

COALITION CALENDAR

September 24: Student E-Poster Proposals Due

Students: showcase your work at the Science, Technology and Human Rights Virtual Conference! Read the guidelines and submit your abstract [here](#). If your proposal was accepted, you will be notified in early October about the next steps.

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

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

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Mentor a FutureGen Scholar!

The inaugural SciTech and Human Rights FutureGen Scholars, Margaret Sanders (University of Connecticut) and Hamza Woodson (Carroll Community College), will soon be starting their projects. Would you like to advise one of these students on how to carry out their work successfully and support their professional development? Please [click here to apply](#).

Student Essay Competition Winners Announced

Congratulations to the winners of this year's Coalition Student Essay Competition: Quinn White (undergraduate) and Marco Travaglio (graduate)! Each will receive a year's membership to AAAS, a subscription to *Science* magazine, and a \$1,500 stipend, and be recognized at the Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference. Four students also received honorable mentions for their essays: Zahra Ravat (undergraduate), Kalyani Ramadurgam (undergraduate), Patrick Schumacher (graduate), and Garrett Williams (graduate). Further information [may be found here](#).

Sept. 30: Submit a Nomination for Global Alliance Awards

Coalition member the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice seeks nominations for its [awards](#), including the [Marion Langer Award](#), which recognizes distinction in social advocacy and the pursuit of human rights. Nominations are due by September 30. More information is [available here](#).

CALLS FOR ACTION

Scholars at Risk & Scholar Rescue Fund Seek Support for Afghan Researchers, Scientists

Both Scholars at Risk (SAR) and the Institute for International Education's Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF) have created a range of opportunities to protect threatened scholars and practitioners from Afghanistan.

The SAR Network says it is responding to hundreds of urgent requests from individual scholars, activists, and civil society leaders—with particular concern for women and ethnic and religious minorities. It has outlined ways for: (1) how scholars and practitioners can seek support; (2) how SAR Network members and prospective host institutions can assist; and (3) how advocates and concerned members of the higher education community can assist. Further information may be found [here](#).

IIE-SRF has been working to identify Afghan professors and researchers in need of support, as well as placement opportunities for them to resume their academic work in safety. IIE-SRF is currently supporting 17 Afghan scholars, and they anticipate granting additional fellowship awards in the weeks and months ahead. Help is needed from academic institutions, individuals, and professional societies and organizations, including committing to hosting on your campus threatened scholars, both from Afghanistan and globally, and referring qualified scholars – from Afghanistan and other countries – who may be eligible for and in need of IIE-SRF assistance. More information [is available here](#).

CALLS FOR INPUT

Sept. 30: UN Special Rapporteur Seeks Input on Toxics & Human Rights to Inform Italy Visit

The UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights, Marcos Orellana, is seeking input to assist in his preparation of an official visit to Italy from November 30 to December 13, 2021, which will allow him to examine a wide range of issues related to toxics and human rights and the implications for human rights of environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes. The conclusions of the visit will be presented in a report to the UN Human Rights Council. Submissions are due September 30, 2021 and further information may be found [here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Sept. 30: Graduate Research Grant for Primary Data Collection

Dobility, Inc., a social enterprise focused on promoting the effective use of data worldwide through SurveyCTO, its flagship software, is providing a grant to help graduate students conduct primary data collection for their research. Each awardee will receive research funding, one year of access to the SurveyCTO platform, and expert support from the SurveyCTO team. SurveyCTO is a mobile data collection platform used for impact evaluations, monitoring and evaluation, mobile health, academic research, household surveys, exit polling, web surveys, and other types of data collection. Applications are due September 30, 2021, and further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

Tech Companies, Human Rights Groups Assess How to Evaluate Ethical Impact of AI Projects

A recent Reuters [report](#) examines how technology companies evaluate artificial intelligence (AI) projects by assessing the benefits of the project and the ethical implications of the use of AI. The article explains that technology companies typically use ethics committees to make that assessment. Human rights advocates point to the value of using full external oversight, particularly as emerging AI applications using neurotechnologies pose deeper and new ethical issues.

Apple Delays Rollout of Scanning Technology Over Human Rights Concerns

Apple is [delaying](#) the rollout of child-safety features that would have allowed the company to scan iPhones in the U.S. for images of child sexual abuse after human rights groups, advocacy groups, researchers, and others raised privacy concerns that the technology could be used in other ways for surveillance purposes. The company reported in early September that it is delaying the rollout in order to take more time over the coming months to collect input and make improvements before releasing the child-safety features.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN, Human Rights Groups, Scientists Focus on Human Rights Concerns in Afghanistan

Recent articles in [Science](#) and [Nature](#) provide accounts of researchers and scientists in Afghanistan that have expressed fears over their safety and their future in the country, including concerns over being persecuted for being involved in international collaborations or due to their fields of study, ethnicity, or gender. The articles also detail ways in which international groups and universities are reaching out to provide support, including

the Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network, a U.S.-based international network of academic institutions focused on defending academic freedom and human rights of scholars globally.

Earlier this month, the SAR Network was one of 54 organizations signing a [letter](#) to UN member states calling for the adoption of a resolution to establish a fact-finding mission or similar independent investigative mechanism on Afghanistan as part of the 48th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council, taking place September 13 to October 8. The groups are seeking a mechanism for a gender-responsive and multi-year mandate and resources to monitor and regularly report on, and to collect evidence of, human rights violations and abuses committed in Afghanistan.

The UN Human Rights Council provided a [summary](#) from its September 14 meeting in which speakers reiterated their concern over the reported violations and abuses of human rights across Afghanistan. They further called for the immediate cessation of violence against ethnic minorities, human rights defenders, journalists, members of the former government, and women and girls in Afghanistan. Some speakers echoed the call by UN High Commissioner of Human Rights for the establishment of an independent mechanism to investigate all violations and abuses committed in Afghanistan, to promote accountability, and to monitor the human rights situation on the ground.

Separately, human rights groups, including Amnesty International, are [calling](#) on social media platforms to preserve evidence of potential human rights abuses in Afghanistan. They are also calling on technology companies to provide public updates on the steps they take to manage the removal of content related to Afghanistan, with special attention to the preservation of material that may constitute evidence of human rights abuses and serious international crimes.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Calls for Action To Address AI Risks

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet [stressed](#) the urgent need for a moratorium on the sale and use of AI systems that pose a serious risk to human rights until adequate safeguards are put in place. She also called for AI applications that cannot be used in compliance with international human rights law to be banned. Her comments follow a UN report that analyzes how AI, including profiling, automated decision-making, and other machine-learning technologies, affects people's right to privacy and other rights, including the rights to health, education, freedom of movement, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of expression. The full report may be found [here](#).

UK Gov't Begins Process for Reforming Regime for Data Protection, Including AI

As part of its National Data Strategy, the UK government, through its Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, has released a 145-page [consultation](#) document as a first step in the process of reforming the UK's regime for the protection of personal data. Consultation responses will provide evidence to help shape future reforms. As part of the process, the UK government is preparing a full public sector equality duty assessment for proposals that would enable organizations to process personal data for the purpose of monitoring and mitigating bias in AI systems to help reduce inequality. The consultation document also considers that human review of AI decisions may, in the future, not be practicable or proportionate, which has raised concerns among privacy rights groups. A recent [article](#) in *Forbes* outlines key issues.

UN Expert Warns that Climate Change is a Global Human Rights Threat Multiplier

Speaking before and presenting a report to the UN Human Rights Council, Saad Alfarargi, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development, [warned](#) that climate change was a global human rights threat multiplier and that climate change had already impacted and would increasingly impact a wide range of internationally guaranteed human rights, including the right to development. He noted that indigenous peoples, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and women in vulnerable situations are groups disproportionately affected by climate change and added that communities and populations most affected by

climate change often do not participate in decision-making processes on actions that address the consequences of climate change. He called on countries to ensure the right to development by supporting development models that achieved a safe climate and met the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, including the need to align both production and consumption patterns to sustainable and equitable levels. He added that the biggest challenge to equality and climate action was the lack of methods to effectively collect data and conduct assessment on the environmental impact of projects and policies. His report may be found [here](#).

Article Examines Recent Climate Litigation and Role of Climate Science

A recent [article](#) in *Nature* examines the number and nature of climate lawsuits and the role that climate science is playing in policy and litigation. The article says that since 2015, plaintiffs, including children, have filed more than 1,000 climate cases, according to an analysis published in July by researchers at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment in London. In what could be the most consequential impact of such litigation, 37 cases allege that governments have not adequately set or met their goals of lowering risks due to climate change.

UN Expert Says Human Rights Need to Be Included in UN Global Biodiversity Framework

David Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, is [calling](#) on UN member states to put human rights at the center of a new Global Biodiversity Framework, a plan that seeks to protect at least 30% of the planet by 2050 and place at least 20% under restoration by 2030. The [draft framework](#) was released in July by the Secretariat of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. Boyd made the call ahead of an October conference in Kunming, China, where representatives of 190 governments will finalize the UN Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. He said that the draft framework currently fails to mention human rights and in particular, does not adequately address the rights of indigenous peoples, people of African descent-, local communities, peasants, rural women, and rural youth, which he says are “key partners in protecting and restoring nature.” He cautioned against “fortress conservation” approaches aimed at restoring “pristine wilderness” free from human inhabitants, saying this approach has had devastating human rights impacts on communities living in targeted areas, including indigenous peoples and other rural dwellers.

Brazilian Supreme Court Delays Ruling in Case on Indigenous Rights to Ancestral Lands

Earlier this month, Brazil's Supreme Court [indefinitely delayed](#) a decision in a case involving the rights of indigenous peoples to ancestral lands. At issue is a legal argument, called the Marco Temporal (time frame), under which the Court will consider a state government's decision over indigenous rights that only recognizes tribal lands occupied by indigenous peoples at the time of the ratification of Brazil's constitution in 1988. Indigenous rights groups say the rule was unconstitutional because there was no time frame in the 1988 constitution, which guaranteed the right to ancestral lands. Last month, when the case before the Court began, Francisco Cali Tzay, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, [underscored](#) its importance. “The court's decision will not only determine the future of these issues in Brazil for years to come, it will also signal whether the country intends to live up to its international human rights obligations and whether it will respect indigenous communities who were not allowed to participate in legal proceedings that revoked their land rights,” he said in an August 25 statement.

UN Seeks Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Human Rights Due Diligence Measures

Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, is [calling](#) that safeguards for human rights defenders be included in a European Union legislative initiative on mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence for businesses. “The European Union, as the world's largest single market, has a golden opportunity to advance the safety and security of human rights defenders who are working around the globe to build more just societies, often at great personal risk,” Lawlor said. “A robust, binding regime in the EU covering companies of all sizes would provide a powerful model for other parts of the world.” The [UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#) recently developed guidance setting forth expectations that

businesses address risks to defenders and that States address as part of their own mandatory human rights due diligence regulations.

Adapting Tech Tools for Human Rights Monitoring: Lessons from Burundi

A recent [article](#) in *OpenGlobalRights* provides a case example from Burundi on how technology can help evidence collection reach the threshold required by international human rights bodies. The authors describe the use of a mobile data collection and analysis system (NEMO) that was used to document human rights violations by the Burundian government against protestors during the country's presidential election in 2015. The key benefits of NEMO were: (1) flexible technological input via mobile devices, desktop computers, and SMS; (2) real-time multi-lingual reporting and analysis; and (3) security and encryption. Challenges encountered included: maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of users on the ground; learning how to use the tool; building skills required to document human rights violations; and ensuring the safety of monitors on- and off-line.

Op-Ed Examines Data Sharing in Health Research in EU & Globally

A recent [op-ed](#) in *Nature* says that COVID-19 has shown that international collaborations and global data sharing are essential for health research, but legal obstacles exist in sharing data for non-pandemic-related research. The authors says that international sharing of pseudonymized personal data among researchers is key; pseudonymized personal data are data on which identifiers such as names are replaced by codes. The article further outlines the current legal framework and barriers in data sharing within the European Union and internationally.

Two Scientific Journals Retract Articles Over Consent Issues in DNA Research

Two journals, *The International Journal of Legal Medicine* and *Human Genetics*, have [retracted](#) articles that relied on the DNA samples of Uyghurs in western China after questions were raised about whether the subjects had provided their full consent. The two studies were the focus of a 2019 article by the *New York Times* that described how Chinese researchers had analyzed DNA samples from hundreds of Uyghurs for a process called DNA phenotyping, which attempts to re-create a person's features, including face and height, by relying on DNA samples. The retraction notices may be found [here](#) and [here](#).

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Study Shows NO₂ Pollution Higher in Minority, Low-Income Communities

A recent [article](#) in the *Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences* reports the results of a study that showed that ambient nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), an air pollutant related to traffic, remained higher among minority and lower-income communities despite reductions in NO₂ pollution resulting from lower urban activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers used high-resolution, remotely sensed NO₂ observations to investigate disparities in levels across different demographic subgroups in the U.S. Similar findings hold for ethnic, income, and educational attainment population subgroups.

Op-Ed Calls for Greater Inclusion in STEM Professions and Advancement

A recent [opinion piece](#) examines the links between the diversity or lack of diversity of scientists and knowledge outcomes. The article cites statistics that show that African Americans, Latinos, Indigenous and other marginalized populations represent only about 9% of STEM academic positions in the U.S. Women (primarily white women) now earn approximately 41% of STEM doctorate degrees and have increased their share of STEM academic positions to approximately 39% but are not at parity with men, especially at higher career positions. Attrition of female scientists increases as they move up the career ladder, with a 19.5% higher dropout rate over male scientists. The article examines needed changes to address these issues.

Two of the four co-authors of the article include: Maureen Kearney, Ph.D., an evolutionary biologist and biodiversity scientist, Program Director in the Division of Environmental Biology at the National Science

Foundation, and formerly the AAAS Chief Program Officer; and Shirley Malcom, Ph.D., a behavioral ecologist and Senior Advisor at AAAS, where she directs the SEA Change initiative.

Op-Ed Calls for Greater Gender Equality in Digital Health

A recent [op-ed](#) in *The Lancet* asserts that although digital health can bolster gender equity through increased access to healthcare, greater control over one's own health data, and reduced burden of unpaid care work, digital health is rarely designed from a gender equity perspective. The editorial says that because of lower access and exclusion from app design, gender imbalance in digital health leadership and gender stereotypes, digital health is disadvantaging women—especially women from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds.

UN Reports on the Plastics Cycle & Human Rights and Right to Science & Toxic Substances

The SDG Knowledge Hub, an online resource center on the implementation of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, provides a [summary](#) of two reports issued by Marcos Orellana, the UN Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes.

The first [report](#) includes recommendations to address the negative consequences of the plastics cycle on human rights and the need to integrate a human rights-based approach in transitioning to a chemically safe circular economy. The report explains that international instruments relevant to the plastics cycle, including the Basel Convention, the Stockholm Convention, and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, do not address several challenges: reducing the volumes of plastics production and waste; controlling hazardous additives in plastics; promoting a chemically safe circular economy; or protecting human rights. The report recommends that States adopt a human rights-based approach to plastics management and negotiate a new international legally binding instrument on plastics.

The second [report](#) is on the right to science in the context of toxic substances. It discusses: the right to science in international human rights instruments; the use of science to inform toxics policy through use of the best available science, the precautionary principle, and effective science-policy interface platforms; and threats to the right to science in the toxics context.

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