

AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

Thank you all who participated in the AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference! You can now watch highlights from the conference on the [AAAS YouTube channel](#). You can also read [AAAS's article](#) on the conference. In the coming weeks we will also be adding recordings, news, and next steps to the [conference portal](#).

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

American Physical Society Announces 2020 Andrei Sakharov Prize Winners

The American Physical Society has [awarded](#) the 2020 [Andrei Sakharov Prize](#), which recognizes outstanding leadership and/or achievements of scientists in upholding human rights, to: [Ayşe Erzan](#), Professor, Department of Physics (retired), Istanbul Technical University, for her lifelong commitment to human rights, especially for her steadfast defense of the rights of citizens to criticize those in power, even at great personal cost; and to [Xiaoxing Xi](#), Professor of Physics, Temple University, for his advocacy in support of the US scientific community and open scientific exchange, especially his efforts to clarify the nature of international scientific collaboration in cases involving allegations of scientific espionage.

ASA Ombuds Service and Updated ASA Activities Conduct Policy

The American Statistical Association (ASA) has introduced a [program](#) to provide ongoing independent, confidential ombuds services to support the association's commitment to providing an atmosphere in which personal respect and intellectual growth are valued and the free expression and exchange of ideas are encouraged.

Coalition Recognizes Science and Human Rights Innovators

The AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition honored Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) on October 23 during the AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference for its MediCapt app with the inaugural [Science and Human Rights Innovator](#) recognition. The MediCapt app was developed by PHR in collaboration with partners in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It enables healthcare providers to securely document and store forensic medical evidence, which can then be used to support the prosecution of perpetrators of sexual violence.

Case of Greek Statistician Andreas Georgiou Highlighted in Journal

World Economics Journal has published an [article](#) outlining the case of Andreas Georgiou, who for the past eight 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 statistic, an action that was widely condemned with official statements of protest from the American Statistical Association (ASA), which continues to [advocate](#) for him, and the International Statistical Institute.

CALLS FOR INPUT

Dec. 12: 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](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

New Initiative for Supporting At-Risk and Refugee Scholars

As part of its ongoing commitment to academic freedom and in response to a global refugee crisis, the National Humanities Center, a private, nonprofit organization for advancing study in the humanities, in partnership with Duke University and the Institute of International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund, has launched a [new initiative](#) to fund at-risk and refugee scholars by providing them a haven to pursue their work in safety and in an environment designed to foster scholarly excellence. Scholars selected as a part of this program will be granted up to two years' status as Visiting Scholars at Duke University and as Resident Associates at the Center, allowing them the opportunity to conduct their research and enjoy the benefits afforded other members of these scholarly communities. Further information may be found [here](#).

Dec. 2: Online Course: "Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters"

Scholars at Risk has launched an online [course](#), "Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters," a free online course created by the Academic Refugee project. The course is available through December 2, 2019.

Dec. 9: 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.

Dec. 15: Early Registration Deadline for 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.

Jan. 15-Feb. 25, 2020: 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. 27-30, 2020: 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, 2020: 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.

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.

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

US State Department Holds First Public Meeting of Commission on Unalienable Rights

The US Department of State held its first public [meeting](#) of the [Commission on Unalienable Rights](#), which was formed in July 2019 by US Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo to provide the Secretary with advice on human rights. The formation of the Commission has raised concerns from human rights and civil rights groups, including Human Rights First, that the Commission would weaken human rights protections, particularly with respect to the rights of sexual and gender minorities and the right to reproductive healthcare. In July, at the formation of the Commission, both [Human Rights First](#) and the [American Psychological Association](#) issued letters to state their concerns. The *Columbia Human Rights Law Review (HRLR)* has launched a [HRLR Online essay series](#) examining the human rights implications of the Commission.

Genealogy Sites Provide Benefits But Also Privacy Concerns in Criminal Investigations

A recent [article](#) in the *American Bar Association (ABA) Journal* examines both the benefits and privacy concerns raised by the use of genealogy sites in criminal investigations. The article outlines how private databases, such as 23andMe and Ancestry.com, through DNA collection can provide information on individuals such as height, geographic ancestry, or whether an individual carries a genetic disease. Such information may be helpful to exonerate individuals in criminal investigations, but the use of such information by law enforcement also raises privacy concerns. The article examines how certain states and other jurisdictions are addressing this issue.

IBM Calls for Precision Regulation for Facial Recognition Technology

In a recent [blog post](#), IBM advocated for the use of “precision regulation” that involves “carefully targeting policy to address legitimate concerns while promoting innovation, protecting consumer rights and ensuring accountability” for facial recognition technology. It supports three main elements of regulation of facial

recognition technology: (1) notice and consent, under which, as a general rule, organizations should be required to obtain an individual's consent before using facial recognition to authenticate his/her identity; (2) inclusion of facial recognition technology on the US Department of Commerce's Commerce Control List of so-called "dual use" products that have both commercial or military applications and are therefore tightly controlled or all out prohibited for export to certain countries depending on how they will be used; and (3) a balanced approach by law enforcement to enable its access to technologies and tools while maintaining privacy and civil liberties.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Recent Study Asserts Free Internet Access as a Human Right

A recent [study](#) in the *Journal of Applied Philosophy* by Dr. Merten Reglitz, Lecturer in Global Ethics at the University of Birmingham in the UK, asserts that free Internet access must be considered a human right as people unable to get online, particularly in developing countries, lack meaningful ways to influence political discourse and action. The article explains that as political engagement increasingly takes place online, basic freedoms, such as free expression, freedom of information, and freedom of assembly are undermined if some citizens have access to the Internet and others do not.

New Initiative for Scholars at Risk Launched in Europe

Ten European partner organizations have announced a new [initiative](#) to support researchers at risk, InSPIREurope, which is funded under the European Commission's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and coordinated by Scholars at Risk Europe at Maynooth University, Ireland. The InSPIREurope project is intended to facilitate trans-national cooperation between European and national initiatives and programs in support of researchers at risk.

Plan for Facial Recognition System in India Raises Human Rights Concerns

A [project](#) by the Indian government to build the world's largest facial recognition system is raising [human rights and privacy concerns](#). The proposed network would allow police from across the country's 29 states and seven union territories access to a single, centralized database. The project is detailed in a [report](#) by India's National Crime Records Bureau, which requested bids from companies to build the project; the companies had until October 11 to submit their proposals.

Russian Court Dismisses Lawsuit Against Gov't Facial Recognition System

Earlier this month, a Russian court [dismissed](#) a lawsuit filed by the Russian women's activist, Alena Popova, over government use of a facial recognition system. She filed the [lawsuit](#) claiming the government's use of video with facial recognition technology violated privacy rights. The lawsuit, filed in early October 2019, said that the system processes citizens' biometric data without their written consent, thereby violating Russia's law on personal data and the right to privacy guaranteed in the Russian constitution.

Facebook's WhatsApp In Lawsuit with Cyber-Security Firm Over Human Rights Concerns

WhatsApp, a cross-platform messaging and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook, has filed a [lawsuit](#) against NSO Group, an Israeli cyber-security company, in which it claims that the technology sold by NSO was used to target the mobile phones of more than 1,400 of its users, which included human rights defenders and others, in 20 different countries during a 14-day period from the end of April to the middle of May 2019. WhatsApp said it had worked with Citizen Lab, an academic research group based at the University of Toronto's Munk School, to identify the victims of the attacks and the technology used against them. The company is seeking a permanent injunction blocking NSO from attempting to access WhatsApp computer systems and those of its parent company, Facebook. In September, NSO [announced](#) that it had launched a new human rights policy and supporting governance framework to bring the company into alignment with the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#).

Fortune Op-Ed Urges Human Rights Commitment in China for US Businesses

A recent [op-ed](#) in *Fortune* asserts the importance of human rights protection in China for U.S. businesses. The article says that as China and the U.S. compete for economic and political influence globally, U.S. businesses need to “firmly” support universal human rights principles and make economic choices consistent with that commitment.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

New Report on AI-Enabled Human Rights Monitoring

Amnesty International and Element AI, a global developer of artificial intelligence (AI) software, have issued a [report to](#) provide a perspective on the potential impact that AI technologies could have on the field of human rights monitoring.

Uyghur Human Rights Project Issues Report on Destruction of Uyghur Mosques and Shrines

A new [report](#) by the Uyghur Human Rights Project presents evidence of the complete or partial destruction of over 100 mosques by the Chinese government. In the [report](#), researcher Bahram Sintash and the Uyghur Human Rights Project cross-reference satellite imagery, photographs, and witness testimony to document the Chinese government’s campaign to eliminate the physical sites of Uyghur Islamic practice. Sintash presented the report at an [event](#) co-hosted by the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, D.C. in late October.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment has issued a [report](#), *Safe Climate*, to outline the need for action to address “the current global climate emergency on the enjoyment of human rights and the crucial role for human rights in catalyzing action to address climate change.” The report outlines the obligations of states and the responsibilities of businesses and provides practical recommendations to address the global reliance on fossil fuels, provide mitigation activities, enhance adaptation to protect vulnerable people, increase climate finance, address financing loss and damage, and strengthen UN institutions in these efforts.

UN Report Cautions Against the Digital Welfare State

Philip Alston, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, has issued a new [report](#) over [concerns](#) for what he terms “the digital welfare state,” in which systems of social protection and assistance are increasingly driven by digital data and technologies. The report, which he presented before the UN General Assembly in October, says that the digitization of welfare systems has very often been used to promote deep reductions in the overall welfare budget, a narrowing of the beneficiary pool, the elimination of some services, the introduction of additional forms of conditionality and behavioral modification goals, and the imposition of stronger sanctions regimes.

Free to Think 2019 Report Released

Scholars at Risk (SAR) has issued its [Free to Think 2019](#) report, which analyzes attacks on higher education communities around the world. The report uses data from SAR’s [Academic Freedom Monitoring Project](#) to identify trends on issues such as violent attacks targeting scholars and students, wrongful imprisonment and persecution of researchers, limitations on student expression, and restrictions on academic travel. This year’s report addresses 324 attacks across 56 countries.

PEOPLE

AAAS Hires New CEO

Sudip Parikh will join AAAS as chief executive officer and executive publisher of the *Science* family of journals in January 2020. [Learn more](#) >>

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