Program News

Richard Pierre Claude, Author and Activist, Honored by AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Earl Lane
AAAS
August 4, 2009

"Richard Pierre Claude, professor emeritus of government and politics at the University of Maryland, was honored at a recent meeting of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition as a founding father of efforts to get scientists to take up important work on human rights around the globe. Claude's award-winning 2002 book, "Science in the Service of Human Rights," is considered a classic in the field. He is also a founding editor of the journal Human Rights Quarterly, now in its 28th year. Colleagues celebrated Claude's career and legacy in a 23 July opening plenary session of the Coalition meeting." Read more.

Human Rights and Science:
Coalition mobilizes scientific societies to fight abuse

Linda Wang
Chemical & Engineering News
August 24, 2009

"Scientific organizations have a common goal of improving people's lives. Yet only a few have organized efforts in the form of committees, sections, or working groups dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights. 'We have a lot of work to do in getting more scientific organizations to become engaged in human rights,' says Mona Younis, former director of [SHRP]. 'For so long, people have imagined that human rights work is for lawyers and legal experts. The notion that scientists are vital for human rights efforts is relatively new.'" Read more.

UNESCO Meeting Adopts Statement on Right to Benefit from Scientific Progress

What does the right to the benefits of scientific progress mean and what needs to be done to conceptualize this vital but neglected right? These questions were considered by a group of experts, including Jessica Wyndham of the SHRP staff, who met in Venice, Italy on July 16-17, 2009. Their preliminary conclusions are reflected in the Venice Statement on the Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress and Its

SHRP EVENTS

January 21, 2010
Washington, DC
Training: Best Practices in Defending the Human Rights of Scientists

January 22, 2010
Washington, DC
AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Meeting

RELATED EVENTS

October 18-30, 2009
Fort Worth, Texas, USA
Training: Forensic Laboratory and Medical Examiner's Office Operations (link)

PUBLICATIONS

Intellectual Property Rights and Access to ARV Medicines
Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (link)

This book focuses on the role civil society has played in bringing about greater access to anti-retroviral drugs in five countries: Brazil, Colombia, China, India, and Thailand. Identifying a tension between promoting scientific advancement and access to medications, the book calls for the adoption of a human rights approach to medicine, rather than an emphasis on the "commercial concept of 'exclusivity.'"
Applications which recognize the role that the scientific community should play in elucidating, raising awareness about, and monitoring the implementation of this right, and calls for their increased engagement. Read Statement.

High-Resolution Satellite Imagery and Possible Mass Graves in Sheberghan, Afghanistan

SHRP recently produced a report in partnership with Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) on the results of satellite imagery analysis concerning a possible mass grave site at Dasht-e-Leili, near Sheberghan, Afghanistan. The graves were reportedly created in late 2001 by General Abdul Rashid Dostum, a former US ally, whose militia is accused of executing or suffocating thousands of captured Taliban, burying them in the area, then excavating the graves and moving the contents to a more remote and secure location. Using information from PHR, SHRP acquired and analyzed multiple satellite images of the site. One particular image, acquired in August 2006, shows a possible hydraulic excavator and dump truck (see picture) atop one of the sites, providing evidence of an excavation date. Following release of the SHRP and PHR reports, the New York Times ran a feature piece on the story, then an editorial. Within days, President Obama announced an investigation into the events at Dasht-e-Leili. Read more from AAAS and PHR.

Science and Human Rights Coalition

Thanks to Our Supporters

Sincere thanks go to the following associations for sponsoring the Coalition meeting reception: the Association of American Geographers and the American Sociological Association. SHRP would also like to express its appreciation to the Mertz Gilmore Foundation for its continued support of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition.

Council and Coalition Meeting Reports

The Coalition Council, which serves as the Coalition’s policy-setting body, met for the first time on July 23. Among the issues it addressed was the role of human rights organizations in the Coalition, procedures for making public statements, and the internationalization of Coalition membership. Read the report.

The Coalition meeting report is also now available. The report provides an overview of the meeting program and details the progress made by the five areas of activity working groups since the launch of the Coalition in January. It also includes the session evaluations. Read the report.

Surgery on Intersex Infants and Human Rights

This paper aims to raise greater awareness of the human rights implications of surgical intervention on intersex infants. Among the questions addressed in the paper are: Is surgery on intersex infants a human rights issue? What human rights issues are particularly relevant? How are the best interests of an intersex infant assessed? What protocols exist regarding surgery on intersex infants?

The Human Rights Dimension of Climate Change

HuriTalk Insight Series (August, 2009) (link)

Featuring interviews with Stephen Humphreys, International Council on Human Rights Policy, and Ulrik Halsteen, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, this article addresses this article address “the human rights dimension of climate change. We explore how human rights can help guide international policy making around climate change and look at some of the challenges that climate change raises for human rights.”
Working Group Update:
Service to the Scientific Community

Our goal is to increase scientific associations’ engagement in human rights. To that end, we are developing a basic toolkit for scientific associations to help them get started in human rights, including “Human Rights 101”, information about why scientists have taken up human rights work, and the types of work currently undertaken by scientific organizations. We have distributed a draft for comments which we will finalize at our fall meeting on September 30 at AAAS. In addition, at the fall meeting we will focus on the group’s contribution to the Coalition’s Article 15 Joint Initiative. The group, which currently has 20 members, welcomes new members and invites interested scientific organization representatives and individual scientists to attend the fall meeting and become involved. Read more.

News from Coalition Members:
ASA Adopts Statement on Human Rights

On August 12, 2009, the Council of the American Sociological Association adopted a statement affirming and expanding the Association’s commitment to human rights. Identifying the link between sociological research and human rights, the statement proceeds to highlight specific human rights of particular relevance to the Association, including the right to “benefit from scientific advancement.” On the same day, the Council also adopted a statement concerning the right to freedom of association. To view these and other actions taken by Coalition members, go to the Coalition member actions site.

Introducing our Members:
Federation of Associations in Brain & Behavioral Sciences

"The Foundation for the Advancement of Behavioral and Brain Sciences is an educational non-profit organization established to promote and enhance understanding of the behavioral, psychological, and brain sciences. The mission of the foundation is education, directed to two important audiences: the public and researchers." Read more.

From the Science Community

Clean Water Should be Recognized as a Human Right
Editors
The PLoS Medicine
June 30, 2009

In a recent article appearing in the journal PLoS Medicine the editors argue that "Access to water should
be framed as a human right for at least three reasons. First, ensuring access to clean water could substantially reduce the global burden of disease. ... Second, the privatization of water—which exploits the view that water is a commodity rather than a public good—does not result in equitable access. ... Third, the world is changing in ways that will both exacerbate water scarcity and threaten the quality of the current water supply." Read more.

From the Human Rights Community

**US: Treaty Signing Signals Policy Shift**
Human Rights Watch
July 24, 2009

"The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ... will be the first international human rights treaty signed by the United States in nearly a decade, Human Rights Watch said today. ... 'This treaty was created to make sure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else and are fully included in society,' said Joe Amon, director of the Health and Human Rights Program at Human Rights Watch. 'This is a real victory for both that goal and for the disability rights advocates who have worked so hard for it.'" Read more.

From the UN

**Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights**

On June 17, 2009, the Human Rights Council adopted a landmark resolution on 'Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights'. "In this resolution, governments express grave concern for the unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, acknowledge that this is a human rights issue and commit to enhance their efforts at the national and international level to protect the lives of women and girls worldwide. Over 70 UN member states co-sponsored this resolution, led by Colombia and New Zealand." Read more.

**Human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation**

Independent expert on human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation, Catarina de Alburquerque, presented her annual report to the Human Rights Council on July 1. "While opinions may differ on whether to recognize sanitation as a distinct right," she says, "there are clear human rights obligations related to sanitation because it is inextricably linked to, and indispensable for, the realization of many other human rights. She outlines a definition of sanitation in human rights terms, and explains the human rights obligations related to sanitation, as well as the content of those obligations." Read more.
About the SHRP Newsletter

The Science & Human Rights Newsletter is issued bi-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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