

Note: AAAS continues to monitor the developments related to COVID-19. All staff based at AAAS headquarters are working from home until at least September 7. AAAS conference facilities are closed, and all meetings through December 31 are canceled, postponed, or held remotely. The Coalition Secretariat will advise members of any future changes to the Coalition's calendar. Stay safe and well!

COALITION CALENDAR

October 22-23: 2020 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference (Online)

Registration is now open for the Coalition's annual conference! This year, all sessions will be held online, including keynote speakers, panels, workshops, and "ask me anything" sessions. We are pleased to announce that this year's conference will be co-sponsored by Human Rights Educators USA and the University and College Consortium for Human Rights Education. This collaboration will focus on engaging students and building partnerships between the Coalition's members and human rights education experts at colleges and universities.

A preliminary agenda will be available soon. Register by September 1 for early registration rates. Student/early career professionals, individual affiliated members of the Coalition and members of a Coalition organization, NGO employees, and retired/emeritus/seniors all receive discounts on registration. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Responding to COVID-19: Science and Human Rights

Additional video interviews with experts on the human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are now available [on the Coalition's website](#). Several videos feature Coalition members describing how their disciplines and organizations are responding to the pandemic. These include Ali Arab of the American Statistical Association, Keri Iyall Smith of Sociologists Without Borders, Kimberly Mealy of the American Political Science Association, and Shelly Leshner of the American Physical Society. More videos will be added in the coming weeks. To watch the videos and browse other resources, please visit the COVID-19 and human rights [resources page](#) on the Coalition website.

Global Alliance: Resolution on COVID-19 and Justice-Involved Populations

The Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice [issued](#) a series of recommendations and call to address the lack of action and oversight directed at those who are incarcerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include: (1) reducing populations at risk by limiting the use of detention; (2) ensuring release strategies are supported by testing, the capacity to quarantine properly, resources to meet basic needs, community supports, and reduced barriers to public benefits; and (3) providing appropriate support for correctional officers and other staff, including personal protection equipment, access to testing, and mental health services.

"Promoting Human Rights and Scientific Responsibility in a Deglobalizing Pandemic Era"

Coalition member the American Psychological Association (APA) featured an article by Neal Rubin, APA Council of Representatives member, APA-UN Associate for Special Projects, and chair of the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, on [human rights and scientific responsibility](#) in its Office of International Affairs' *Global Insights* newsletter. Read the [article here](#).

American Statistical Association Reissues Statement on Andreas Georgiou

The American Statistical Association has reissued [its statement](#) in support of statistician Andreas Georgiou one year after Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis began his term in office. For almost a decade, Georgiou, the former President of the Hellenic Statistical Authority, has faced legal proceedings, investigations, and prosecution for providing deficit and debt statistics of the Greek government. The International Statistical Institute also reissued its [statement of support](#) for Georgiou.

CALLS FOR INPUT

July 30: Public Comments on Commission on Unalienable Rights' Draft Report

The Commission on Unalienable Rights under the U.S. Department of State issued a [draft report](#) on July 16, which provided a review of US human rights policy. The report, which is open to public input until July 30, has been criticized by human rights groups, including [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights First](#). The draft report was released in a [speech](#) by U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, who established the Commission. Comments received thus far may be found [here](#). Comments are due by July 30 and may be directed to commission@state.gov.

July 31: UNESCO Consultation on Artificial Intelligence

As part of a [process](#) to elaborate the first global standard-setting instrument on the ethics of artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of a Recommendation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is seeking public input on the [first draft of the Recommendation](#). The purpose of the feedback is to capture the interests, concerns and views of stakeholders involved in AI around the world, including the general public, academia, the scientific and technical community, civil society, the private sector, and governmental entities. The questionnaire/survey may be found [here](#) and is due July 31.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Online Course by Scholars at Risk: Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters

Scholars at Risk, an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom, is holding an online course, *Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters*. Further information, including how to register and start dates, may be found [here](#).

July 27-31: RightsCon Launches Virtual Edition

Access Now, a policy and advocacy group for technology and human rights, is holding a virtual edition of RightsCon, its annual conference on technology and human rights. The event brings together business leaders, policymakers, technologists, advocates, academics, government representatives, and journalists to address pressing issues at the intersection of human rights and technology. Further information may be found [here](#).

Job: Research Fellow, Media Ecosystems, Shorenstein Center, Harvard

The Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University is seeking a research fellow with an interest in social institutions, digital media, and information integrity to support the collection and curation of case studies for the *Global Media Manipulation Case Book*. The Research Fellow will conduct research on topics related to public discourse, politics, and society, including the propagation of disinformation and media manipulation and its impact on political communication and democratic processes. Further information, including how to apply, may be found [here](#).

Job: Research Manager, Center for Democracy & Technology

The Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) is seeking a research manager to work on issues at the intersection of technology and human rights. Responsibilities include designing and implementing research projects to inform the development of CDT's policy positions and contributing to U.S. and international dialogue about key issues in technology policy. Further information, including how to apply, may be found [here](#).

Opportunity: Scholars at Risk's Practitioners at Risk Program

[Scholars at Risk](#) (SAR) is seeking to establish a new program to explore increased on-campus support for practitioners at risk. SAR's work arranging temporary positions for at-risk individuals focuses on university scholars and researchers but has always included a wide range of others targeted for their ideas, including journalists, writers, democracy/human rights advocates, lawyers, and artists. Information about this new "practitioners at risk" program is outlined [in this flyer](#), which describes the developing affinity group of individuals interested in supporting practitioners at risk, including through inviting them for short visits on campus. Among other activities, affinity group members may provide advice and pose questions about supporting practitioners at risk; seek review of candidates for positions on their campus; nominate candidates for any available temporary positions elsewhere; and apply for co-funding for temporary positions, whenever such funds might be available. SAR has initiated a listserv for all group members. To join the affinity group and listserv, fill out [this survey](#).

Opportunity: Student Advocacy Seminars (Scholars at Risk)

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is offering Student Advocacy Seminars to provide university and college students with the opportunity to develop human rights research and advocacy skills through direct engagement on behalf of threatened members of the global higher education community in cooperation with SAR's Academic Freedom Monitoring Project and Scholars in Prison Project. Student Advocacy Seminars are available to all SAR member institutions. SAR and Student Advocacy Coordinators at Roger Williams University assist faculty members and students to create an opportunity that fits their curricular needs and interests. Further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

Facebook's Civil Rights Audit Shows Policies, Practices Need To Be Addressed

A recent [article](#) in the *Washington Post* outlined the results of a [report](#), commissioned by Facebook and conducted by civil rights auditors, that evaluated the social media platform's policies and practices regarding freedom of expression, moderation of the platform, and the misuse of the platform by individuals and groups sharing misinformation and hate speech. An [article](#) in the *New York Times* explained the audit was critical of Facebook for prioritizing free expression on its platform over nondiscrimination and for not having a robust infrastructure to handle civil rights. In a [blog post](#), Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's Chief Operating Officer, acknowledged the report and the need for further improvement. "This audit has been a deep analysis of how we can strengthen and advance civil rights at every level of our company—but it is the beginning of the journey, not the end."

A Quantitative Approach to Law Valuable for Public Analysis of Court Records

A recent [article](#) in *Science* explains that a growing body of empirical legal research demonstrates that systematic analyses of court records could improve legal practice and the administration of justice. The article provides an example of applying a quantitative approach to law and collaborative research and the value in removing barriers to accessing court records and allowing public analysis of them.

National Academies Presidents' Statements on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Presidents of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Academy of Medicine have issued separate statements on racial inequality and ways in which their respective organizations and society as a whole can advance equity and inclusion as outlined in their statements below:

[National Academy of Sciences](#);

[National Academy of Engineering](#);

[National Academy of Medicine](#).

In addition, in an [article](#) in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Marcia McNutt, President of the National Academy of Sciences, outlined a five-step program for the scientific community to address racial inequality and to provide for greater equity and inclusion, including in building more inclusive culture in research environments and in teaching, education and scientific institutions.

The Human Right to Water Further Impacted by COVID-19

A recent [article](#) by Amanda Klasing, Acting Co-Director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch, outlines that the U.S. has not adequately protected the human right to water during the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing water shutoffs due to inability to pay. She points to [findings](#) from We the People of Detroit, an organization committed to community research and the human right to water, that showed more water shutoffs correlated with more COVID-19 cases. A coalition of civil rights organizations, including the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, [filed a](#) class action lawsuit in federal court earlier this month to make water affordable and permanently end water shutoffs in Detroit.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Biodiversity Project in Columbia Provides Practical Ways for Sustaining Peace

A recent [article](#) in *Science* features an interview with Jaime Góngora, a wildlife geneticist at the University of Sydney, who has initiated a citizen science program, Peace with Nature, to involve former members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in learning about and advancing the benefits of biodiversity in Columbia. Góngora leads a group of researchers from the UK, Australia, and 10 Colombian institutions that are working with ex-combatants to study Colombia's native plants and animals. The training is a step to enable them to contribute to environmental projects, improve their livelihoods, and reincorporate into society, including providing opportunities to develop connections with regional and national institutions to implement potential ecotourism projects.

Forensic Scientists in Mexico Discover Remains in Important Human Rights Investigation

Forensic scientists have identified the remains of one of 43 students who disappeared in rural Mexico in 2014 [in a case](#) that has been the subject of investigations by human rights groups and forensic scientists to determine the circumstances behind their disappearance and the role of the Mexican government. In 2018, the newly elected President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, established a special presidential commission to support the families of the victims and to investigate the case. Since then, an international panel of experts is assisting with the investigation, and the country's independent attorney general has created a special investigative unit dedicated to solving the case with numerous sites being tested for remains.

Genetic Database in China Raises Human Rights and Scientific Concerns

A recent [report](#) by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a research institute, and [further examined](#) by the *New York Times*, outlines the use of a forensic database used by Chinese authorities to collect and store genetic profiles of roughly 10% of the country's male population, as many as 70 million people, which in turn can be used to construct genetic links to China's entire male population, roughly 700 million people. Chinese authorities say the database is used for law-enforcement purposes, but scientists

and human-rights activists have raised [concerns](#) about using the genetic database containing information about people without a criminal history for government surveillance.

UN Expert Group Addresses Human Rights Abuses Stemming from Corruption

The UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights presented a [report](#) to the UN Human Rights Council that explains how corruption involving business enterprises can lead to human rights abuses and how preventing corruption by all actors may prevent and mitigate business-related human rights abuses. The report further examines how to better integrate human rights due diligence in anti-corruption and anti-bribery measures and provides recommendations for states, businesses, and civil society in improving policy coherence, enhancing human rights due diligence, and strengthening access to remedy. The Working Group has encouraged the introduction of mandatory human rights due diligence legislation as is being developed in various parts of Europe and in the European Union. It also recommended that businesses use the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and integrate respect for human rights into corporate decision-making and anti-corruption compliance programs.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Raises Concerns Over Police Practices

In the wake of global protests against systemic racism, corruption, and economic woes exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, [expressed concern](#) about the use of non-lethal weapons against demonstrators. These emerging devices include pepper-ball launchers, acoustic weapons, drones, and other autonomous systems that release tear gas. She called for mandatory training for law enforcement personnel on the use of crowd-control weapons and accountability for rights violations related to their misuse. A report by the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights also raises other concerns relating to the practices used against protestors, including facial recognition technology, the blocking of cell phones, the monitoring of social media platforms, and suspension of Internet access.

West African Court Upholds Digital Rights in Case of Internet Shutdowns in Togo

The Economic Community of West African States Community Court of Justice [has ruled](#) that the September 2017 Internet shutdown ordered by the Togolese government during protests was illegal and violated the right to freedom of expression. The court ordered the government of Togo to pay compensation to the plaintiffs in the case and to take necessary measures to guarantee the implementation of safeguards with respect to the right to freedom of expression. In 2019, Access Now, a group for digital rights advocacy and policy, led a coalition of eight organizations that submitted a [amici curiae brief](#) in a lawsuit filed by Amnesty International Togo and other applicants.

UK Initiative Uses AI To Identify War Crimes and Human Rights Abuses

An [initiative](#) led by Swansea University in the UK, along with a number of human rights groups, is applying machine learning and other digital tools to further analyze documentation of alleged war crimes in Yemen. The researchers are testing a system that can be applied to the Yemeni Archive, which contains 5.9 billion video frames of footage of videos and photos documenting abuses, to identify the use of cluster munitions, explosive weapons that spray out smaller explosives on impact. The use and sale of cluster munitions are banned by 108 countries, including the UK, and if it could be proven in a UK court that cluster munitions had been used to commit war crimes, such evidence could be presented in legal cases involving the war crimes. Using machine learning to review that level of footage makes an appreciable difference. Approximately 30 days on a regular desktop would be required to review the footage for cluster munitions using the machine-learning-based system compared to 2,750 days (at 24 hours a day) through human review alone.

Moscow's Use of Facial Recognition Technology Challenged

Two activists in Russia have [lodged a complaint](#) to the European Court of Human Rights over Russia's use of facial recognition technology during authorized and peaceful protests in Russia in 2019, which represents the first case challenging the use of facial recognition to conduct mass surveillance in the court's practice. In March, a domestic court in Russia had dismissed the plaintiffs' complaint on the grounds that the government's use of the technology was legal. The plaintiffs are asserting that collection of protesters' unique biometric data through the use of facial recognition violates the right to privacy and the freedom of assembly as protected under the European Convention on Human Rights. They also state that using this technology at an opposition rally amounts to discrimination based on political views.

UN Expert Calls for Global Ban on Conversion Therapy To Protect LGBT Rights

Víctor Madrigal-Borloz, UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, is [calling](#) for a global ban on conversion therapy in a [report](#) presented to the UN Human Rights Council. The report outlines that conversion therapy lacks scientific merit and causes psychological and physical damage to victims, has human rights implications, and is connected with violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The UN expert notes that conversion therapy violates the right to bodily autonomy, health, and free expression of one's sexual orientation and gender identity and says that concerted action of states, the medical community, and civil society is required to ensure a worldwide ban on such practices.

UN Special Rapporteur Examines Racial Inequality and Digital Technologies

The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, E. Tendayi Achiume, is [calling](#) for greater scrutiny of emerging digital technologies, which she said are being used to uphold racial inequality, discrimination, and intolerance. She delivered a report, *Racial Discrimination and Emerging Digital Technologies: A Human Rights Analysis*, earlier this month to the UN Human Rights Council. Achiume [analyzes](#) different forms of racial discrimination in the design and use of emerging digital technologies, including the structural and institutional dimensions of this discrimination. She also outlines the human rights obligations of states and the responsibility of corporations to combat this discrimination.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Global Campaign for Peace Education Issues Online Education Resource

The Global Campaign for Peace Education, which seeks to build public awareness and political support for peace education and promote the training of teachers in peace education, has released an [online educational resource](#) for teachers and educators. The free online resource has more than 100 offerings organized along three major themes: (1) peace education theory, frameworks, and strategic planning; (2) peace education programs with curriculum materials; and (3) curriculum and training materials by theme.

OpenGlobalRights Launches Discussion Series on Climate Litigation and Human Rights

OpenGlobalRights has launched a [discussion series](#) to explore a specific advocacy and regulatory tool that is gaining momentum globally: human rights-based climate change litigation. The blog series is the result of a conference convened by the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at the New York University School of Law, which brought together scholars, practitioners, scientists and others. The discussion series seeks to examine several issues: (1) the analytical and strategic lessons that can be extracted from the body of lawsuits and rulings for future research and advocacy; (2) the ideas and experiences from other fields of research and practice (such as socio-economic rights advocacy) that can be applied to the understanding and strategizing of future lawsuits and submissions before national and international courts and human rights bodies; and (3) the types of litigation efforts that may contribute to attaining the scale and urgency that, according to science, are needed for climate action to be timely and effective.

Journal Publishes Special Section on Mental Health and Human Rights

Health and Human Rights Journal published a [special section](#), “Mental Health and Human Rights,” in its June issue, which was timed to coincide with the completion of the second and final term of guest editor Dainius Pūras as the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health. In that role, he contributed to two UN resolutions affirming mental health as a human right and in his most recent report to the UN General Assembly and in his final report to the UN Human Rights Council, he examines the social determinants of mental health and calls for discussions and actions that are rights-based. The special section examines human rights-based approaches to easing mental distress, societal practices, including their limitations, in how mental health is understood and responded to, and discriminatory practices. The special section is intended to be useful for policy makers and health and social workers who want to embed human rights in their work and adopt right-to-health approaches. It further identifies alternative mental health approaches to address exclusion, neglect, coercion, and abuse of people with intellectual, cognitive, and psychosocial disabilities.

National Academies Launch Webpage on the Right to Science

The Committee on Human Rights of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Academy of Medicine has launched a new [webpage](#) on “The Right to Science.” The webpage provides a brief history and useful materials on the right to science, including those from the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition. The Academies’ Committee on Human Rights also released [a statement](#) condemning the intimidation and threats faced by scientists and public health officials working on the COVID-19 response in the U.S.

Safety First: Guidelines for Responsible Mine Tailings Management

Earthworks and MiningWatch Canada, two environmental groups, have released a [report](#), *Safety First: Guidelines for Responsible Mine Tailings Management*, which provides recommendations for the safe operation and management of tailings dams following the collapse of a dam in Brazil that killed 250 people and caused damage to the surrounding community. Tailings facilities contain the processed waste materials generated from mining metals and minerals. The report asserts that current industry standards, including the draft of the Global Tailings Standard released in 2019, do not go far enough to adequately protect communities and ecosystems from failures.

Benchmarking Human Rights Practices Among Renewable Energy Companies

The Business and Human Rights Centre, a UK-based not-for-profit human rights advocacy organization, has issued a [report](#), *Renewable Energy & Human Rights Benchmark*, to provide companies, investors, governments, and wider civil society key information to ensure the renewable energy industry adopts human rights best practices. The benchmark assesses renewable energy companies on high-risk areas, including land rights, indigenous peoples’ rights, and supply-chain management, and applies Corporate Human Rights Benchmark’s core indicators to evaluate how companies measure up to their responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

PEOPLE

Congratulations to Ali Arab

Ali Arab, a valued contributor to the Coalition and representative to the Coalition Council for the American Statistical Association, was re-elected to a three-year term on the Board of Directors of Amnesty International USA. Congratulations, Ali!

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