in some instances, contribute to improvements in the status of the individuals in question. In the case of Samuel Greene, in particular, the Committee eventually heard from Greene himself that he believed the Committee's letter to the Government of Liberia had saved him from execution.

9.6 From Ad Hoc to Continuing Status

With the expansion of “case work” and the identification of other human rights matters of potential interest to statisticians, it soon became clear that there was

Charge of the ASA Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights—May 1982

The committee will concern itself with violations of and threats to the scientific freedom and human rights of statisticians and other scientists throughout the world. The following shall be its functions:

1. To gather factual information about current developments in its areas of concern. This function may include communications with appropriate authorities to inquire about specific cases that come to the committee's attention.
2. To inform the members of the American Statistical Association, through *Amstat News* and by other means, of cases that come to the attention of the committee, inviting response from the membership.
3. To encourage discussion of scientific freedom and human rights matters in meetings of the ASA, its sections and chapters, and other scientific societies, and in publications of these organizations.
4. When deemed appropriate, to recommend to the Board of Directors or the Executive Committee of ASA actions to defend or promote the scientific freedom and human rights of statisticians and other scientists.
5. As directed by the Board of Directors, to implement such actions.

Under no circumstances will the committee or any of its officers or members make any commitment or take any position on behalf of the association or its membership without prior authorization by the Board of Directors.

In carrying out these functions, the committee may avail itself of collaboration with similar groups in other scientific societies, in particular with the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Fig. 9.1 Charge of the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights of the American Statistical Association, 1982

need for a continuing committee⁵ to work on these issues. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee developed a proposed charge for such a committee and, as required by ASA's by-laws, submitted it for approval to the Committee on Committees. That committee was not satisfied with the initial version, raising questions about how the proposed committee would relate to the association and its board of directors, and to what extent it would be making statements on their behalf. The proposed charge was revised, and the new version was approved by the Committee on Committees and subsequently by the Board in May 1982. The original charge of ASA's Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights is shown in Fig. 9.1. The wording of the charge clearly reflects the concern of some of ASA's officers and directors that the Committee not become a "loose cannon," taking potentially controversial positions and actions without prior approval. The final paragraph includes an acknowledgment of the valuable assistance that the Committee had received (and would continue to receive) from the AAAS.

9.7 The Wen-chen Chen Case

The case of Wen-chen Chen brought the Committee's work to the attention of many statisticians for the first time. Morris de Groot, chairman of the Statistics Department at Carnegie Mellon University and a member of the Ad Hoc Committee, had flown to Taiwan shortly after Chen's death, accompanied by a forensic pathologist. Aided by the pathologist's investigation, de Groot was convinced that Chen had been thrown from the staircase where his body was found, rather than having fallen or jumped as the official account claimed. This question had practical importance for Chen's family, because Chen had a life insurance policy from a company based in Taiwan. Based on the official conclusion of "probable suicide," the company refused to pay the claim. Appeals from de Groot and other colleagues of Chen produced no response. Subsequent efforts to persuade the Taiwanese government and courts to open a formal investigation into Chen's death, or simply to rescind the official ruling of suicide, have so far been unsuccessful.

De Groot proposed that the Committee and ASA highlight the situation, in the hope of putting more pressure on the Government of Taiwan to change its position. In the fall of 1982, therefore, the Committee decided to sponsor a session at the 1983 Annual Meetings about Chen's work and what had happened to him. The program for the meetings had already been set, but Ed Bisgyer, the Associate Executive Director of ASA, pointed out that a committee could have a meeting whenever and wherever a room is available and could set and publish any agenda it chose. The Committee chose to announce publicly that its meeting would focus largely on Wen-chen Chen and invited his brother Robert to serve as the main speaker on the topic. The session attracted over 100 people and served as a vehicle for identifying additional ASA members who were interested in human rights issues.

⁵ Now referred to in ASA's by-laws as "current committees." The need for such committees must be reviewed at least once every 7 years by the Board of Directors.

9.8 Cases from the Soviet Union

The years 1982 and 1983 brought several additional Soviet statisticians to the Committee's attention, mostly via AAAS and the Committee of Concerned Scientists, whose human rights advocates were then focusing primarily on Soviet cases. In addition, in 1983, the Committee learned from AAAS that the Soviet Union had reportedly begun revoking academic degrees of Jewish scientists who had applied to emigrate from the country.

The reason for this action, as understood by those who reported it, was that the Soviet constitution guaranteed to all citizens employment appropriate to their education and experience. For those with advanced scientific degrees, virtually all of these jobs involved national security and therefore required clearance. Application to leave the country raised concerns about the applicant's loyalty and hence about the desirability of issuing or continuing clearance. Revoking the academic degree, rendering the individual ineligible for the job, apparently was considered to be a good way to handle the security risk while complying with the constitution.

Since the rationale appeared to be legalistic, the Committee settled on a response emphasizing legal concerns as well as the Soviets' desire to continue scientific exchanges with the West. The letter to Soviet authorities that was drafted by the Committee and approved by the Board pointed out that, for scientific exchanges to continue, it was necessary for US participants to be sure that their counterparts identified as scientists really are what they claim to be. If degrees can be revoked for political reasons, the letter continued, how are we to know that they are not also granted for political reasons? A number of other scientific societies wrote similar letters. While there was no formal response from the Soviet government, AAAS reported a few months later that the revocation of degrees had apparently ceased.

Over the next few years, the Committee took on additional cases from the Soviet Union and expanded its efforts on their behalf. Such efforts included the presentation of Pinsker et al. (1985) and the presentation of two papers, Grechanovsky and Pinsker (1987) and Resnikoff (1987), at the ASA Annual Meetings. Samuelson recalls that preparing the Resnikoff paper for the 1987 proceedings volume was a particular challenge, because "my computer didn't have Symbol font and the guy had used two-thirds of the Greek alphabet in his notation. I had to draw in all those η s and ζ s and φ s and ψ s by hand. Still, I knew I had the easy part of the task."

9.9 Organizing Sessions for Annual Meetings

Encouraged by the response to the Wen-chen Chen meeting in 1983, the Committee decided to do more to make other statisticians aware of human rights issues, both professional and technical. In 1984, at the ASA Annual Meetings the Committee co-organized and co-sponsored with the Social Statistics Section an invited paper session on social indicators, which included two papers on human rights monitoring. At the 1985 ASA Annual Meetings, the Committee and the Social Statistics

Section presented another, similar session on social indicators, including human rights monitoring; in addition, the Committee received approval for another invited paper session, sponsored solely by the Committee, featuring one presentation on arms control and another on human rights issues. When Ed Barankin passed away in the spring of 1985, the Committee dedicated this latter session to his memory.

9.10 Using Statistics to Monitor the Status of Human Rights

Other chapters in this book make it abundantly clear that statisticians, in addition to acting on behalf of colleagues whose rights are violated, can apply their professional knowledge to the collection and analysis of quantitative data about the status of human rights in their own and other countries. International human rights treaties cover not only civil and political rights, but also economic and social rights relating, e.g., to education, nutrition, and health care, topics to which our profession has long given its attention. However, awareness of this possible expansion of the Committee's activities came only gradually to its members and, when it did, their proposal to add new activities to the Committee's charge was not readily accepted.

Late in 1981, in response to reports that Salvadorian citizens were being tortured and murdered by elements of the country's armed forces, the US Congress passed an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 making continued foreign aid to El Salvador contingent on progress by that country in bringing an end to these human rights violations. A report to the Congress was required by January 1982, and subsequent legislation required periodic certifications of progress. To meet these requirements, the State Department established a data collection system based largely on press and embassy reports. Human rights NGOs established their own data series, which showed substantially higher numbers of killings and other violations. In 1983, in his ASA presidential address, R. L. Anderson noted this politically controversial "numbers game" and suggested that these reports would be a suitable subject for statistical review and inquiry (Anderson 1984). As the controversy continued and grew, members of the Committee concluded that its mission should be expanded to allow statisticians, as Richard Savage later put it in his 1984 ASA presidential address, "... to work impartially to allow the decision-making process to be more enlightened" (Savage 1985).

Early in 1983, the Committee drafted a proposal to expand its charge to allow it to provide information and assistance to scientific societies and other organizations on statistical questions relating to the measurement, evaluation, and analysis of data on human rights. Although the proposal was given a sympathetic hearing by the Board of Directors, it was defeated by a narrow margin, because some members feared that the committee's new activities would cause ASA to get involved in controversial partisan political issues, such as the use of statistical data to determine the fate of aid to El Salvador.

In 1984, ASA President I. Richard Savage devoted his presidential address (Savage 1985) to what he called "hard/soft problems," by which he meant problems that are both difficult to solve (hard) and difficult to define precisely (soft.) He gave

four major examples, one of which was human rights monitoring. He strongly urged that the entire profession focus more attention on problems of this type, especially the four he had identified. Encouraged by President Savage's advice, Committee members resolved to try again to expand the charge. Discussion with key members of the Committee on Committees led to suggested language that limited the scope of the new activities to responding to requests from other scientists and scientific organizations on statistical questions relating to human rights data. The new draft of the Committee's charge was accepted by the Committee on Committees in August 1985 and by the Board in October 1985. The following were the key provisions added at that time:

1. Exchange information with other scientists and scientific organizations on
 - the scientific freedom and human rights of statisticians and other scientists generally;
 - the situation regarding specific individuals or groups; and
 - statistical questions relating to data on human rights.
2. Assist scientific societies or other responsible organizations, upon request, in statistical questions relating to the measurement, evaluation, and analysis of data on human rights.

9.11 The Book Project

In 1985, the AAAS received a grant from the Ford Foundation for a research project to evaluate the role of statistics in the documentation of human rights violations. Eric Stover served as project director. Jabine was asked to serve as chair of the project steering committee and Samuelson as one of its members. Agreement was reached with the editor of *Human Rights Quarterly* to devote a special issue of that journal to statistical issues in the field of human rights. The steering committee circulated a call for papers to several statistics and political science newsletters and to individuals known to be doing relevant work. Six of the proposals submitted were chosen by the steering committee for commissioned papers, and two additional papers were accepted for publication in the special issue (Claude and Jabine 1986). Updated versions of most of these papers and several additional papers on related subjects were later published in *Human Rights and Statistics: Getting the Record Straight* (Jabine and Claude 1992).

Although the ASA Committee was not a formal sponsor of this project, several of its members were actively involved. Herbert Spirer and David Banks, both of whom later served with distinction as chairs of the Committee, contributed papers. Spirer and Samuelson coauthored a chapter, "Use of Incomplete and Distorted" "Data in Inference About Human Rights Violations" (Spirer and Samuelson 1992) and Banks wrote a chapter, "New Patterns of Oppression: An Updated Analysis of Human Rights" "Data" (Banks 1992).

9.12 Human Rights and the International Statistical Institute

In 1982, a group of European statisticians established the European Working Group on Statisticians and Human Rights to work on behalf of some of the same individuals who were receiving the support of the ASA Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights and its predecessor Ad Hoc Committee. During the 1983 ISI meeting in Madrid, the European Working Group held an informal meeting, which was attended by some members of the ASA Committee who were also members of ISI. Spurred by this initial contact, they began to consider ways in which they might stimulate ISI to become more involved in human rights matters.

It seemed to them that it would be reasonable for ISI to include, in its scientific meetings and journal, papers making use of statistics to monitor human rights. Looking at this question in a broad context, it was clear that several papers from prior biennial sessions of ISI had dealt with statistics of education, health, income, and other topics covered by international treaties on economic and social human rights. Asking ISI to support individual statisticians whose rights were being violated was clearly a more sensitive issue. Actions implying criticism of specific governments might interfere with ISI's goal of widespread participation in its scientific activities by statisticians from all countries.

In preparation for the 1985 ISI session in Amsterdam, three initiatives were planned:

1. Organization of a contributed paper session on "Statistics, Statisticians and Human Rights."
2. Preparation of a petition to Soviet authorities on behalf of Yosif Begun, a Soviet refusnik, to be circulated to ISI members for their signatures.
3. Preparation of a petition to the ISI council to review ISI's policies with respect to human rights activities.

As described in the following paragraphs, these initiatives were the source of some controversy and met with only limited success.

Tom Jabine, jointly with Jean-Louis Bodin of France⁶ and Ann Mitchell⁷ of the United Kingdom, submitted a proposal for a topical contributed paper meeting on "Statistics, Statisticians and Human Rights." Initially, the proposal was accepted and the meeting was listed in Bulletin Number 1 for the ISI session. However, the ISI Bureau subsequently decided that the topic was not appropriate and announced in Bulletin Number 2 that the proposed meeting had been eliminated from the program. Nevertheless, all ISI members are entitled to present a contributed paper at each ISI session, so Jabine and Professor Helmut Muhsam of Israel submitted papers on topics related to human rights and requested that they be scheduled for consecutive presentation at the same contributed paper meeting.

Perhaps by chance, it turned out that the two papers were scheduled for presentation on the same morning as an informal open meeting on human rights and

⁶ He later served as President of the ISI.

⁷ She served as Secretary of the European Working Group on Statisticians and Human Rights.

statistics, which had been requested by several members. The conflict was resolved by convening the open meeting, adjourning it temporarily so that those present could go to the adjoining room to hear the two contributed papers, and then proceeding with the informal meeting. As is customary, the two papers were published in the ISI Bulletin (Jabine 1985b; Muhsam 1985).

A draft of the Begun petition was approved unanimously at the informal meeting, signed by those present, and posted on a bulletin board for additional signatures. When the president of ISI saw the petition, he objected strongly to the fact that ISI was mentioned by name in its opening sentence. Although that sentence was an accurate statement of the circumstances under which the petition was developed, he was afraid that Soviet authorities receiving the petition might not understand that the informal meeting was not part of the official ISI program. After protracted negotiations, the sponsors of the petition (Bodin, Mitchell, and Jabine) agreed to change the first sentence and were promised that the ISI secretariat would send a letter from the sponsors to those who had signed the original version, explaining the change and inviting them to sign the new version. The new version was also posted on the bulletin board, and all signed copies were transmitted to Ann Mitchell, who forwarded them to the Soviet authorities.

A draft version of the petition to establish a committee to review ISI's policies on human rights matters was discussed at the informal meeting and some changes were proposed. A revised version was given to persons who had attended the meeting and had indicated their willingness to circulate the petition to obtain signatures. The signed versions were turned in to Bodin, who presented them to the ISI council, of which he was a member. No formal report of action on this proposal was ever issued by ISI.

9.13 Concluding Remarks

The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, followed by the 1966 Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, signaled the beginning of international human rights law-making by international and regional organizations, as well as a populist worldwide movement to ensure greater realization of the rights set forth in these treaties. Nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International (founded in the mid-1960s), became an important part of this movement. National and international scientific and professional organizations gradually began to pay attention to human rights issues within the context of their primary interests.

ASA was neither the first nor the last professional association to take an active interest in these issues. For ASA, the decisive factors were the apparent violations of the rights of Carlos Noriega, the former head of a national statistical agency, and the determination of ASA's executive director, Fred Leone, that those violations should not go unnoticed. The work of the Ad Hoc Committee formed at his suggestion was greatly aided by assistance from the AAAS Clearinghouse on Science and Human Rights and by support from several ASA presidents during its early years.

Initially, the Committee concerned itself with assistance to statisticians and mathematicians, mostly in the Soviet Union, whose civil and political rights were apparently being violated. However, it soon became evident to members of the Committee that statisticians could also use their professional expertise to assist in the development of statistical indicators of human rights performance. After some early resistance, the committee's charter was amended to include such activities.

As we have explained, efforts to engage the International Statistical Institute in similar activities met with little success. ISI officers and staff were clearly apprehensive about activities that might imply criticism of member nations. Many ISI members are official statisticians whose participation in the organization depends on support by their national governments. There have been few instances of international professional societies openly criticizing a country or its citizens for human rights violations, one notable exception being the World Psychiatric Association's 1977 censure of Soviet psychiatrists for their participation in brutal treatment regimes for dissidents (Dean 1989).

We will leave it to others to carry this history forward from the end of Samuelson's tenure as chair of the ASA Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights in 1988. Notwithstanding our lack of success in persuading ISI to become more involved, we feel that at this point the stage had been set for many new initiatives by members of the Committee in collaboration with others, including especially the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program and Human Rights Information and Documentation Systems International (HURIDOCs). The work of Herbert and Louise Spirer in training human rights advocates from all over the world on the use of statistics in monitoring human rights deserves a separate account. Their training manual, Data Analysis for Monitoring Human Rights (Spirer and Spirer 1993) has been translated into several languages.

One of ASA's goals, as stated in its constitution, is "... to increase the contribution of statistics to human welfare." In this spirit, as evidenced by the other chapters in this book, many statisticians, including ASA's immediate past president, Fritz Scheuren, are using their professional skills and knowledge to contribute to the advancement of the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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