

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Coalition Marks International Human Rights Day

On December 10, Human Rights Day, several Coalition member organizations held activities and shared resources:

- Dr. Corann Okorodudu of the [Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues](#) spoke before the NGO Committee on Mental Health, a coalition of NGOs in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, on the topic of “Human Rights and Mental Health: The New Normal.”
- The [Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice](#) published a [special edition](#) of their *Did You Know* Newsletter series focused on Human Rights Day, with an emphasis on social justice and behavioral health issues. The Global Alliance also issued a new [Resolution on the Human Rights of Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities in the Justice System](#) to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3.
- The AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program hosted a Facebook Live event on [Using AI for Human Rights](#) and shared videos from its [Responding to COVID-19: Science and Human Rights](#) video series.

Recordings from 2020 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference Available

Recordings of numerous sessions from the October AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Virtual Conference are now available on the AAAS [YouTube channel](#). The remaining recordings will be posted soon – stay tuned!

COVID-19 & Human Rights Resources

The Coalition Secretariat has added new resources to the COVID-19 and human rights [resources page](#) on the Coalition website on [access to health care](#), [restrictions on civil rights](#), the [human rights of older people and people with disabilities](#), and more. Please feel free at any time to share additional resources you have found helpful or information about what your organization is doing to respond to the pandemic.

ACTION ALERTS

Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali at Risk of Execution

On December 2, Scholars at Risk, an organization that works to protect threatened scholars and promote academic freedom around the world, issued an action alert to its network concerning [Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali](#). An Iranian-born resident of Sweden and scholar of disaster medicine, Dr. Djalali was arrested on a visit to Iran in April of 2016. He was convicted of “corruption on earth” in 2017 and sentenced to death, allegedly for providing intelligence to Israel. However, Iranian authorities have never provided evidence to support these allegations. Dr. Djalali has not been provided with proper medical care in prison and, according to Scholars at Risk, “remains at imminent risk of execution.” Learn more about Dr. Djalali and ways you can help [here](#).

On December 9, more than 160 scientists participated in an “Academic Marathon,” 24 hours of activities to support Dr. Djalali. Learn [more here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Dec. 29: Applications: Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council of the UN is seeking applicants for the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions due to the resignation of the current mandate holder. Applicants must complete an online survey and submit an application form. The deadline for filing is December 29, and further information may be found [here](#).

Jan. 10: Call for Papers: Special Issue on Human Rights, Dignity, and Social Justice

The International Journal of Social Psychology is calling for papers for a special issue that will highlight research on the promotion of human rights, dignity, and social justice with a particular emphasis on research examining communication and solving and preventing intra- and intercultural confrontations. Further information may be found [here](#).

Jan. 26: Job: UConn: Professors for Environmental and Human Interactions Program

The University of Connecticut's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is [seeking applications](#) for four positions at the level of Assistant Professor as part of a cluster hire in its Environment and Human Interactions program. The university is also [seeking applications](#) for two additional appointments at the Associate or Full Professor level as part of this program. The program involves scholars on a range of subjects, including but not limited to pollution, water supply, climate change, policy, and society's response.

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

Video Analysis by Human Rights Group Important in Court Ruling on Police Use of Force

SITU Research, an applied research division of the architectural practice SITU focused on architecture, urbanism, policy, and human rights, [reports](#) that its most recent visual investigation helped achieve a favorable ruling in a case involving the use of force by police at a recent protest. Oregon's District Court ruled in favor of the legal advocacy group Don't Shoot Portland and found the City of Portland and the Portland Police Bureau to be in contempt of court for violating a temporary restraining order restricting the use of less lethal munitions during a Black Lives Matter rally that took place on June 30, 2020. The ruling demonstrates that the use of citizen video, combined with analysis, can isolate specific actions during protests and clarify interactions between civilians and the police.

Human Rights Groups Address Forced Sterilizations in U.S. Migrant Detention Centers

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), an autonomous organ of the Organization of American States, a regional organization of 35 countries in Central, North, and South America, has [raised](#) concerns over human rights violations based on reports of sterilizations and surgical interventions without consent in migrant detention centers in the U.S. IACHR says that these nonconsensual surgical procedures would represent a violation of the rights of migrant women to personal security, freedom from arbitrary or unlawful interference of privacy, and the preservation of their health. In response, IACHR is calling for an immediate end to such practices, an investigation to prosecute and sanction those responsible for them, and for the U.S. to provide an effective remedy to the people whose human rights have been violated.

Google Employees Send Letter to CEO Over Firing of Co-Lead of Google's Ethical AI Team

Timnit Gebru, a computer scientist known for her advocacy for responsible artificial intelligence (AI) and diversity in the technology industry, was terminated as co-lead of Google's Ethical AI team following a dispute over an AI research paper that she had submitted for internal company review at Google in order to gain clearance to present the paper at a conference in 2021. In protest over her firing, Google employees, including those of the Ethical AI team, [sent a letter](#) to CEO Sundar Pichai over the future of ethical AI at

Google. The letter lays out the moves the researchers want the company to make in order to “rebuild trust” with the team and create an environment in which they can continue their work.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Human Rights Watch Chronicles Most Important Developments of 2020

Human Rights Watch has issued a [review](#) of the top news stories from 2020 impacting human rights. Much of its reporting was centered on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on human rights. From government-imposed lockdowns to information accessibility to the pandemic's impact on children and marginalized communities, how authorities in countries around the world handled the crisis was one of the biggest human rights stories of the year, according to Human Rights Watch's review.

Health, NGOs, Human Rights Groups Advocate for Improved Access to COVID-19 Vaccines

Several groups are [calling](#) for improved access to COVID-19 vaccines for low- and middle-income countries in the wake of research that shows disparity in vaccine access in these countries. Amnesty International, Frontline AIDS, Global Justice Now, and Oxfam, which are part of the People's Vaccine Alliance, a coalition of groups advocating for fair and equal distribution of vaccines, used data collected by the science information and analytics company Airfinity to analyze the deals made between countries and the eight leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates. The research showed that nearly 70 poor countries will only be able to vaccinate one in ten people against COVID-19 next year unless further action is taken.

In a related action, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have [advocated](#) for a proposed temporary waiver under World Trade Organization (WTO) measures that would waive intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines to enable more governments to fulfil their obligations with respect to the rights to life and health. In early October 2020, India and South Africa asked the members of the WTO to waive protections in WTO rules for patents, copyrights, industrial designs, and undisclosed information in relation to COVID-19 vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics under the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. The proposed waiver would facilitate technology transfers so that COVID-19 medical products, including vaccines, could be produced quickly and affordably by manufacturers.

The WTO met on December 10 to discuss the [proposed waiver](#) and agreed to continue discussions due to a lack of consensus. A status report was submitted to the WTO's General Council, and the report outlined the issues involved and highlighted the common goal of WTO members of providing access to high-quality, safe, efficacious and affordable vaccines and medicines. The WTO later issued an [information note](#) to provide background and further information on trade considerations in the development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The next formal meeting of the TRIPS Council is scheduled for March 10 and 11, 2021. In order to allow for further consideration of the waiver request in the more immediate future, the WTO proposed to consider meeting in January and early February to advance discussions.

Human Rights Watch Reports on Big Data Program that Targets Muslims in Xinjiang, China

Human Rights Watch [reports](#) that a Big Data program used for policing in China's Xinjiang region arbitrarily selects Turkic Muslims for possible detention. The program, the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP), is reported to have been used to identify people that are sent to “political education” camps in Xinjiang. Human Rights Watch first reported on the IJOP in February 2018, noting that the policing program aggregates data about people from various sensory systems in Xinjiang and flags individuals that it deems potentially threatening and provides that information to officials.

Shell in Landmark Case Over Climate Change and Human Rights

A final hearing was held earlier this month over climate change litigation involving Royal Dutch Shell and its practices relating to climate change and human rights. The case [was brought](#) by several activist groups,

including Friends of the Earth, a coalition of environmental organizations, which filed the lawsuit in the Netherlands in April 2019 on behalf of more than 17,000 Dutch citizens. The case asserts that Shell, with respect to its practices relating to climate change, is violating Dutch liability law and provisions under the European Convention of Human Rights, specifically the right to life and the right to respect for private and family life. The lawsuit is not seeking compensation but rather to oblige Shell to alter its business model, which the group argues is not in line with the Paris Agreement, an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which deals with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance. The case has potential consequences for the wider fossil fuel industry. Due to its importance, the Dutch Court of Justice awarded special status to the case. A verdict from the judge is expected in late May 2021. If the case is successful, the ruling could require the company to comply with global climate goals and reduce its emissions by 45% by 2030.

European Court of Human Rights Responds to Climate Change Lawsuit

In an important decision that potentially could have significant impact with respect to governments' obligations to address climate change, the European Court of Human Rights has formally asked 33 European countries to respond to a lawsuit brought by six applicants, between ages 8 and 21, from Portugal. The case concerns greenhouse gas emissions and their contributions to global warming, including heat waves that would impact the living conditions and health of the applicants. The applicants claim that the forest fires that Portugal has experienced every year for several years, especially since 2017, are the direct result of global warming to which such emissions have contributed. The case will now [proceed](#) to the next stage, where each defendant country will have to respond to the complaint. The 33 countries have until the end of February to respond, unless a settlement is reached before then.

Congo National Park Project Impacts Human Rights of Indigenous Communities

A recent [article](#) in *The Guardian* chronicles a proposed national park/protected land's impact on nearby indigenous communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The indigenous communities say that the proposal to establish the Protected Area of Messok Dja on their traditional forest lands is violating their human rights and that they have suffered acts of violence by eco-guards (forest rangers), who are patrolling the area. They say that they are being deprived of access to their forests and the resources that are vital to their livelihoods.

New Alliance in Africa Seeks to Combat COVID-19 Misinformation

A [new network](#) in Africa, the Africa Infodemic Response Alliance (AIRA), has launched an effort to combat the "infodemic" of misinformation online surrounding COVID-19 and other health emergencies in Africa. As announced by the World Health Organization, the AIRA brings together 13 international and regional organizations, together with fact-checking groups that have expertise in data and behavioral science, epidemiology, research, digital health, and communications. The AIRA is the first initiative of its kind that is working to detect, disrupt, and counter damaging misinformation on public health issues in Africa, according to the UN.

UN Secretary-General Calls for Action to Combat Genocide

In recognition of the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime, observed on December 9, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [highlighted](#) the key responsibilities that governments, social media platforms, technology companies, and religious and civil society leaders have in combatting hate speech, which he says is "a clear warning sign" of genocide. Mr. Guterres also called for credible and effective accountability to deter atrocities and provide justice and remedies for victims, including meeting their psychological and material needs.

UN Issues Statement on Data Protection and Privacy in COVID-19 Response

The United Nations and several UN system organizations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, issued a [joint statement](#) on data protection and privacy in the COVID-19 response. Developed by the UN Privacy Policy Group, an inter-agency group on data privacy and data protection, the statement supports the privacy protective use of data and technology by the UN in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. The [joint statement](#) is based on the [UN Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles](#) as well as the recommendations in the UN Secretary-General's Data Strategy on data protection, privacy, and human rights.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Reports Examine the Adverse Impact on Human Rights from COVID-19 Pandemic

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC), a network of NGOs, international organizations, and UN agencies engaged in protection work in humanitarian crises, including armed conflict and climate change-related and natural disasters, has issued two reports relating to human rights and the COVID-19 pandemic. The [first report](#) examines a deterioration in international efforts and funding to provide humanitarian assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect vulnerable groups from human rights violations, including gender-based violence, trafficking, and child recruitment. GPC data indicate that of the 54 million people targeted for assistance in 26 humanitarian response plans, almost 40 million could be missing out this year. GPC also issued [an update](#), *Aftershock: Abuse, Exploitation & Human Trafficking in the Wake of COVID-19*, to highlight that deteriorating protection conditions caused by COVID-19, conflict, and climate change are contributing to an uptick in hunger, displacement, and the adoption of adverse coping strategies.

Human Rights Groups Issue Information on International Criminal Court Meeting

The states parties of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is a court of last resort for the prosecution of serious international crimes, including genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, [met](#) from December 14 to 16, 2020 in The Hague for their annual session. In advance of the meeting, Human Rights Watch issued a [briefing note](#) to offer recommendations to the ICC in the following priority areas: (1) enhancing the ICC's delivery of justice through a process of review and bolstering political and diplomatic support to the court; (2) electing the best possible leadership for the court; and (3) ensuring adequate resources.

In the context of the ICC meeting, the Public International Law & Policy Group, a non-profit organization operating as a global pro bono law firm, held a side event on human rights documentation for accountability by civil society. Video of that meeting may be found [here](#). Its recent report on the subject, *Human Rights Documentation by Civil Society—Technological Needs, Challenges, and Workflows: Perspectives from Documenters, Transitional Justice Experts, and Tool Developers*, may be found [here](#).

Physicians for Human Rights Report Examines Human Rights and Healthcare in Syria

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has issued a new [report](#) that examines factors contributing to the health system decline in Daraa, Syria, which began in 2018, when the area was retaken by the Syrian government as part of the ongoing conflict in the country. The report examines the lack of government response in addressing these deficiencies in healthcare, which have been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the report, PHR conducted 19 key informant interviews between August and October 2020 using remote communication methods. Key informants included humanitarian workers, research analysts, academics, and journalists, based in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, the U.K., and the U.S. Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, PHR has documented human rights violations, including attacks on healthcare facilities and personnel, and the arrest, detention, and torture of healthcare workers.

New Reports on the Human Rights Impact Assessment of Digital Activities

The Danish Institute of Human Rights has issued [several reports](#) to provide practical guidance for businesses and other actors in the digital ecosystem on how to conduct a human rights impact assessment of digital activities.

NASEM Publishes Teaching Research Resource for Human Rights

The Human Rights Committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) has put forth a [teaching resource page](#) on its website to provide documents and resources that can be used to incorporate human rights into curricula. Among the resources included are [course syllabi](#) compiled by the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition on science and human rights.

Scholars at Risk Issues Report on Attacks on Higher Education Communities

Scholars at Risk's Academic Freedom Monitoring Project has issued its [annual "Free to Think" report](#) to explore concerning trends in attacks on higher education communities. The report analyzes 341 attacks on higher education communities in 58 countries between September 1, 2019 and August 31, 2020. These included: (1) violent attacks on campuses in Afghanistan, India, and Yemen; (2) wrongful imprisonments and prosecutions of scholars; (3) restrictions on academic travel, deployed most prominently by authorities in Israel, Turkey, and the U.S; (4) pressures on student expression, including sustained pressures in Colombia, India, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and South Africa; and (5) legislative and administrative threats to university autonomy, including in Brazil, Ghana, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Turkey.

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