Program News

**Scientists Come Out for Human Rights**
Sonia Shah  
*The Nation*  
January 27, 2009

“Ever hear of a pro bono chemist, or a human rights physicist or an environmental statistician? Not really, right? ... the scientific masses have by and large remained impassively unmoved ... with nary a head turned for the din and crash of messy social realities outside their rarefied digs. But cracks in that notoriously apolitical stance have started to appear. Take, for example, a groundbreaking meeting held by [AAAS] in mid-January. At the AAAS's elegant DC headquarters, some 200 scientists met with a smattering of human rights activists, sharing stories of a groundswell of interest in social change activism in the scientific community.” Read more.

**Making Human Rights More Scientific**
Doug Lederman  
*Inside Higher Ed*  
January 19, 2009

“Ask a group of scientists — heck, ask any group of people — if they’re concerned about human rights, and you’ll get few if any dissenters. After all, it’s a hard thing not to care about. But it might be a little less clear why scientists, or any professionals, need a formal group to actively involve themselves in human rights issues. … As the [AAAS] formally launched its new Science and Human Rights Coalition at a meeting here last week, the room full of true believers offered a compelling set of reasons why the new organization could offer benefits not just for scientists but, eventually, for potentially troubled people around the world.” Read more.

**Bridging the Divides**
Interview with Mary Robinson  
(video)  
January 14, 2009

“We need to bridge the divides, to realize that we are on the same ground and that we need to develop ways of using the strengths of the scientific community. ... There is a growing community and it’s a community that is linking...” Read more.
those who are working on human rights, those who are working on development issues, those who are working on environmental concerns, on climate change concerns, and we need the scientists. And that is why this AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition is so important.”

Science and Human Rights Coalition

Thanks to Our Supporters

Sincere thanks go to the following associations for sponsoring the Coalition Launch reception: the Association of American Geographers, the American Psychological Association, and the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences. SHRP would also like to express its appreciation to the Mertz Gilmore Foundation which, in 2004, recognized the potential of a coalition of scientific associations to advance human rights, and since then has provided SHRP with funding to support the establishment of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition.

Launch Report

Thanks to the hard work of over 20 scientific associations and many dedicated individuals, the Coalition has now been launched! The report of the launch will be available shortly on the Coalition website.

Get Your Organization Involved

Eager to see your scientific association, society, or academy become involved in the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition? Keen to share with your colleagues and organization information about this initiative? Available here is a one-page description of the Coalition that you can use as the basis for listserv announcements, newsletter articles, and meeting presentations.

News from Coalition Members:
American Psychological Association

Monitor
January 2009

“APA has become a founding member of the Science and Human Rights Coalition. ... APA joined the Coalition to act on psychologists’ commitment to human rights and open up opportunities for concerned APA members on the coalition’s working groups, says Clinton Anderson. ... ‘Although APA has policy resolutions on human rights, APA hasn’t had much explicit involvement in human rights activities,’

groups to gather compelling evidence of atrocities and humanitarian need inside isolated regions and states such as Darfur and Burma, also called Myanmar. Additionally, they provide evidence of numerous frequent human rights violations including illegal housing demolition, resource theft, and the seizure of indigenous lands.”

Promotion of children’s rights and prevention of child maltreatment
Richard Reading et al. (link)

“In medical literature, child maltreatment is considered as a public health problem or an issue of harm to individuals, but less frequently as a violation of children’s human rights. Public health approaches emphasise monitoring, prevention, cost-effectiveness, and population strategies; protective approaches concentrate on the legal and professional response to cases of maltreatment. ... We describe how children’s rights provide a different perspective on child maltreatment, and contribute to both public health and protective responses.”

Achieving Economic and Social Rights: The challenge of assessing compliance
Edward Anderson and Marta Foresti (link)

“A number of challenges have stopped [economic and social - ES] rights from achieving a fully functional
says Anderson. ‘We hope to support APA members who have interest in applying psychological science to human rights and in increasing psychology’s role in human rights advocacy.’”  

**Introducing Our Members**  
**Washington Statistical Society**

“The WSS [Washington Statistical Society] is the largest, most active chapter of the American Statistical Association with about 900 members. Our members work in the government, academic, and private sectors, spanning many disciplines. Members' interests and expertise cover an extensive range of areas in applied and theoretical statistics, data collection, survey methods, and allied subjects.”  

For more information about the Coalition and how you or your organization can become involved, please visit our website. To receive the latest information about the Coalition, please sign-up for our Coalition Listserv.

**From the Scientific Community**

**American Political Science Association (APSA): Human Rights Awards**

The APSA Section on Human Rights was established to “encourage scholarship and facilitate exchange of data and research findings on all components of human rights.” Each year the Section makes awards in several categories, honoring political scientists who have focused in their research, scholarship and work on human rights. Nominations are currently open for the following Awards: Best Book, Best Dissertation and Distinguished Scholar.

**From the Human Rights Community**

**Health in Ruins: A Man-Made Disaster in Zimbabwe**  
Physicians for Human Rights  
January 2009

“Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) witnesses the utter collapse of Zimbabwe’s health system, once a model in southern Africa. ... As the report documents, the Mugabe regime has used any means at its disposal, including politicizing the health sector, to maintain its hold on power. Instead of fulfilling its obligation to progressively realize the right to health for the people of Zimbabwe, the Government has taken the country backwards, which has enabled the destruction of health, water, and sanitation - all with fatal consequences.”
New York Law School and HIFA2015 Announce New Initiative on Human Rights and Health Care Information

Press Release
December 10, 2008

“Tens of thousands of people die every day from diseases that are readily preventable and treatable. Many of these deaths could have been avoided if family caregivers and front-line health workers had the information necessary to provide appropriate care. ... The New York Law School/HIFA2015 Human Rights and Health Information Project is dedicated to exploring the use of a human rights model to approach the problem of access to healthcare information. ... The team will prepare a briefing paper that evaluates the right to access healthcare information as an international human right ... then plans to develop models for implementation of this vital right.” Read more.

From the UN

Frequently Asked Questions on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Fact Sheet No. 33

OHCHR
December 2008

“The relative neglect of [economic, social and cultural] rights on the human rights agenda has, unfortunately, fostered a host of misunderstandings and misconceptions about them. And while many of the reasons for this neglect—cold war tensions, academic neglect, lack of clarity on substance, lack of civil society engagement—have disappeared, many of the misunderstandings persist. This Fact Sheet therefore seeks to demystify economic, social and cultural rights, and answer some of the most common questions put to practitioners.” Read more.

About the SHRP Newsletter

The Science & Human Rights Newsletter is issued monthly by the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program. Through the newsletter we strive to keep scientists and human rights practitioners informed with news items, program updates, new resources, and upcoming events at the intersection of science and human rights. Submissions to the newsletter are welcome and can be made via our online form.

Please visit our website to learn more about our programs as well as our past accomplishments.

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