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## COALITION CALENDAR

### October 21-22: 2021 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

Save the date! The annual AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference will be held on October 21-22, 2021. More information about the conference format and the call for proposals coming soon.

## COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

### Brazilian Physicist Earns 2021 AAAS Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award

Ricardo Galvão, a physicist who lost his position as Director of Brazil's National Institute for Space Research (INPE), a research unit of the country's Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, after defending its data on deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, [received](#) the 2021 Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award from AAAS. The annual AAAS Scientific Freedom and Responsibility Award honors scientists who have demonstrated scientific freedom and/or responsibility in particularly challenging circumstances, sometimes at risk to their professional or physical safety. When Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro attacked the legitimacy of a report highlighting a dramatic increase in Amazon deforestation, Galvão stood behind the figures, a decision that cost him his job. "Professor Galvão defended sound science in the face of hostility," said Jessica Wyndham, Director of the Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program at AAAS. "He acted to protect the welfare of the people of Brazil and the immense natural wonder that is the Amazon rainforest, a site of global heritage."

AAAS will begin accepting nominations for the 2022 award on April 15. More information on eligibility requirements can be found [here](#).

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

The Coalition Secretariat continues to add recordings of sessions from the October AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Virtual Conference to the AAAS [YouTube channel](#). Videos include [The Ethics and Human Rights of Geospatial Research During COVID-19](#) and [Engaging University Administration in Bringing Human Rights to Campus](#). The remaining recordings will be posted soon – stay tuned!

### COVID-19 & Human Rights Resources

The COVID-19 and human rights [resources page](#) on the Coalition website features resources on [access to health care](#), [responsible research in crisis situations](#), and more. Please feel free to share additional resources you have found helpful or information about what your organization is doing to respond to the pandemic.

## CALLS FOR INPUT

### March 15: UN Report on Toxics and Human Rights and the Right to Scientific Progress

The UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights is [seeking input](#) for an upcoming thematic report on the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications that will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2021. The report will focus on the interface between information, science, and hazardous substances and wastes. It will examine the elements of a rights-based approach to this interface with a view to strengthening the tools for the production and communication of scientific knowledge based on the respect for the integrity of scientific processes. The report will include, as appropriate, examples of assaults on science and scientists and lay out government duties and business responsibilities with respect to the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications and identify ways to bolster the science-policy

interface. Input is due March 15, and further information may be found [here](#).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### February 26-27: Symposium on Corporate Accountability and Digital Privacy

On February 26, the UCLA Law School Promise Institute for Human Rights, the *Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs*, and the Corporate Accountability Lab will host a symposium to address issues of corporate accountability, featuring leading lawyers, scholars, and activists and a keynote from Michael Fakhri, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food. The second day of the symposium on February 27 will be co-sponsored by UCLA Law's *Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs* and the International and Comparative Law Program and will discuss future legal challenges in digital privacy and data collection, the creation of space law and policy, and sanctions and human rights enforcement. Further information may be found [here](#), and registration information may be found [here](#).

### February 28: Engineering for Change Research Fellowship

Engineering for Change, an organization focused on preparing the global workforce to improve the quality of life of underserved communities, is accepting applications for a research fellowship available to engineering students and early-career engineers. The fellowship is part-time and virtual. Applications are due February 28, and further information may be found [here](#).

### March 1: Call for Submissions: *Forced Migration Review*

*Forced Migration Review* is seeking articles for a specially themed issue, to be published in June 2021, which will explore public health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the context of displacement, including a focus on the response to and reduction of the risk of epidemics and pandemics. It welcomes submissions relating specifically to COVID-19 but is also seeking articles on policy and practice in public health/WASH affecting displaced populations more broadly. The submission deadline is March 1, and further information may be found [here](#).

### March 24: Transitional Justice in the USA Speaker Series

The Center for International Law and Policy at New England Law-Boston [has launched](#) a *Transitional Justice in the USA Speaker Series* in collaboration with other institutions of higher learning, academic centers, and civil society groups. The series aims to raise national awareness of transitional justice initiatives being developed across the country in order to address racial injustice. It seeks to offer a sustained forum that encourages an open dialogue about the benefits, accomplishments, and challenges experienced by these initiatives. The inaugural panel was held on February 23 to examine comparative lessons of transitional justice from other countries. The second panel, to be held on March 24, will explore how human rights and academic institutions, and their affiliates, can best support an existing grassroots network of racial justice advocates working on themes related to transitional justice in the U.S. Further information, including how to register, may be found [here](#).

## SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

### Recent Data Show Importance of Diversifying Police Departments

Recent [findings](#) published in *Science* show that Black, Hispanic, and female police officers in Chicago made fewer stops and arrests than their white male counterparts, according to an analysis of three years of data on daily activities of officers in the Chicago Police Department. The findings add greater weight around the impacts of diversifying police departments by gender and race, a reform that is widely proposed to address allegations of abusive and discriminatory policing.

### End to Muslim Ban in Immigration Policy Viewed Favorably by Scientists

A recent [article](#) in *Science* examines the impact on scientists on a recent executive order by the Biden Administration that revoked the Trump Administration's policy that restricted the entry into the U.S. of individuals from primarily Muslim and African countries and that instructs the U.S. State Department to restart visa processing for affected countries. Although travel restrictions due to COVID-19 have largely limited conferences to mostly virtual events, the shift in policy is considered favorable for scientists. The article details feedback and examples from scientists.

### **U.S. Digital Divide Threatens Vaccine Access for Older People**

A recent [analysis](#) by Human Rights Watch (HRW) examines how online vaccine registration systems have highlighted the barriers many older people can face in accessing essential services. The HRW analysis showed that just half of people over 75 use the internet in the U.S., and 16.5% of people over 65 do not have access to the internet at all. For older people of color, 25% of Black, 21% of Latino, and 28% of Native American people over 65 do not have internet access. HRW is recommending ways to address these digital divides in the context of COVID-19 vaccination procedures to include offline registration systems.

### **U.S. To Seek Election to UN Human Rights Council**

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the U.S. intent to seek election to a seat on the UN Human Rights Council starting in January 2022. "The United States is committed to a world in which human rights are protected, their defenders are celebrated, and those who commit human rights abuses are held accountable," Blinken said in February 24 [statement](#). "Promoting respect for human rights is not something we can do alone, but is best accomplished working with our allies and partners across the globe. President Biden is committed to a foreign policy that unites our democratic values with our diplomatic leadership, and one that is centered on the defense of democracy and the protection of human rights." The UN Human Rights Council is a multilateral venue dedicated to furthering international human rights efforts and has played a role in promoting accountability for human rights violations and abuses. In seeking a seat on the Council, however, Blinken also recognized the need for reform at the Council itself. "We acknowledge challenges at the Council as well, including unacceptable bias against Israel and membership rules that allow countries with atrocious human rights records to occupy seats they do not merit," he said in the statement. "However, improving the Council and advancing its critical work is best done with a seat at the table."

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **UN Experts Call on the EU to Close Legal Gap to Protect Children from Online Abuse**

In recognition of Safer Internet Day, UN human rights experts [are urging](#) the European Union (EU) to reach agreement on temporary legislation to allow for the continued use of technological tools to address online child sexual abuse. The implementation of the European Electronic Communication Code on December 21, 2020 extended the EU communications regulatory framework to effectively ban tools used by technology companies to prepare reports for law enforcement agency investigations to help identify, locate and rescue victims, and bring perpetrators to justice. "The fact that there currently exists no legislation within the EU that allows for the technology companies to detect and report child sexual abuse online is very concerning to me," said Mama Fatima Singhateh, the Special Rapporteur on sale and sexual exploitation of children, in a February 10, 2021 statement. "If no agreement is reached to finalize and pass the temporary derogation, many children will continue to be abused with impunity with no hope in sight for assistance."

### **Businesses, Human Rights Groups Criticize Myanmar's Proposed Cyber Law**

A [Reuters report](#) says that a group of 50 businesses in Myanmar are criticizing new cyber laws proposed by the military junta on the grounds that the laws would contravene human rights, violate data privacy, and curtail innovation. The draft law requires online service providers to keep a broad range of user data, including the person's name, IP address, phone number, ID card number, and physical address, for up to three years at a place designated by the as-yet-unspecified ministry authorized by the military junta to deal with cybersecurity. More than 160 Myanmar civil society organizations have criticized the proposed bill as has the

Asia Internet Coalition, whose members include Apple, Facebook, Google and Amazon, as well as human rights groups. “The draft cybersecurity law would hand a military that just staged a coup and is notorious for jailing critics almost unlimited power to access user data, putting anyone who speaks out at risk,” said Linda Lakhdhir, Asia legal advisor at Human Rights Watch, in a February 12, 2021 statement. “It would have a devastating impact on freedom of expression and access to information at a time when those rights are more important than ever.” The ruling State Administrative Council, installed after the February 1, 2021 military coup, sent the draft to telecommunications operators on February 9, and called for input on the bill by February 15.

### **UK Supreme Court Rules Environmental Lawsuit Brought by Locals in Nigeria Can Proceed**

The UK Supreme Court [ruled](#) that an environmental lawsuit brought by a group of approximately 42,500 Nigerian farmers and fishermen against Royal Dutch Shell Plc can proceed in the UK. The Court reversed two earlier rulings that blocked the case from being heard in the UK. The residents of fishing and farming communities in the Niger Delta region say oil spills from pipelines operated by Shell’s local unit have destroyed their land and livelihoods. More than five years after filing their lawsuit, the individuals represented will be allowed a trial where they are seeking that the company pay compensation and clean up the pollution. Further case details may be found [here](#). The ruling is considered significant in supporting impoverished communities in seeking environmental justice.

### **French Tribunal Confirms Jurisdiction in Climate Change Litigation**

Earlier this month, a French tribunal ruled in favor of five NGOs (Notre Affaire à Tous, Sherpa, Eco Maires, France Nature Environnement and ZEA) and 14 local authorities by confirming its jurisdiction in climate-change litigation against the oil company Total. In January 2020, the French NGOs and local authorities filed a lawsuit against Total based on France’s “duty of vigilance” law, asserting that Total did not include enough detailed information in its vigilance plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In 2017, France passed the law to oblige respect for human rights and the environment in business activities. It established a legally binding obligation for parent companies to identify, prevent, mitigate, and redress human rights and environmental impacts resulting from their own activities as well as from the operations of companies under their control, subcontractors, and suppliers. The law imposes the obligation of implementing and publishing a vigilance plan in detail or account for the failure to do it. The company had argued that the case should be heard before a commercial court, and that its plan complied with the duty of vigilance law. One of the plaintiffs in the case, Sherpa, noted that the order from the tribunal recalls that the duty of vigilance “is Total’s social responsibility.” Further information may be found [here](#) and [here](#).

### **UN Experts Call for Equitable COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution and Access**

UN experts [are calling](#) for equitable and globally coordinated COVID-19 vaccine-distribution programs as a means to fully address the spread of the virus. “The virus can still travel from the vastly unvaccinated massive population of the Global South to the Global North, including in its increasingly mutating forms,” said Obiora Okafor, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and international solidarity, in an UN statement. He said it was vital that States and non-State actors cooperate, such as through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, which, led by the World Health Organization, is part of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator. Separately, UN independent experts González Morales, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, and Tlaleng Mofokeng, the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, have urged States to ensure that migrants are also included in national COVID vaccination programs.

### **Brazil’s Response to COVID-19 Shows Inadequate Response to Science-Based Measures**

A recent [article](#) in *The Lancet* outlines the incidence of COVID-19 in Brazil and the inadequate response of the government, including a lack of adherence to scientific-based public health measures to curb the spread of the virus. The article also highlights regional, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in the COVID-19

pandemic in Brazil, as well as differences between official statistics and estimates on the real number of people infected with COVID-19.

### **UN Experts Call for End to Tourist Resort in Bangladesh over Indigenous Rights**

UN human rights experts [are calling](#) on Bangladesh to suspend the construction of a large-scale tourist resort in the Chittagong Hills Tracts because it threatens to dispossess the indigenous Mro peoples of their traditional lands and cause serious environmental damage. The Bangladesh army and a conglomerate company began the project last fall in the Bandarban district. The experts said they were disturbed about irregular land leasing practices and the army's denial of access for grazing and water resources on traditional lands that the Mro people depend on for culture and identity. They also expressed concerns over escalating threats and intimidation against indigenous human rights defenders who are peacefully defending the land rights of the community.

### **UN Secretary-General Calls for Advancing Gender Equality in Science**

Closed labs and increased care responsibilities are two of the challenges women in scientific fields are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in his [message](#) for the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, which was on February 11. “Advancing gender equality in science and technology is essential for building a better future,” said the UN Secretary-General. “We have seen this yet again in the fight against COVID-19.”

## **NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES**

### **UN Report Provides Scientific Blueprint for Climate, Biodiversity, and Pollution Challenges**

Ahead of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5), UN Secretary-General António Guterres and UN Environment Program Executive Director Inger Andersen officially launched a new [report](#), *Making Peace with Nature*, to provide a scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity, and pollution emergencies based on evidence from global environmental assessments. It flags the connections between environmental and development challenges and describes the roles of all parts of society in the transformations needed for a sustainable future.

### **Amnesty International Report Outlines Human Rights Obligations in the Battery Value Chain**

Amnesty International has issued a [paper](#) to lay out the principles that businesses should adopt to avoid causing, contributing to, or being directly linked to human rights abuses and environmental harm along the battery value chain while supporting the need to promote a more efficient use of resources, fewer vehicles, and the development of new battery technologies and other human rights-consistent solutions to climate change. The battery value chain includes rechargeable batteries to power electric vehicles and renewable energy storage units as well as batteries used to power mobile phones, laptops, tablets, cameras, power tools, and other electronic devices. The paper also lays out the principles that governments must adopt to fulfill their obligation to both respect human rights and protect their citizens from potential human rights abuses by companies operating or headquartered within their territory and jurisdiction.

### **Human Rights Watch Calls for Regulating DNA Databases to Mitigate Human Rights Abuses**

Human Rights Watch has issued a [statement](#) calling for more regulation to stem potential human rights abuses regarding the retention of genetic materials in the form of national DNA databases. It says that although DNA profiling for individual cases of law enforcement has helped to identify suspects and to exonerate the innocent, the proliferation of national DNA databases raises human rights concerns. It is calling for more comprehensive regulation regarding the collection, use, and retention of DNA, which it says has become a form of genomic surveillance.

### **Conference Recording: Human Rights in the Era of AI**

The German Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection jointly organized a conference, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, to examine issues of human rights and artificial intelligence (AI). The conference, “Human Rights in the Era of AI,” was held in late January and examined the impact of AI on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as the feasibility and finer details of a future legal framework for AI. A recording of the conference and related materials may be found [here](#).

### **Recording: Human Rights Guidelines for Neurotechnology and AI**

As part of a speaker series, the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University recently held a [discussion](#), “Neurorights: Human Rights Guidelines for Neurotechnology and AI,” to examine a proposal to add new human rights to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to protect mental privacy, personal identity, personal agency, equal access to cognitive augmentation, and protection from algorithmic biases. The presentation by Rafael Yuste, Professor of Biological Sciences, Columbia University, also discussed the proposal for a “technocratic oath” and current advocacy efforts for neuro-rights in the U.S. and abroad that create frameworks for the ethical use of artificial intelligence and neurotechnology. A recording may be found [here](#).

### **Article Examines Women’s Security and COVID-19 Vaccines**

An [article](#) in *The Lancet* examines security concerns for women in their role as healthcare workers in administering COVID-19 vaccines. The article points out that access to and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines is not only a security concern with regard to vaccine nationalism, cybersecurity, and as a protected commodity, but is also a concern for women, peace, and security agendas, given the feminized nature of the healthcare workforce and vaccination teams responsible for vaccine delivery.

### **STEM Education as an Instructional Framework to Address Systemic Racism**

Advancing Research & Innovation in the STEM Education of Preservice Teachers in High-Need School Districts (ARISE), which provides resources, tools, and a community for STEM teacher preparation and education programs in high schools, has put forth an [article](#) to propose an instructional framework that is centered around social justice for students by engaging them in socially relevant issues to make sense of phenomena and problems, make informed decisions, and take responsible actions. The authors assert that the proposed instructional framework underscores that by foregrounding social justice and capitalizing on new advances in STEM disciplines, STEM education can redress systemic racism both in and out of school.

### **Article Examines Ways to Improve Accountability in Development Projects**

An [article](#) by Accountability Counsel, an advocacy group for marginalized communities to protect their human rights and the environment, outlines three recommendations to ensure accountability for these communities in development projects. The recommendations relate to information-sharing, participation of communities in designing solutions, and implementation and monitoring. Accountability Counsel presented at the 2019 Science and Human Rights Coalition conference.

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