

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Celebrates Human Rights Day

Tuesday, December 10 was International Human Rights Day, marking the 71st anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The theme of Human Rights Day this year was “[Youth Standing Up for Human Rights](#).” At AAAS, the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights, and Law Program organized a breakfast and presentation on science and human rights.

Numerous member organizations shared information about Human Rights Day and the Coalition on social media and/or their websites, including the [Acoustical Society of America](#), the [American Association of Geographers](#), the [American Chemical Society](#), the [American Mathematical Society](#), the [American Political Science Association](#), the [Council on Undergraduate Research](#), the [Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice](#), the [Linguistic Society of America](#), and the [Society for the Study of Social Problems](#).

In keeping with this year’s call to action, the Global Alliance shared with its members its [2017 resolution](#) calling on the United States to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Acoustical Society of America’s Panel on Public Policy [shared the text](#) of Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which articulates the human right to science. The [American Chemical Society](#) highlighted its work to assist at risk scientists and encouraged its members to volunteer for these initiatives.

Videos from Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

Recordings of all sessions from the October Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference are now available on the [AAAS YouTube channel](#). Be sure to check out [six new short videos](#) about the Coalition. In these videos, Coalition members and conference attendees reflect on the urgent needs that can be addressed by collaborations between scientists and human rights advocates, explain the importance of the Coalition, and share advice for how to get involved at the intersection of science and human rights. [Watch and share >>](#)

U.S. State Department Unalienable Rights Commission Raises Concerns

Several speakers and participants at Coalition events have authored articles raising concerns on the recently formed Commission of Unalienable Rights, which was formed in July 2019 by US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and which held its first meeting in October. The Commission was formed to provide the Secretary with advice on human rights, but it has raised concerns from human rights and civil rights groups, which say the Commission would weaken human rights protections, particularly with respect to the rights of sexual and gender minorities and the right to reproductive healthcare. [Margaret Satterthwaite](#), former member of the Coalition Steering Committee and member of the Science and Human Rights Innovators Committee, who is Co-Chair, Center for Human Rights, and Faculty Director, Robert L. Bernstein Institute for Human Rights at New York University, co-authored an [article](#) to highlight specific issues and policy positions of Commission members that raises concerns over human rights protection. [Catherine Flowers](#), a past Coalition speaker and Executive Director of the Alabama Center for the Rural Enterprise Community Development Corporation (ACRE), also co-authored an [article](#) examining the human rights implications of the Commission.

ASA Issues New Statement of Support for Greek Statistician Andreas Georgiou

During its November 2019 meeting, the Board of Directors of the American Statistical Association (ASA) approved another [statement](#) of support for the Greek statistician, Andreas Georgiou, who for the past nine

years has been facing prosecution for the way he discharged his duties while he was President of the Greek Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) from 2010-15. He was charged with falsification of Greece's official deficit and debt statistics, an action that was widely condemned with official statements of protest from the ASA.

CALLS FOR INPUT

Dec. 31: UN Study on Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities and Climate Change

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is requesting input for an analytical study and report on the promotion and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change. Inputs are due December 31, 2019 and further information may be found [here](#).

Jan. 13-24, 2020: UN Global Online Consultation on Civic Space

The United Nations is inviting civil society to share its advice on how best to achieve the three pillars of the UN's civil society work: (1) promoting civic space by advising on, and proactively advocating for, safe participation of diverse civil society groups in national decision-making processes; (2) partnering with civil society by enhancing civil society engagement with the UN; and (3) protecting civil society actors. The online consultation will be January 13 to January 24, 2020. Further information may be found [here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Dec. 31: Nominations for Scholars at Risk's 2020 Courage to Think Award

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is [seeking nominations](#) for the 2020 Courage to Think Award, which will be presented during the Courage to Think Award Dinner at the SAR Network 2020 Global Congress in Baltimore on March 27, 2020. The Courage to Think Award recognizes individuals, groups or institutions that have demonstrated an exemplary commitment to protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom, whether through their professional work, private or community service, or by facing personal risk. Nominations are due by December 31, 2019.

Jan. 14: RightsCon Costa Rica: Call for Proposals

RightsCon Costa Rica, a conference for civil society representatives, technology companies, journalists, academics, lawyers, technologists, and start-ups, is calling for proposals for sessions. The deadline for submissions is January 14, 2020. Further information, including the proposal guide, may be found [here](#).

Jan. 15-Feb. 25: Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development E-Learning Course

The Human Rights Center of the University for Peace, a treaty organization of the United Nations, is offering an [online course](#), *Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development*, from January 15 to February 25, 2020. The course will address the issues involved in the field of indigenous peoples' rights, beginning with who qualifies to be "indigenous peoples," the scope of their right to self-determination, the international and regional legal frameworks for the protection of their rights, the challenges therein, and the debates surrounding the concept of indigenous governance.

Jan. 17-19: Creating Balance Conference on STEM and Social Justice

The University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu is holding a [Creating Balance Conference](#), which brings together educators, parents, students, activists, and community members to explore the connections between STEM education and social justice. The conference is being held January 17 to January 19, 2020.

Jan. 27-30: ACM FAT* Conference

The [Association for Computing Machinery's Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency](#) (ACM FAT*), a computer science conference with a cross-disciplinary focus that brings together researchers and practitioners interested in fairness, accountability, and transparency in socio-technical systems, will be

held January 27–30 in Barcelona, Spain.

Jan. 31: USPTO Accepting Applications for Patents for Humanity Awards Competition

The US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is [accepting applications](#) for the Patents for Humanity awards competition to recognize innovators who use game-changing technology to meet global humanitarian challenges. The program provides business incentives for reaching those in need: winners receive an acceleration certificate to expedite select proceedings at the USPTO, as well as public recognition of their work. Applications are due January 31, 2020.

Feb. 3: Journal of Academic Freedom Call for Papers

The *Journal of Academic Freedom* of the American Association of University Professors, a nonprofit membership association of faculty and other academic professionals, is [seeking](#) original, scholarly articles exploring the ways the many managerial techniques in use on campuses today affect academic freedom and democratic faculty governance for its next volume, to be published in the fall of 2020. Electronic submissions of no more than 8,000 words are due by February 3, 2020 and must include an abstract of about 150 words.

March 12-13: Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights Conference (Brussels)

The Academy of European Law is holding a [conference](#), *Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Human Rights*, on March 12-13, 2020 in Brussels, Belgium. The conference, which will be livestreamed, provides a space for legal debate on the current impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on individual human rights, on its regulation, and on the application in practice of legal principles related to AI in line with the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

March 25-28: SAR Global Congress

Scholars at Risk (SAR) has opened registration for the [SAR Network 2020 Global Congress](#) to be held March 25-28, 2020 in Washington D.C. and Baltimore and convened in partnership with Johns Hopkins University and AAAS. The 2020 Global Congress theme, *Truth, Power & Society: The Promise of Higher Education in Challenging Times* reflects three core roles of higher education: research and teaching leading to new insights and understanding, evidence-based contributions to public discourse and policy, and meaningful engagement with the broadest public good.

Job: Physicians for Human Rights: MediCapt Technical Lead

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is [seeking](#) a Technical Lead for its MediCapt mobile application that is used to capture, preserve, and transmit forensic medical evidence to the justice sector. The Technical Lead will be responsible for managing all technical aspects of the MediCapt tool and will report to the Deputy Director of Programs/Director of the Program on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones.

Job: Data Science Lead, IDinsight

IDinsight, a global advisory, data analytics, and research organization, is [seeking](#) a Data Science Lead to grow and build a data science team using tools to tackle pressing challenges, such as extreme poverty, infant mortality, food security, and climate change.

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

PBS Analysis Examines How Companies Are Reducing Bias in AI Systems in Hiring Process

A recent [analysis](#) on PBS outlines corrective action taken to mitigate employment discrimination through the development of software that provides greater accountability and transparency in the hiring process and addresses biases inherent in algorithms used in artificial intelligence systems applied in that process.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Dutch Court Rules That Emissions Reduction Is a Human Right in Climate-Change Case

In an important case relating to government obligations with respect to climate change, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands in The Hague [ruled](#) that the Dutch government must reduce emissions by at least 25% by the end of 2020 compared to 1990 levels, which exceeds the goal of the European Union of 20%. The ruling denied the Dutch government's appeal of an earlier ruling in favor of the [Urgenda Foundation](#), an environmental group that first filed the case in 2013 on behalf of a group of Dutch citizens. The government has argued that a legal obligation to meet a specific target would limit its flexibility in determining how to reduce emissions. In issuing its ruling, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands said that it based its judgment on the UN Climate Convention and the obligations of the state under the European Convention on Human Rights. In the ruling, the judge said that the European Human Rights Convention Articles 2 and 8—the right to life and the right to respect for private and family life—indicate that action on climate change falls under the umbrella of human rights protection. An [article](#) in the *New York Times* further examines the implications of the decision on a global basis.

UN High Commissioner Stresses Need to Address Human Rights and Climate Change

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet issued a [statement](#) on December 10, in recognition of Human Rights Day, with a particular emphasis on the need to address the human rights challenges arising from climate change. “[A]mong the many human rights challenges that have been metastasizing during the first two decades of the 21st century, the global climate emergency presents perhaps the most profound planet-wide threat to human rights that we have seen since World War II. From the right to life, to health, to food, water and shelter, to our rights to be free of discrimination, to development and to self-determination, its impacts are already making themselves felt...Climate harms will not be halted by national borders – and reactions based on hostile nationalism, or short-term financial considerations, will not only fail: they will tear our world apart. The struggles for climate justice and human rights are not a political quarrel. This is not about left or right: it is about rights – and wrongs.”

Investor Advocacy Group Calls for Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence

The [Investor Alliance for Human Rights](#), a collective action platform for responsible investment, issued an [invitation](#) to all institutional investors to sign on to a statement entitled, “[The Investor Case for Mandatory Human Rights Due Diligence](#).” The statement calls on all governments to develop, implement, and enforce mandatory human rights due diligence requirements for all companies headquartered or operating within their own jurisdictions or, where appropriate, to further strengthen these regulatory regimes where they already exist. This statement follows the previous Investor Alliance statement entitled “[Making Finance Work for People and Planet](#),” which calls on governments to require investors to consider human rights throughout the investment lifecycle.

Human Rights Advocates, Public Seek Privacy Protection with Facial Recognition Technology

A Reuters [article](#) outlined a growing public call for data protection and privacy laws over the use of facial recognition technology in India following the use of facial recognition technology at a cafe chain in the country that that triggered concerns among customers and human rights advocates. A personal data protection bill was scheduled to be introduced in the current parliamentary session on December 13, 2019.

UK Citizen Appealing Ruling Over Facial Recognition Technology and Human Rights

A UK citizen is [appealing](#) a court ruling that South Wales Police did not breach his human rights by using automated facial recognition (AFR) technology. He is challenging the use by law-enforcement of its AFR system, which analyzed his biometric data (i.e., digital mapping of a person's facial features) in a public setting without his knowledge or consent. The High Court in the UK ruled in September in favor of law enforcement and noted what it viewed as an important safeguard used by police with the system, which was that a potential match suggested by software was reviewed by the officer operating the equipment before the person was approached by police. However, the citizen contends that the South Wales Police is subjecting the public to unjustified surveillance with the AFR system.

UN Secretary-General Underscores Free, Secure and Open Access to the Internet

UN Secretary-General António Guterres [highlighted](#) the importance of an accessible, free, secure and open Internet in achieving equality at the Internet Governance Forum, which was held in Berlin in late November. Globally, some 3.6 billion people do not have affordable Internet access, he noted. He also highlighted challenges in cyber-security and the division that digital technologies can cause, particularly through social media platforms, in political and social discourse. He encouraged conference participants to explore the possibility of establishing a Global Commitment on Digital Trust and Security, as recommended by the UN High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, launched last year, to agree on global norms for cyberspace. He added that he will soon appoint a Technology Envoy to help nurture a shared digital future that recognizes these issues and bridge divisions.

Scientific Publishers Address Ethics in Research with Facial Recognition Technology

A recent [article](#) in *Nature* outlines that two scientific publishers (Springer and Wiley) are reviewing the ethics of research papers in which scientists backed by China's government used DNA or facial-recognition technology to study minority groups in the country, such as the predominantly Muslim Uyghur population. This concern is part of a larger [issue](#) of China's government using facial recognition technology and other digital tools in the surveillance of minority groups.

India's Biometric ID System Raises Human Rights Issues

An [article](#) in the *Jakarta Post* outlines the underrepresentation of certain groups, such as the homeless and transgender groups, in India's national digital identity system, Aadhaar. Aadhaar, which is linked to an individual's fingerprints, face and iris scan, was introduced in 2009 to streamline welfare payments and reduce wastage in public spending. Human rights activists and technology experts have raised further concerns about the system relating to the privacy and safety of data, the susceptibility of biometrics to failure, and the misuse of data for profiling or surveillance.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Amnesty International Report Evaluates Facebook and Google

Amnesty International has issued a new [report](#), *Surveillance Giants*, to examine how the surveillance-based business model of Facebook and Google is incompatible with the right to privacy and poses a threat to a range of other rights, including freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of thought, and the right to equality and non-discrimination.

Amnesty International Updates Citizen Evidence Lab

Amnesty International is [launching](#) an updated version of its [Citizen Evidence Lab website](#) to bring to use open-source and other digital investigation tools that have advanced how evidence of serious human rights violations and other crimes are gathered and preserved. The upgraded site provides a space for human rights researchers, investigators, students and journalists to explore and share investigative techniques in human rights.

New Reports on AI Inequality, Automated Decision Systems and Disability, Bias, & AI

AI Now, a research institute at New York University examining the social implications of artificial intelligence (AI), has issued three separate reports relating to the civil rights and human rights implications of AI. [AI Now's 2019 Report](#) examines growing movements addressing AI inequality by looking at the coalitions involved and the research, arguments, and tactics used. It also offers recommendations to policymakers, advocates and researchers on how to address the use of AI in ways that widen inequality. The report [Confronting Black Boxes: A Shadow Report of the New York City Automated Decision Task Force](#) examines a New York City task force that was charged with implementing an automated decision system (ADS). The report provides a record of the task force's review process and offers other municipalities and governments recommendations based on collective experience and current research insights on government use of ADS. The report, [Disability, Bias, and AI](#), examines the intersection of disability, bias, and AI and identifies areas where more research and intervention are needed.

New Report Examines Water and Sanitation Access Challenges in the US

Dig Deep, a human rights non-profit working group, and the US Water Alliance, a non-profit organization, have issued a report, [Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States: A National Action Plan](#), to offer an analysis of the water- and sanitation-access challenge in the US and to propose a plan of action to ensure equitable water access through the action by the water sector, government agencies, philanthropy, nonprofits, and the public.

Interview with New UNAIDS Head

A recent [interview](#) in *Science* with Winnie Byanyima, a diplomat and Ugandan politician who has run the nonprofit Oxfam for the past seven years and who now heads the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), a Geneva, Switzerland-based operation, examines the challenges and opportunities in the global agenda for ending the epidemic.

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Editor: Patricia Van Arnum

Associate Editor: Mary Cate Carroll

Contributors: Joel Ericson, Theresa Harris, Nate Weisenberg, Jessica Wyndham