

COALITION CALENDAR

September 1: Early Registration Deadline for the 2021 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference

The AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference will be held online October 21-22. Early registration rates are available through September 1. Visit <https://sciencetechhumanrights2021.org/> to register. More information, including a [preliminary agenda](#), is [available here](#).

September 24: Student E-Poster Proposals

We are now accepting student e-posters for the conference! Read the guidelines and submit your poster proposal [here](#). If your proposal was accepted, you will be notified in early October about the next steps.

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Scholars at Risk Issues Urgent Appeal on Afghanistan

On August 18, Scholars at Risk issued an [urgent public appeal](#) to the U.S. State Department regarding the fate of scholars, students, practitioners, civil society leaders, and activists, especially women and ethnic and religious minorities, in Afghanistan after the Taliban capture of Kabul. The letter, which is signed by numerous Coalition members, calls on the U.S. government to take action to protect Afghans seeking to leave the country, including continuing evacuation flights and waving certain requirements for scholars, researchers, and others who are in danger. If you would like to sign the letter, Scholars at Risk [invites signatures here](#).

Mentor a FutureGen Scholar!

Congratulations to the inaugural SciTech and Human Rights FutureGen Scholars, Margaret Sanders (University of Connecticut) and Hamza Woodson (Carroll Community College)! An official announcement with more information about Margaret and Hamza and their proposed projects will be made in the coming weeks. Would you like to advise one of these students on how to carry out their projects successfully and support their professional development? The call for mentors is now open. Please [click here to apply](#).

Student Essay Competition Winners To Be Announced Soon

A panel of judges has reviewed this year's entries in the Coalition's Student Essay Competition and selected three undergraduate and three graduate finalists. Our group of final-round judges is now reviewing these essays to determine the winners (and any honorable mentions) in both categories. The recipients will be announced in mid-September.

2020 Conference Compendium Published

Summaries of eleven sessions from the 2020 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference have now been published [on the Coalition website](#). Please feel free to share this resource with students, educators, and other interested people in your networks. Many thanks to the compendium's editor, Dr. Gabriel Velez of Marquette University, and associate editors Tara Smith, Brittin Alfred, Mika Armenta, Chitra Balakrishnan, Brett Green, and Keri Iyall Smith.

AAAS Journal Highlights Work to Support Displaced Scientists

Science & Diplomacy, an online publication of the [AAAS Center for Science Diplomacy](#), recently published the article “[Understanding and Meeting the Challenges of Displaced Scientists in the 21st Century](#).” The essay describes the challenges facing scientists and all displaced people, outlines current opportunities for action from the scientific community, and explains how scholar assistance upholds both the human rights of individual scientists and the human right to science overall. You can watch the authors speak on “Creating Effective Advising Networks for Displaced Scientists” at the 2019 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference [here](#). One of the authors, Michael Martin, was also featured in a 2019 Coalition video on [Protecting the Rights of Scientists](#).

Human Rights at Your Organization’s Annual Meeting? Let Us Know!

Does your association have sessions or other activities at its annual meeting related to human rights? Please reply to this message and let the Secretariat know. We are happy to highlight these events in this newsletter.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

September 15: Nominations for Edward O’Brien Human Rights Education Awards

Human Rights Educators USA (HRE USA) is now accepting nominations for the Edward O’Brien Human Rights Education Awards. The awards are bestowed annually on one individual and one organization who have made significant contributions to human rights education in the United States. Any member of HRE USA or its organizational affiliates can submit a nomination. More information is [available here](#).

Job: Associate Research Scholar, Columbia University’s Center on Sustainable Investment

Columbia University is seeking a Postdoctoral/Associate Research Scholar to collaborate with the Director and Research Staff of the Law School's Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment to execute the Center’s applied research agenda on the laws, policies, and practices that shape international investment and its alignment with sustainable development and human rights. Further information may be found [here](#).

Job: Research Fellow, Center for Democracy & Technology

The Center for Democracy & Technology is seeking a Research Fellow with research and/or technical expertise on policy problems related to free expression, content moderation, and artificial intelligence. The Fellow will design and lead research projects that examine, for example, meaningful transparency on social networking services, automated content moderation, or recommender systems and media pluralism. Further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

AAAS “How We Respond” Initiative Highlights Environmental Justice Efforts

The AAAS “How We Respond” initiative, which highlights the ways U.S. communities are actively and effectively responding to climate change, in particular at the local level, shared two examples from [St. Louis, Missouri](#) and [North Charleston, South Carolina](#). The initiative detailed the work in St. Louis by civic leaders, environmental groups, state and local governments, non-profits, academic institutions, and others to advance the use of renewable energy in low-income communities. An April 2021 report issued by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Center for Energy and Climate Solutions highlighted St. Louis for its building energy-efficiency and solar workforce programs. In North Charleston, South Carolina, AAAS highlighted the work of the Lowcountry Alliance for Model Communities (LAMC), whose core mission is to build healthy families by addressing four issues—economic development, affordable housing, education, and environmental justice—for seven underserved communities in the North Charleston area. LAMC works in concert with other groups in South Carolina to provide workshops and research tools to enable local residents to monitor air quality in their communities and create pollution maps that are used to engage the community and state and local officials to take action against the source of pollution.

Ban on Migrant Border Crossings Over Public Health Raises Human Rights Concerns

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) provided [details](#) on the impact of an order, issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the Trump Administration and continued under the Biden Administration, which bars migrants and asylum seekers from crossing the U.S.–Mexico border for public health reasons due to COVID-19 while allowing other people to cross. A letter from public health experts in July 2021 reiterated that the latest scientific knowledge regarding transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 did not support expulsion as a public health measure and that the order undermined trust in the CDC itself as a scientific body. In May 2021, a PHR research team conducted interviews in Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico with 28 asylum seekers who had been expelled under the order and with six healthcare workers providing services to migrants. The team documented people’s experiences during expulsion, including family separation, the actions of U.S. and Mexican government officials, and the physical and mental health impacts of expulsion and family separation.

Article Examines Discriminatory Policies and Heat Risks in U.S. Cities

A recent [article](#) in *Nature* examines how scientists are mapping correlations between race, poverty, and heat in U.S. cities and are suggesting solutions to reduce the dangers. The article explains that researchers are increasingly exploring the links between discriminatory policies and heat risks. The article describes how cities are working to incorporate heat equity into their urban planning, such as by planting trees and painting roofs white in neighborhoods that have typically received fewer resources, but that more needs to be done.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Low-Income Countries Not Expected to Reach COVID Vaccine Targets Until 2023

A recent [article](#) in *Nature* details low vaccination rates against COVID-19 in low-income countries and provides projections that it would take until 2023 to reach vaccination targets in these countries. The article reports that around 11 billion doses are needed to fully vaccinate 70% of the world’s population against COVID-19, and as of early July, 3.2 billion doses had been administered. At the current vaccination rate, this will increase to around six billion doses by the end of the year, according to research by the International Monetary Fund. Thus far, more than 80% of the doses have gone to people in high-income and upper-middle-income countries with only 1% of people in low-income countries receiving at least one dose. The article details the work of developed countries to increase their contributions of vaccines to low-income countries as well by efforts such as [COVAX](#) (COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access) for more equitable vaccine access.

Use of Forensic Genetic Data in Research Papers Raises Concerns over Privacy Rights

A recent [article](#) in *Science* details concerns raised by scientists and others over the misuse of genetic data from Uyghurs and other minorities in China without their informed consent in research papers. A review by a researcher at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium identified 28 papers at six journals over the past several years, primarily in forensic genetics, which deserve scrutiny because of consent problems in China and the potential for abuse of data. Human rights activists support this review as the forensic use of DNA databases has evolved from a narrowly focused law enforcement tool to a potential threat to privacy rights in China. The potential for misuse is most notably in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where other human rights abuses against Uyghur and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang are occurring.

UN Experts Raise Concerns for Human Rights Defender Imprisoned in Guatemala

UN rights experts [are expressing concerns](#) over the criminalization, violations of due process, and health rights of an indigenous human rights defender in Guatemala, Bernardo Caal Xól, a leader of the peaceful resistance of Cahabón, a collective of 38 Maya Q'eqchi' communities in northern Guatemala. In 2015, he organized peaceful opposition to the Oxec hydroelectric project, which the communities said endangered the Cahabón River. In 2018, he was sentenced to seven years and four months in prison despite a lack of evidence against him and irregularities in the prosecution, the experts said. His lawyers filed an appeal following his conviction, but the hearings were cancelled or suspended on numerous occasions. Mr. Caal Xól filed an

appeal before the Supreme Court in Guatemala to present his arguments, which was heard in late June, but a ruling, which was expected in 15 days, has yet to be issued. The UN experts are concerned over the conditions of his imprisonment, including his health.

Human Rights Council Seeks Consultations on the Internet, Digital Technologies

The United Nations Human Rights Council has adopted a resolution on the promotion, protection, and enjoyment of human rights on the internet and affirmed that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression. The Council requested that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights study the trend in Internet shutdowns and analyze their causes, their legal implications, and their impact on a range of human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights, and through consultations with stakeholders and building on previous reports, present a report to the Council.

The Council also adopted a separate resolution on the possible impacts, opportunities, and challenges of new and emerging digital technologies with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council requested that the Office of the High Commissioner convene two expert consultations to discuss the relationship between human rights and technical standard-setting processes for new and emerging digital technologies and the practical application of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to the activities of technology companies, and to submit a report to Council. See [here](#) for the resolutions adopted.

Nobel Laureates Send Letter to Chinese Gov't Opposing Censorship of Taiwanese Chemist

More than 100 Nobel laureates sent a [letter](#) to the Chinese government to object to its actions in pressuring the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to revoke the invite of Yuan Lee, a scientist from Taiwan and the Nobel Laureate in Chemistry (1986) to address a virtual Nobel Prize Summit in April. The event was organized by NAS and hosted by the Nobel Foundation and focused on climate change and sustainable development. “We strongly believe that the free and open expression of ideas and the freedom of assembly are basic human rights, and international forums such as the Nobel Summit are essential means of finding solutions, maintaining international trust, and securing a more just and prosperous future,” said the letter. An [article](#) in *Chemistry World* provides further details.

UN, Human Rights Groups Seek Regulation of Surveillance Software

The United Nations, human rights groups, and civil society organizations are calling on businesses and governments to take action to stop the use of surveillance software against journalists and human rights defenders. Their call follows reports that NSO Group’s Pegasus software has been misused in the surveillance of journalists and human rights activists.

“Companies involved in the development and distribution of surveillance technologies are responsible for avoiding harm to human rights,” said Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a July 19, 2021 [statement](#). “They need to take immediate steps to mitigate and remedy the harms their products are causing or contributing to, and carry out human rights due diligence to ensure that they no longer play a part in such disastrous consequences, and avoid being involved in similar future scenarios.” She added that “one key step to effectively prevent abuse of surveillance technology is for States to require by law that the companies involved meet their human rights responsibilities, are much more transparent in relation to the design and use of their products, and put in place more effective accountability mechanisms.”

In a joint open letter, 156 civil society organizations, including [Amnesty International](#), and 26 independent experts are calling on governments to implement an immediate moratorium on the sale, transfer and use of surveillance software. Human Rights Watch provided an additional [statement](#) calling on governments to suspend the trade in surveillance technology until rights-protecting regulatory frameworks are in place and

that governments should immediately cease their own use of surveillance technologies in ways that violate human rights.

In late June, NSO Group, the subject of the criticism by the groups, issued its “[Transparency and Responsibility Report](#)” to address what the company says is the interplay between public safety and security and the preservation and protection of human rights. The report provides the company’s position on ethical and responsible international business conduct, its governance framework, and human rights policies.

UN Experts Calls on Zambia’s Government to Address Lead Contamination

UN experts [are calling](#) on the government of Zambia to immediately provide medical treatment to children who have contracted lead poisoning from the country’s largest lead mine and to take steps to clean up areas contaminated from the mine. The affected area is Kabwe, the capital of Zambia’s Central Province, which was home to lead mining and smelting from 1904 to 1994, when the government closed the mine. Over three million tons of tailings (waste from the mining process), about 2.5 million tons of slag (waste from the smelter), and other waste remain in the area. New sources of lead pollution are appearing in the area as well as the Zambian government issues licenses for small-scale mines, which are in addition to unlicensed mines.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Report Examines Human Rights Due Diligence in Venture Capital Firms’ Investments

A recent [report](#) by Amnesty International says that human rights due diligence by venture capital (VC) firms is insufficient. It surveyed 53 VC firms and start-up accelerators, supplemented by research into these firms’ due diligence policies and practices. Overall, the study did not find any evidence of human rights due diligence policies in 44 of the 53 of the VC firms and accelerators surveyed (83% of all firms surveyed).

Article Evaluates COVID-19’s Impact on Gender Inequalities

An [article](#) in *The Lancet* examines the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had in compounding gender inequalities faced by women, girls, and people of diverse gender identities. It points to an escalation in gender-based violence within households, increasing risk of child marriages and female genital mutilation, and an increased burden of unpaid care work. The article notes, however, some positive impacts of the pandemic. This includes catalyzing a need for concrete action on gender inequality, such as investments in health to ensure social protection and financial recovery, targeting of disadvantaged populations to ensure equity, and engaging with broader geopolitical challenges that affect health.

Article Asserts “Dignity Neuroscience” Forms the Basis of Universal Human Rights

An [article](#) in *The Annals of the New York Academy of Science* introduces a new concept called “dignity neuroscience” or the idea that universal human rights are rooted in human brain science. The authors from Brown University [argue](#) that numerous studies in disciplines such as developmental psychology and neuroscience support long-held notions that people thrive when they enjoy basic rights such as agency, self-determination, freedom from want or fear, and freedom of expression. They say that science also supports the idea that when societies fail to offer their citizens such rights, allowing them to fall into poverty, privation, violence and war, there can be lasting neurological and psychological consequences.

Article Evaluates the Implementation of Human Rights Law

An upcoming [article](#) in the University of Pennsylvania’s *Journal of International Law* evaluates the United Nations’ process of monitoring and evaluating countries’ progress toward human rights goals through the UN’s mandatory reporting mechanism for major human rights treaties. The article provides a foundation for a data analytics research approach that can help assess the reporting process and inform human rights law implementation.

Op-ed Calls for More Inclusive Practices for Data Creation and Use

An [op-ed](#) in *Nature* asserts that all people, not just technology companies, should decide how their digital data are used as only a limited number of entities now have a say in how data from smartphones, sensors and other sources are created and used.

Exploring Science and Race in a New Limited *Science* Podcast Series

Science [will explore](#) a series of books that examine science and race in a new limited podcast series hosted by journalist Angela Saini, who provided a keynote address at the 2020 AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference. The series seeks to address key questions on race and science, such as how have different sciences produced ideas about race, and how have these ideas contributed to progressive social reform and, alternatively, to reactionary, oppressive, and even racist practices? What is the history of participation of ethnic minorities in science, and of the use of racialized subjects in scientific research? How should we understand the relationship of science to the pursuit of racial equality and social justice?

Each episode of the series will first appear as a segment on the [Science podcast](#). New episodes will be added each month, and the collected series will be available on the [Science BOOKS, ET AL. blog](#).

Op-ed Asserts Addressing Inequalities Key for Meeting UN Goal of Ending AIDS by 2030

An [op-ed](#) in *The Lancet* argues that a target by the United Nations under its Sustainable Development Goals to end AIDS by 2030 can be best realized by ending certain inequalities. It pointed to the UN General Assembly fifth high-level meeting on HIV and AIDS held on June 8–10, 2021, which looked at the HIV epidemic through an inequality lens. In a political declaration, *Ending Inequalities and Getting on Track to End AIDS by 2030*, UN member states adopted a new set of targets to be reached by 2025: provide 95% of all people at risk with access to HIV combination prevention options; ensure that 95% of people living with HIV know their status; and get 95% to be on HIV treatment. These goals aspire to reduce the annual number of new HIV infections to less than 370 000 and AIDS-related deaths to 250,000, and to provide HIV treatment to 34 million people. Importantly, a target to reduce the number of countries that have measures discriminating against at-risk groups to less than 10% has been included.

Article Examines New U.S. Policy Linking Social Equity and Infrastructure

A recent [article](#) examines how the Biden Administration is emphasizing social equity as a key component of transportation policy. The article outlines the policy and impact of a plan by the U.S. Department of Transportation to award \$905 million for 24 projects in 18 states under the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America discretionary grant program. Criteria for winning these grants included how they would address climate change, environmental justice, and racial equity.

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