AAAS | Science and Human Rights Coalition

COALITION CALENDAR

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN! October 23-25: Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

The Coalition's tenth anniversary conference will be held in Washington, DC, at AAAS Headquarters. Early Bird Registration ends September 1, so register soon! Learn more »

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Webinar: Scientific Collaborations with Human Rights Organizations

On October 17, the Coalition's Scientific Collaborations with Human Rights Organizations Project Team will host its fourth webinar of its 2019 series. Anne Sprinkel, Program Director of Tipping Point at CARE, a global nonprofit dedicated to ending poverty worldwide, will discuss the role of scientific collaboration in their work regarding Tipping Point. More information to come.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

September 10: Facial Recognition, Human Rights and Scientific Responsibility

On September 10 at 12:00 PM Eastern Time, join the AAAS for the first interview of a three-part Facebook Live series on artificial intelligence, human rights and scientific responsibility. In this 30-minute interview, leading experts on facial recognition technology will explore the current capabilities of facial recognition, debunk the myths and explain the realities of its current degree of accuracy, and explore the potential medium and long-term capabilities of the technology. Learn about current efforts to address the ethical, legal and social implications of the technology and consider how these concerns should inform developers and users of the technology. This series is supported by Hitachi.

October 1-4: Social Practice of Human Rights 2019

The Human Rights Center at the University of Dayton will host its Social Practice of Human Rights Conference. This year's theme is "Going Against the Grain" and will discuss high-risk threats that present themselves with unprecedented urgency, collaborative efforts to build sustainable movements, and disruptive methods to address human rights issues.

November 1: Open Source Investigation Course

The University of California Berkeley Human Rights Center and the Institute for International Criminal Investigation (IICI) have partnered to offer a new course in open source investigation. This course brings together trainers working at the cutting edge of technology, law and fact-finding to cover topics such as privacy and data-protection regimes, security and risk assessments, and advanced search and monitoring techniques and tools. The course begins December 9 in The Hague, The Netherlands. Applications are due November 1.

Job: Program Coordinator, Emerging Threats and Opportunities (WITNESS)

WITNESS, an organization using video and technology to defend and protect human rights, invites applications for a Program Coordinator to support, and where relevant, lead, initiatives within the Emerging Threats and Opportunities work of WITNESS. This work has a primary current focus on artificial intelligence (AI) and mis/disinformation, particularly in terms of proactive work on deepfakes and synthetic media, and

emerging foci on identifying ways to protect human rights defenders and their advocacy from AI-enabled attacks.

Job: International Mining Campaigner (Earthworks)

Earthworks, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the adverse impacts of mineral and energy development while promoting sustainable solutions, is seeking a campaigner to support frontline communities and ecosystems at risk from mining pollution. The organization is seeking candidates with strong organizing, research, writing, and spoken communications skills, with experience working in support of frontline communities, and with a background in science and/or comfort with scientific information. Fluency in Portuguese or Spanish required.

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

Human Rights Watch Raises Concerns Over the Right to Health and Pesticides

Human Rights Watch has raised concerns over a recent decision by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to not ban chlorpyrifos, a pesticide that, according to some studies, has been linked to developmental delays in children. Last month, the EPA concluded that despite several years of study, the science addressing neurodevelopmental effects remains unresolved and that it will continue an ongoing review of chlorpyrifos and make its next determination about the pesticide by 2022. "Exposure to dangerous pesticides undermines the rights to health and a healthy environment of communities across the United States," said HRW in a July 22, 2019 article examining the EPA decision.

Family Separations at US Border Based off HIV Status

A top US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) official walked back his statements made during a US House Judiciary Committee hearing Thursday, July 25 on family separation policies at border crossings. Brian Hastings, CBP's chief of law enforcement, originally stated that migrants could be separated from their families, including their children, based off HIV status alone due to the disease's communicability. The following day, Hastings issued a statement to The Hill, saying that "CBP would not separate families due to the communicable nature of HIV" and that family separation occurs on a "case by case basis." HIV was removed from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's list of communicable diseases of public health significance that could bar entry to the US in 2010 because it cannot be transmitted through casual contact.

CSIS Presents a New Podcast about Human Rights and Technology

The Human Rights Initiative of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) launched a new podcast, *Humanity, Wired*, about the human rights impacts of existing and future technologies. The show is hosted by Amy Lehr, Director of the Human Rights Initiative, speaks with human rights defenders, policymakers and technologists about how technology benefits and hurts society.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Recent *Nature* Article Broaches Issue of Consent in Digital-Data Studies
A recent editorial in *Nature* examines the growing field of data governance under which computer scientists, bioethicists and legal and human-rights scholars are concentrating on how to provide protection for participants in data-collection activities, such as anonymized and aggregated data derived from smartphone apps, social networks, wearable devices or satellite images. The article explains that currently the decision on whether the benefits of digital-data studies outweigh the risks largely falls to the researchers who collect and analyze the data and not to the people who take part. Ideas to better protect participants range from tagging the data as they are being collected, so that individuals can see how this information is being used, to creating institutional review boards capable of assessing the safety of big digital-data studies.

Physicians for Human Rights Urges UN To Address Attacks on Health Facilities in Syria
Susannah Sirkin, Director of Policy and Senior Advisor for Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), provided a briefing to the United Nations Security Council late last month on the on attacks on health facilities and personnel in Syria. From March 2011 through July 2019, PHR corroborated 578 attacks on at least 350 separate facilities and documented the killing of 890 medical personnel. In Aleppo, PHR documented 161 attacks on health facilities, with 54 in 2016. It further noted that since April of this year, following a military escalation targeting Idlib and northern Hama, PHR has received reports of 46 attacks on healthcare facilities and has confirmed 16 to date. PHR is urging the UN Secretary-General to launch an immediate investigation into attacks on health facilities and personnel in Idlib, northern Hama, and western Aleppo and on the failure of the deconfliction mechanism there and is calling on the UN to oblige the attacking forces to stop the violence against hospitals and other vital civilian infrastructure.

Facial Recognition Technology in Airport Security Raises Human Rights Concerns
A Reuters article reports on the launch of facial recognition technology at two airports in India (Bengaluru and Hyderabad) as part of airport security has raised privacy concerns among human rights groups in the country. Recently launched paperless biometric technology in the Bengaluru airport identifies passengers by their face and eliminates the practice of passengers presenting boarding passes, passports and other identity documents, and the airport at Hyderabad is also testing facial recognition technology. Human rights groups have raised concerns that such technology creates greater surveillance of individuals and raises privacy concerns.

Surveillance Technology Raises Legal and Human Rights Issues
A recent article in *Forbes* examines the legal and cultural implications of the use of digital surveillance of individuals in public areas. The article notes several examples, including a pending case in the UK, which is challenging the use by police of facial recognition cameras that scan the faces of passers-by, without their consent, and stores these individuals' biometric data. Liberty, a UK-based human rights group, is supporting the plaintiff who asserts that the use of such technology violates data-protection and equality laws. The decision in the case could have major consequences for how automated facial recognition technology is used in the UK as well as implications globally for other countries, according to a recent analysis in the *Financial Times*.

Recent Studies Examine Deaths of Environmental Defenders
A recent article in *Scientific American* highlights recent studies by the non-profit group, Global Witness, which examined the deaths of environmental activists. The study found that Central and South America are the deadliest regions in which to be an environmental defender. Mining and large agriculture projects accounted for the greatest share of deaths, and countries with larger agriculture sectors and more hydroelectric dams tended to have higher numbers of murders per capita. The studies relied on a database compiled and verified through three separate sources, including media stories, local nongovernmental organization reports, and interviews with residents of affected areas. The researchers performed a geospatial analysis of 683 deaths that occurred between 2014 and 2017 (in 2018 another 164 deaths of environmental defenders were reported,

according to a report by Global Witness published last month) and overlaid this information with data pertaining to agricultural harvests, forest cover, mining and dams to see whether the prevalence of these activities correlated with increased murders per capita.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES
Examining Health and Human Rights in the United States
A special section in *Health and Human Rights Journal* examines healthcare and human rights in the United States. The section explores three cases that raised the relationship between health and human rights. The authors of all three papers are medical anthropologists with cross-training in public health or clinical medicine, and all employ qualitative research methods, including audio-recorded interviews, open-ended surveys, and participant observation.

PEOPLE
Welcome Nate Weisenberg
Nate Weisenberg joined the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program as a Program Associate in July 2019. Prior to AAAS, he worked at the Atomic Heritage Foundation, where he co-managed an oral history project on the Manhattan Project and its legacies, and Human Rights Education Associates, where he led marketing and outreach for e-learning courses for human rights practitioners. Nate holds a B.S. in Foreign Service (magna cum laude) from Georgetown University and an M.A. in Public Humanities from Brown University.