
Note: AAAS continues to monitor the developments related to COVID-19. All staff based at AAAS headquarters are working from home until at least September 7. AAAS conference facilities are closed, and all meetings through December 31 are canceled, postponed, or held remotely. The Coalition Secretariat will advise members of any future changes to the Coalition's calendar. Stay safe and well!

COALITION CALENDAR

October 22-23: 2020 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference (Online)

Registration is open for the Coalition's annual conference! This year, all sessions will be held online, including keynote speakers, panels, workshops, and "ask me anything" sessions. We are pleased to announce that this year's conference will be co-sponsored by Human Rights Educators USA and the University and College Consortium for Human Rights Education. This collaboration will focus on engaging students and building partnerships between the Coalition's members and human rights education experts at colleges and universities.

A preliminary agenda will be available soon. Register by September 1 for early registration rates. Student/early career professionals, individual affiliated members of the Coalition and members of a Coalition organization, NGO employees, and retired/emeritus/seniors all receive discounts on registration. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

"Advancing the ACS Core Values of DI&R Through Partnerships"

In a [Comment](#) for *Chemical & Engineering News*, Dorothy Phillips, a member of the Coalition's Steering Committee, Coalition Council representative for the American Chemical Society (ACS), and an ACS Director-at-Large, describes ACS' work in diversity, inclusion and respect (DI&R). She highlights the importance of partnerships with organizations of scientists and engineers that historically have been underrepresented in STEM.

American Political Science Association Article on New Technologies and Human Rights

An [article](#) in the *American Political Science Review*, a journal of the American Political Science Association, provides a summary of a new conceptual representation of human rights as a structured taxonomy, similar to a family tree, with broad concepts that branch into more specific, nested rights. This approach seeks to track human rights abuses over time to better ascertain if human rights abuses are actually increasing or showing an increase due to advances in technology that led to improved information flow and reporting. The new approach using a taxonomy provides a way to distill vast amounts of evolving information systematically and over time. Civil rights, for example, might branch into freedom of movement, assembly, religion, speech, etc., each of which might also branch into more specific categories of their own. In a country with long-standing abuses of labor rights, for example, that broader category would appear in early versions of its rights taxonomy. Those tracking rights violations could see when new information allowed future reports to fill in more specific branches underneath that concept, such as providing details on working conditions, rather than indicating that abuses are materially worsening over time.

APA Responds to Draft Report from Commission on Unalienable Rights

The American Psychological Association (APA) [issued comments](#) on a [draft report](#) issued by the Commission on Unalienable Rights under the U.S. Department of State which provided a review of U.S. human rights policy. The report, which was open for public input until July 30, was criticized by human rights groups, including [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights First](#).

The APA provided mixed reactions to the draft report. It acknowledged the value of the report in outlining a basis for human rights in U.S. foreign policy and a review of U.S. founding principles and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to guide human rights and foreign policy, but said, “we are concerned about the draft report’s establishment of a perceived hierarchy of human rights and the current threats to the U.S. being viewed as a global model for human rights.” The APA raised concerns over the draft report’s apparent valuing of certain rights (i.e., property rights, religious liberty, and democratic participation) over others. “While these rights are vital, such a narrow focus could lead to the widespread neglect of broad categories of other rights,” said the APA in its comments. It said that concern is “magnified by the public statements of several Commission members opposing the right to reproductive health care and the rights of sexual and gender minorities, which are dismissed in the draft report as ‘divisive social and political controversies.’”

COVID-19 & Human Rights Resources

The Coalition Secretariat continues to update the COVID-19 and human rights [resources page](#) on the Coalition website. Please feel free to share additional resources you have found helpful, or information about what your organization is doing to respond to the pandemic. In addition, we continue to share video interviews from our [Responding to COVID-19: Science and Human Rights](#) series. All of the videos can be watched on [AAAS’ YouTube channel](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Online Course by Scholars at Risk: Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters

Scholars at Risk, an international network of institutions and individuals whose mission is to protect scholars and promote academic freedom, is holding an online course, *Dangerous Questions: Why Academic Freedom Matters*. Further information, including how to register and start dates, may be found [here](#).

Job: August 23: Senior Adviser, Crisis Evidence Lab, Amnesty International

Amnesty International’s Evidence Lab, which sits within its Crisis Response program, is looking for a Senior Adviser to join its multi-disciplinary team for a one-year parental leave cover. The Senior Adviser will participate in the Evidence Lab’s research and analysis in support of Amnesty’s global human rights efforts, which includes, but is not limited to, the handling of large data sets, the use of open-source information, and the analysis of geospatial data. Applications are due August 23, and further information may be found [here](#). Examples of past projects may be found in the lab’s [Twitter thread](#).

Sept. 2: Introduction to Human Rights Online Course

GVI USA, in partnership with the University of Richmond and the University of North Carolina Charlotte, is offering an [Introduction to Human Rights](#) online course as part of its Foundations in Sustainable Development Program. Enrollment closes on September 2. More information is [available here](#).

Job: Research Fellow, Media Ecosystems, Shorenstein Center, Harvard

The Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University is seeking a research fellow with an interest in social institutions, digital media, and information integrity to support the collection and curation of case studies for the *Global Media Manipulation Case Book*. The Research Fellow will conduct research on topics related to public discourse, politics, and society, including the propagation of disinformation and media manipulation and its impact on political communication and democratic processes. Further information, including how to apply, may be found [here](#).

Job: Research Manager, Center for Democracy & Technology

The Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) is seeking a research manager to work on issues at the intersection of technology and human rights. Responsibilities include designing and implementing research projects to inform the development of CDT's policy positions and contributing to U.S. and international dialogue about key issues in technology policy. Further information, including how to apply, may be found [here](#).

Opportunity: Scholars at Risk's Practitioners at Risk Program

[Scholars at Risk](#) (SAR) is seeking to establish a new program to explore increased on-campus support for practitioners at risk. SAR's work arranging temporary positions for at-risk individuals focuses on university scholars and researchers but has always included a wide range of others targeted for their ideas, including journalists, writers, democracy/human rights advocates, lawyers, and artists. Information about this new "practitioners at risk" program is outlined [in this flyer](#), which describes the developing affinity group of individuals interested in supporting practitioners at risk, including through inviting them for short visits on campus. Among other activities, affinity group members may provide advice and pose questions about supporting practitioners at risk; seek review of candidates for positions on their campus; nominate candidates for any available temporary positions elsewhere; and apply for co-funding for temporary positions, whenever such funds might be available. SAR has initiated a listserv for all group members. To join the affinity group and listserv, fill out [this survey](#).

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

UN Recognizes Human Rights Impact on 75th Anniversary of First Nuclear Test

Baskut Tuncak, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, issued a [statement](#) on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Trinity nuclear test on July 16, 1945, the world's inaugural test of a nuclear device, in New Mexico. "The 'Trinity' test of the United States not only marked the start of a new era for mankind and [a] prelude to two horrific explosions suffered by [the] innocent people of Japan, but a long and tragic legacy of discrimination, a forgotten part of the legacy of nuclear weapons testing by States," said Tuncak in a July 16, 2020 statement. He pointed to the detonation of hundreds of nuclear bombs over vulnerable communities in the Pacific from 1946 to 1958 and the disposal of hazardous radioactive waste on lands and territories of indigenous peoples as a legacy of nuclear testing. "The discriminatory nature of nuclear testing should be acknowledged and addressed as part of the ongoing conversation on systemic racism and nuclear disarmament," he said. "Unaddressed, the dangers of radioactive contamination will persist for centuries, and so too will the harmful legacy of racism that surrounds this tragic chapter of humanity."

U.S. Gov't-Mandated Sale of TikTok Raises Privacy and Human Rights Concerns

The U.S. government and privacy groups have raised concerns over the data collection and data processing practices of the video sharing site TikTok, which is owned by ByteDance, a privately held Beijing-based company, and potential misuse of that data by the Chinese government. Citing national security and privacy concerns, President Donald Trump [signed an executive order](#) earlier this month (August 6) that would require

ByteDance to sell or spin off its U.S. TikTok business within 90 days or face a ban in the U.S. Technology companies, including Microsoft, have expressed [interest](#) in acquiring the operations of TikTok in the U.S. and elsewhere. Under the order, ByteDance is [expected](#) to destroy all its copies of TikTok data attached to U.S. users and inform the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States when it has destroyed all that data. In addition to executive action, Congress is proceeding with its own measures. Earlier this month, Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS), Chair of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, and Senator John Thune (R-SD), Chair of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation and the Internet, [both sent a letter](#) asking the U.S. Federal Trade Commission to investigate TikTok's data collection and data processing practices. The U.S. Senate also unanimously [passed a bill](#) that would prohibit the TikTok app on US government-issued devices.

Human rights groups have also addressed the issue. An [article](#) earlier this year by Human Rights Watch outlined the relationship between TikTok/ByteDance and the potential misuse of the app by the Chinese government in surveillance and censorship efforts. The article cites a [report](#) by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Freedom House issued a [commentary](#) calling India's recent ban on TikTok and other social media apps similar to other government practices, such as internet shutdowns and website blocks, that limit freedom of expression online. To address concerns about TikTok while respecting individual rights, the group says governments should enhance privacy protections rather than restrict access to online content. Access Now, a digital rights group, [criticized](#) Trump's executive order as a form of government censorship and instead called for better data privacy protection measures.

U.S. Gov't Imposes Sanctions on 11 Chinese Companies Over Human Rights

The U.S. government [has banned](#) 11 Chinese companies from purchasing U.S. technology and products without a special license on the grounds that the companies were involved in human rights violations in China's campaign targeting Muslim minorities, including the Uighurs, in the Xinjiang region. A recent [article](#) in *The New York Times* explains that the ban only prevents U.S. companies from selling components or technologies to these Chinese companies without a license, not from purchasing products. However, in practice US companies are unlikely to continue doing business with any firm named on a government list for forced labor or other abuses in Xinjiang. The action follows a [ban](#) by the U.S. government on several Chinese officials for human rights abuses, mainly against the Uighur ethnic group.

National Academies Committee on Human Rights Supports Scientists in COVID Response

The Committee on Human Rights of the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released [a statement](#) condemning the intimidation and threats faced by scientists and public health officials working on the COVID-19 response in the U.S. "As COVID-19 continues to spread throughout the United States, we are alarmed by reports of widespread intimidation of scientists and public health experts working to combat the pandemic," said the statement. "Numerous experts have been disparaged, harassed, and threatened with physical violence for doing their jobs: gathering and interpreting data on COVID-19 and providing science-based guidance to promote health and safety...To overcome the crisis we are facing, which is most severely impacting vulnerable populations in our country, we must marshal the expertise of the scientific and medical communities and ensure that they are able to carry out their work without intimidation or reprisal."

Human Rights Groups Oppose Rule Banning Asylum Seekers on Public Health Grounds

Human rights and public health groups have voiced their opposition to a [proposed rule](#) issued last month that would amend regulations of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to allow consideration of emergency public health concerns based on communicable disease when making a determination of asylum. The proposed rule would allow the U.S. government to consider whether an individual poses a risk of further spreading infectious or highly contagious illnesses or disease because of declared public health emergencies or because of conditions in their country of origin or point of embarkation.

The proposed rule would also apply this security bar, including its use on public health grounds, to the preliminary credible fear screening stage, the point in the asylum process in which asylum seekers subject to expedited removal are permitted an interview with immigration officials over a credible fear of persecution or torture if they return to their country. Public comment on the proposed rule ended August 10.

Human Rights Watch issued [comments](#) opposing the proposed rule on public health, national security, and human rights grounds. It says that the proposed rule is inconsistent with the U.S.'s obligations under the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and customary international law. [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights First](#) also issued statements opposing the proposed rule. A [letter](#) signed by 170 experts from public health schools, medical schools, and other US institutions also denounces the proposed rule.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN Chief Calls for Nuclear Disarmament on 75th Anniversary of Atomic Bombings in Japan

In a [video message](#) delivered to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony in Japan, UN Secretary-General António Guterres paid tribute to the victims of the atomic bombings of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945. Guterres advocated for continued international efforts for nuclear disarmament. Calling for the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture to be safeguarded and strengthened, the UN chief cited next year's [Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) as an opportunity for governments to "return to this shared vision." He also noted the importance of the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), which has not yet entered into force, and the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty](#), which "remains a top priority in order to entrench and institutionalize the global norm against nuclear testing." "The only way to totally eliminate nuclear risk is to totally eliminate nuclear weapons," [Guterres added](#). "The United Nations and I will continue to work with all those who seek to achieve our common goal: a world free of nuclear weapons."

Proposed Law in Turkey Limiting Social Media Companies Raises Censorship Concerns

A proposed law in Turkey that would impose regulations on social media companies has raised [concerns](#) over government practices of censorship and restricting online expression. The bill, which was passed by Turkey's parliament and is expected to be signed into law by its president, requires foreign social media companies with over 1 million users, such as Twitter and Facebook, to have a representative in the country and store domestic user data in Turkey. The proposed law would also impose fines of up to \$1.5 million and set bandwidth restrictions and advertising bans for failure to comply. The government says the bill is as an effort to protect the public from disinformation while others say it is an attempt to limit freedom of speech and silence critics of the government.

Content Moderation on Internet Could Have Unintended Impact for Human Rights Groups

A recent [article](#) in *The Washington Post* highlighted concerns by human rights groups that initiatives by social media companies to curtail misinformation and hate speech through content moderation could have unintended consequences for researchers and advocates who use the internet to document and monitor conflicts and human rights abuses. The article points out that automated tools used in content moderation cannot exercise nuanced judgment and are not equipped to analyze context, and are, therefore, largely unable to differentiate footage documenting human rights abuses from harmful propaganda.

UN Human Rights Experts Warn of Gov't Practices Limiting Online Expression

Six United Nations human rights participated in RightsCon, an annual conference on human rights in the digital age, in late July to discuss a range of topics, including lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, surveillance technologies, security and data collection, racial discrimination, and online attacks against human rights defenders and protest movements. "COVID-19 has made us even more reliant on digital technologies and the space they create for civic engagement," they said in a July 30, 2020 [statement](#). "With the closing of

civic space and restrictions on offline media, access to universal, open, affordable, secure, and stable internet is vital to save lives, to prevent abuses, to continue to promote and protect human rights and urgently increase access to information... Digital technologies that construct and surround the space in which we conduct our lives during these unprecedented times must not be used by governments or companies to restrict fundamental freedoms, reduce civic space, and target civil society actors, including human rights defenders.”

UN Human Rights Experts Support Restoration of Internet in Ethiopia

Four United Nations human rights experts issued a [statement](#) to support the restoration of broadband and Wi-Fi in Ethiopia and called on the government to respect the right of people to demonstrate peacefully. Some service was restored in mid-July after the Ethiopian government shut down the internet amid civil unrest sparked by the killing of Hachalu Hundessa, a popular Oromo singer and human rights defender, in late June. “Access to the internet is closely related to the right of peaceful assembly,” said Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to peaceful assembly and association, in a July 21, 2020 statement. “We have time and again asked the government to refrain from imposing internet disruptions, including at the 44th session of the Human Rights Council in July 2020, and I hereby renew our call on the Government to fully restore mobile internet and data services.”

Climate Change and Human Rights Protection Debated in Case in Australia

A [report](#) in *The Guardian* says that the Australian government has asked the UN Human Rights Committee, which monitors compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to dismiss a claim by residents of the Torres Strait Islands, off the northern coast of Australia, that climate change is having an impact on their human rights. The complaint, filed more than 12 months ago, argues that the Australian government had failed to take adequate action to reduce emissions or pursue proper adaptation measures on the islands and, as a consequence, had failed fundamental human rights obligations to Torres Strait Islander people. The government is reported to have asserted to the UN committee that the case should be dismissed because it concerns future risks rather than current impacts and, therefore, the claim is inadmissible.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

New Report Analyzes Human Rights Impact of Mexico’s New Copyright Law

The Electronic Frontier Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on civil liberties in the digital world, issued a [report](#) on the human rights impact of a new copyright law in Mexico that was passed last month as part of a package of legal reforms accompanying the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, the 2020 successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement. The group said that [law](#) has wide-ranging impacts on Mexicans’ human rights, including free expression, cybersecurity, disability, education, and health. Earlier this month, Mexico’s National Commission for Human Rights [asked](#) Mexico’s Supreme Court to assess the constitutionality of the copyright law on the grounds that the law contains possible violations of the rights to freedom of expression, property, freedom of commerce or work and cultural rights.

Citizen Lab Issues Research Note on Spyware Incident in Togo

The Citizen Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto, which focuses on research, development, and policy and legal engagement related to information and communication technologies, human rights, and global security, issued a [research note](#) on the use of spyware against civil society groups in Togo during nationwide pro-reform protests in 2019 that were forcibly dispersed with violence and arrests. The Citizen Lab volunteered to assist WhatsApp in investigating the incident as part of the Citizen Lab’s mandate to study digital threats against civil society.

Union of Concerned Scientists Launches Hub for Climate Litigation

The Union of Concerned Scientists has [launched](#) the Science Hub for Climate Litigation. The Hub aims to build greater capacity within the scientific community to conduct and communicate legally relevant research

by fostering dialogue and a community of practice among scientific experts, legal scholars, and practitioners working at the nexus of science and climate litigation.

UC San Diego Researchers Issue Study on Indigenous Property Rights and Deforestation

A recent [study](#) by researchers at the University of California San Diego, [published](#) in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, analyzes deforestation and property rights in Brazil and suggests that one way to reduce deforestation is to grant more of Brazil's indigenous communities full property rights to tribal lands. The study uses a method that combined satellite data of vegetation coverage in the Amazon rainforest between 1982 and 2016 with Brazilian government records of indigenous property rights. The study found significantly reduced deforestation rates in territories that are owned fully and collectively by local tribes when compared to territories that are owned only partially by the tribes or not at all. The average effect was a 66% reduction in deforestation.

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