

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Coalition Marks International Human Rights Day

December 10 was International Human Rights Day. The theme for Human Rights Day 2021, designated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was “[All Human. All Equal.](#)” Coalition member organizations marked the day with special events on science and human rights. For example, the Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice devoted a special newsletter to Human Rights Day and published a new [policy brief](#) on advancing equality for women in the workforce. The Acoustical Society of America’s Panel on Public Policy issued [a statement](#) recognizing the day and asking ASA members to reflect specifically on the human right to science.

Recorded Webinar: Evolving Perspectives on Anthropology and Human Rights

The Coalition’s final webinar of 2021 explored the American Anthropological Association’s historic perspectives on human rights and contemporary projects that reflect current perspectives from the field. The recording is available [here](#).

ASA Provides Update on Case of Greece’s Former Chief Statistician

The American Statistical Association (ASA) provided an [update](#) on the case of Andreas Georgiou, Greece’s former chief statistician, who has been subject to investigations and legal proceedings by the Greek government for 10 years for defending revised government deficit and debt data for 2006–2009 from ELSTAT, the national statistical service of Greece. ASA, which has long supported Georgiou, reports that the Greek Supreme Court has granted a hearing for January 2023 to consider his request to annul an appeals court decision that found him liable for slander. The Greek Supreme Court also granted Georgiou an injunction to stop the enforcement of slander penalties until the 2023 hearing date.

In August 2021, the International Science Council’s (ISC) Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science issued a public statement: “The ongoing and repeated harassment of Dr. Georgiou as a result of professionally conducting his role at ELSTAT, in line with recognized best practice, is a clear violation of the ISC’s principle of Freedom and Responsibility in Science. . . . These charges are part of a sustained, politically motivated backlash against Dr. Georgiou, and threaten the values of scientific freedom and responsibility in Greece and across the European Union.”

CALLS FOR INPUT

Dec. 31: Call for Input: UN Reports on Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water

The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation is seeking input for two reports: (1) the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of indigenous peoples, which will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2022; and (2) the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of people living in impoverished rural areas, which will be presented to the UN General Assembly in October 2022. Input is due by December 31, and further information may be found [here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Job: Oxfam America, Senior Advisor, Health and Vaccine Equity, Private Sector Department

Oxfam, a global organization working to end the injustice of poverty, is seeking a Senior Advisor, Health and Vaccine Equity, Private Sector Department to strengthen Oxfam America's capacity to engage key U.S.-based private-sector actors through advocacy and campaigning. Further information may be found [here](#).

Job: Postdoctoral Fellow, Human Rights and Transitional Justice, Harvard University

The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, a university-wide academic and research center in humanitarian crisis and leadership, under the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, is seeking a Postdoctoral Fellow, Human Rights and Transitional Justice, with strong analytical and statistical skills to evaluate the effectiveness of transitional justice policies such as prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations, and vetting and lustration. The data and evidence generated by this project will serve to design better policy to address the complex needs of survivors of violence and conflict for accountability, with particular emphasis on the need to prevent, respond to, and end impunity for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and mass atrocity. The one-year fellowship is expected to begin on or around January 1, 2022, with the possibility of extension. Further information may be found [here](#).

Job: Executive Director, OpenAQ

[OpenAQ](#), a tech non-profit whose mission is to fight air inequality with open data and community, is searching for their next Executive Director. To learn more about this opportunity and how to apply, please find a [Prospectus here](#). OpenAQ organized a plenary session at the [AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference](#) held in October.

Jan 1: Call for Papers: Special Issue on Psychology and Human Rights

The International Journal of Psychology is calling for abstracts for proposed articles for a special issue on recent theoretical, methodological, empirical, and practical advances in the psychology of human rights. Articles should evaluate conceptual models and applications of psychology and human rights (including evidence-based practices) that have been implemented in different contexts and new directions in research. Topics may include, but are not limited to: the human rights of indigenous peoples; human rights in legal, mental health, penal and/or detention systems; human rights in national security and defense, military and civic behavior and in displaced populations. Abstracts for a proposed paper are due January 1, 2022, and further information may be found [here](#).

Job: Jan 2: SSRC Just Tech Fellowship

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is seeking applicants for the inaugural cohort of its Just Tech Fellowship. The SSRC works with practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers in the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and related professions in the pursuit of evidence-based policies to promote human well-being. Fellows will identify injustices emerging from new technologies and identify solutions that advance social, political, and economic rights. Applications are due January 2, and further information may be found [here](#).

Job: Jan 9: Researcher, Ethical AI (University of Twente)

The University of Twente in Enschede, the Netherlands is seeking a Researcher in Deep Learning / Ethical Artificial Intelligence. The successful applicant will integrate fairness or explainability techniques into deep learning workflows for classifying unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) imagery. The research output will be closely connected to the university's UAV Center, which centralizes UAV activities at the university's International Institute of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC). ITC focuses on the development of educational material, capacity-building projects, and consultancy services related to drones and UAVs. Applications are due January 9, and further information may be found [here](#).

Jan 31: American University's 2022 Human Rights Essay Award Competition

The Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law

is accepting submissions for the upcoming 2022 Human Rights Essay Award Competition. American University Washington College of Law will award two winners—one for submissions in English and one for submissions in Spanish—with a full scholarship to complete the Certificate of Attendance or Diploma in the 2022 Program of Advanced Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, which will take place from May 30 to June 17, 2022. The topic of the 2022 Competition is “Climate Change and Human Rights: Impacts, Responsibilities, and Opportunities.” Submissions are due January 31, 2022, and further information may be found [here](#).

Feb. 15: Call for Papers: *Forced Migration Review*

The journal *Forced Migration Review* is seeking articles for an issue, to be published in July 2022, which will focus on voice and representation and response and accountability as it relates to policy and practices stemming from forced migration and displacement. Articles are due February 15, 2022, and further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

U.S. Cites Chinese Research Institutes for Using Biotech in Human Rights Abuses

The Biden Administration has imposed trade restrictions on Chinese research institutes and entities for developing and deploying biotechnology and other technologies for military applications and human rights abuses. The Commerce Department [cited](#) China’s Academy of Military Medical Sciences and 11 of its research institutes for using biotechnology “to support Chinese military end uses and end users to include purported brain-control weaponry,” and added them to its Entity List, a tool used to restrict the export, re-export, and in-country transfer of items deemed to pose a risk to the national security or foreign policy interests of the U.S.

“The scientific pursuit of biotechnology and medical innovation can save lives. Unfortunately, the PRC [People’s Republic of China] is choosing to use these technologies to pursue control over its people and its repression of members of ethnic and religious minority groups,” [said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo](#). “We cannot allow U.S. commodities, technologies, and software that support medical science and biotechnical innovation to be diverted toward uses contrary to U.S. national security.”

White House Launches Initiatives to Advance Human Rights and Digital Technologies

As part of the Summit for Democracy, President Joe Biden [announced](#) the establishment of the Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal, a set of policy and foreign-assistance initiatives to bolster democracy and human rights globally. It centers on five areas, including advancing technology for democracy and human rights.

Four technology-based projects were announced: (1) strengthening the Freedom Online Coalition, a multi-stakeholder effort to support internet freedom and promote human rights online; (2) expanding digital democracy programming by assisting partner countries in realizing the benefits of digital technologies that support democratic values and respect human rights; (3) funding for the International Grand Challenges on Democracy-Affirming Technologies, prize competitions focusing on topics such as applying artificial intelligence for an open internet and advancing privacy-preserving technologies; and (4) the launch of the [Export Controls and Human Rights Initiative](#), a multi-country pledge to establish a voluntary, nonbinding written code of conduct to use export-control tools to prevent the proliferation of software and other technologies used to enable serious human rights abuses. In parallel, to counter authoritarian censorship of the internet, the U.S. State Department will establish and seed a Multilateral Surge and Sustain Fund for Anti-Censorship Technology to enable and sustain more users to the uncensored internet.

Congress Passes Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act

The U.S. Senate [passed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act](#), which requires companies to prove that goods imported from China's Xinjiang region were not produced with forced labor. The bill, which was previously passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, now goes to President Joe Biden, who supports the measure, to sign into law. "The President welcomes the agreement by Congress on the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act," said the White House in a December 14th [press statement](#). "We agree with Congress that action can and must be taken to hold the People's Republic of China accountable for genocide and human rights abuses and to address forced labor in Xinjiang." The bill applies to all goods, wares, articles, and merchandise mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part in Xinjiang, a region in China where human rights abuses have occurred against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic groups.

White House Official Emphasizes Fairness and Equity in Science and Technology Policy

Alondra Nelson, Deputy Director for Science and Society in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, highlighted the goals of the Biden Administration to make science and technology policy fairer and more equitable. She points to a "new social compact" that would make innovation more inclusive and equitable, address inequalities of the past, and use social science to improve policymaking. Her comments were part of [an interview](#) in *Issues in Science and Technology*, a quarterly journal published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and Arizona State University. Dr. Nelson spoke at the [AAAS Forum on Science & Technology Policy](#) held in mid-October.

Human Rights Groups Criticize Re-instatement of "Remain in Mexico" Asylum Policy

The Biden administration has re-instated a federal policy requiring asylum seekers to wait in Mexico while their claims are being processed, as reported by the [BBC](#) and [CNN](#). In June, the Biden administration had revoked the policy, which had been put into place by the Trump administration, but in August, a federal court ruled that the policy was improperly cancelled, a decision that the Biden administration is appealing. Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a [memorandum](#) detailing how the administration is re-implementing the policy, which includes measures that the administration says makes the policy more humane. Mexico has agreed to accept the policy, known as Remain in Mexico, in exchange for concessions such as a shorter turnaround time for asylum decisions and a U.S.–Mexico development program for Central America. The policy, however, is being criticized by human rights and pro-migration groups. Human Rights First and the Women's Refugee Commission are among 242 human rights, civil rights, refugee aid, immigration, and faith-based organizations signing a [letter](#) that calls on the Biden administration to end the policy and restart asylum.

UN Expert Calls for Comprehensive Human Rights Legislation in the U.S.

Fernand de Varennes, the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, [is urging](#) the U.S. to overhaul legislation to prevent increasing exclusion, discrimination, hate speech, and crimes against minorities. He cited gaps in human rights protection due to a lack of comprehensive national human rights legislation that conforms more closely to its international human rights obligations. "These deficiencies in national human rights protection contribute to millions of Americans, particularly minorities, facing growing inequality, discrimination and even exclusion, facing dramatic increases in hate speech and hate crimes, as well as the challenges and threats caused by environmental degradation and growing economic, health and educational disparities that leaves a disproportionate proportion of them behind," he said following a 14-day visit to the U.S. to evaluate its human rights situation. He will submit a final report to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2022.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN Secretary-General, Human Rights Commissioner Stress Equality on Human Rights Day

In [recognition](#) of Human Rights Day on December 10, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet took stock of the progress and setbacks made since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, addressed recent challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and emphasized the importance of moving forward with the [UN's Common Agenda](#),

which outlines 12 goals for securing peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet achieved through increased global cooperation and multilateralism.

“Recovery from the pandemic must be an opportunity to expand human rights and freedoms, and to rebuild trust,” said Guterres in a [video message](#). “Inequality is deepening, but we can choose a different path.”

“The Common Agenda set out by the UN Secretary-General in September 2021 calls for renewed solidarity between peoples and future generations; a new social contract anchored in human rights; better management of critical issues involving peace, development, health and our planet; and a revitalized multilateralism that can meet the challenges of our times,” [said Bachelet](#). “This is an agenda of action and an agenda of rights... Equality is at the heart of human rights, and at the heart of the solutions required to carry us through this period of global crisis.”

UN Conference Fails to Act on Use of “Killer Robots”

The Sixth Review Conference of the [UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#) (CCW), also known as the Inhumane Weapons Convention, was held earlier this month in Geneva, and CCW participants were unable to agree to begin negotiations on new rules for so-called “killer robots,” or autonomous weapons that can choose targets and kill people without human interference, in a move criticized by human rights groups. Instead, the States of the CCW agreed to hold 10 days of meetings in 2022 to address the issue.

“The lack of a substantive outcome at the UN review conference is a wholly inadequate response to the concerns raised by killer robots,” said Steve Goose, Arms Director at Human Rights Watch, in a Dec. 20 [statement](#). Human Rights Watch is a co-founder of the [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#), a coalition of more than 185 nongovernmental organizations in 67 countries that advocates for a treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons systems and maintain meaningful human control over the use of force. Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic issued a [briefing paper](#) to outline the steps and focus for a new treaty on autonomous weapons systems, which they say is necessary to clarify and strengthen existing international humanitarian law.

Earlier this year, at a meeting of the Group of Government Experts of the CCW, most CCW States parties called for a new legally binding instrument for autonomous weapons while a minority countered that existing international humanitarian law is sufficient. The U.S., one of the countries opposed to a new treaty, instead has [recommended](#) a non-binding Code of Conduct. UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued a [statement](#) in advance of the CCW Review Conference to “encourage the Review Conference to agree on an ambitious plan for the future to establish restrictions on the use of certain types of autonomous weapons.” An [article](#) in *The New York Times* further analyzes recent news.

UN Experts Call for Release of Journalist Jailed for COVID Reporting in China

UN human rights experts [are calling](#) on the Chinese government to immediately release imprisoned citizen journalist and human rights defender Zhang Zhan on humanitarian grounds. She has been detained since May 2020 and was sentenced to a four-year sentence in December 2020 on charges of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” She was arrested after she posted a video criticizing the government’s handling of the outbreak of COVID-19 and was accused of spreading false information and stirring up negative sentiment about the pandemic.

Europe’s Roma People Subject to Privacy Rights Issues in Genetics Research

A recent [article](#) in *Nature* points to multiple issues, including those relating to consent, with the handling and interpretation of DNA data from the Roma people in Europe. The study analyzed more than 450 papers published between 1921 and 2021 and five public databases with DNA data to understand how geneticists, medical researchers, molecular anthropologists, and others obtained DNA. The most problematic area was the

use of these data in forensic genetics research. The article points out that only since 2010 have leading forensic genetics journals required publications to include evidence of appropriate procedures, such as the use of written informed consent or approval from an ethics committee, but data collected even decades earlier continue to be widely used.

UN Experts Call for Release of Environmental Defenders in Honduras

UN human rights experts [are calling](#) on Honduras, elected to the UN Human Rights Council in October, to release eight environmental defenders in line with recommendations made by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which said that their detention was arbitrary and breached several human rights, including the guarantee to a fair trial. In addition, the experts note that Honduras has not yet ratified the Escazú Agreement, the first legally binding instrument to include provisions on environmental human rights defenders and noted the adoption of a resolution by the Human Rights Council on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The defenders were placed in pre-trial detention two years ago for opposing an iron oxide mine inside a protected national park in the country.

Kenya's High Court Ruling on National ID System Important for Digital Rights

In an important case involving digital and privacy rights, the High Court in Kenya ruled against the Kenyan government over the rollout of a new biometric-enabled digital identity system that consolidates an individual's national ID, passport, driver's license, social security card, and national insurance card into one credential necessary to access public services and benefits, enroll in school, and vote. The Court ruled that the government failed to undertake a data-protection impact assessment (DPIA) before issuing identity cards and processing data, an action that contravened Kenya's Data Protection Act. Although more than 11.2 million cards have already been processed and more than \$90 million spent on the system, the Court ordered the government to undertake a DPIA before proceeding further. Further analysis of the case and its human rights implications may be found [here](#).

Online Portal Suggested to Link Researchers at Risk in Afghanistan with Resources

A recent [op-ed](#) in *Nature* highlights the need to better connect researchers at risk in Afghanistan to organizations able to help them. The article says this problem could be addressed with an organized digital portal or service that could serve as single online space for organizations and individuals to use to display what they are offering in terms of employment, support, or advice that could match them with scholars and other at-risk professionals in Afghanistan and other countries in conflict, such as Syria and Yemen.

UN Experts, Human Rights Group Call for Equitable Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines

UN human rights experts [are urging](#) States to act decisively to ensure that all people have equal and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines, particularly those in low-income countries. They support a temporary waiver of relevant intellectual property rights under the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) to ensure that protection of vaccine patents does not become a barrier to the right to health, a position supported by human rights groups, including [Human Rights Watch](#). They also point to States' responsibilities to ensure the equal distribution of vaccines within and between countries and the obligations of businesses to ensure that their actions do not result in adverse impacts on human rights.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

AAAS Publishes Report on Scientists' Social Responsibilities

The AAAS has [released a report](#) detailing its findings from a global survey, interviews and focus group about scientists and engineers' perspectives toward their social responsibilities. The project featured the cooperation from 18 additional scientific and engineering membership organizations and was funded by a National Science Foundation grant. To read the full report, [click here](#). The recording from the virtual report launch is [available here](#).

International Science Council Report Examines Freedom and Responsibility in Science

The International Science Council's Committee for Freedom and Responsibility in Science has issued a [position paper](#), *A Contemporary Perspective on the Free and Responsible Practice of Science in the 21st Century*, which calls for global science systems that protect the human right to science. The paper proposes actions for scientists, research institutes, universities, science organizations, the private sector and governments to help strengthen free and responsible science for the common good. A summary of the paper may be found [here](#).

Amnesty International Report: Twitter Fails To Protect Women Online

Amnesty International has issued a [report](#), "The Twitter Scorecard," which grades the social media company's record on implementing a series of recommendations to tackle abuse against women and non-binary persons on the platform. "Despite our repeated calls to improve [its] platform, Twitter is still falling short on its promises to protect users at heightened risk of online abuse," said Michael Kleinman, Director of Technology and Human Rights at Amnesty International USA, in commenting on the report. "For a company whose mission is to 'give everyone the power to create and share ideas instantly without barriers,' it's become abundantly clear that women and/or marginalized groups disproportionately face threats to their online safety." Kleinman was a speaker at the [AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference](#) held in October. The report may be downloaded [here](#).

Council of Europe Report: Protecting Women and Girls from Violence in the Digital Age

The Secretariat of the Violence Against Women Division of the Council of Europe has published a [comparative study](#) assessing the relevance of two human rights treaties, the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) in addressing online and technology-facilitated violence against women. The study explores the extent to which these two international treaties can complement each other and help address online and technology-facilitated violence against women through coordinated policies, prevention, protection, prosecution and international cooperation.

Op-ed Warns of Human Rights Impact of Emotion Recognition Software

An [op-ed](#) in *OpenGlobalRights* points to the potential harm of governments using emotion recognition software as a tool of governance. The article says that facial recognition technology already presents challenges for human rights protection, and emotion recognition software is a further source of misuse. It falls under the category of affective computing, which uses data, algorithms, and artificial intelligence to recognize and influence human emotions. While its use is now limited, the author cites examples of its use in China and says democratic governments and human rights activists need to be prepared for the implications of this technology and work to build international consensus against its use before it becomes widespread.

Op-ed Examines Increasing Datafication and Impact on Human Rights

Another [op-ed](#) in *OpenGlobalRights* highlights the importance of human rights inputs into datafication, the process whereby a series of characteristics are identified as relevant and then synthesized and translated into a structured format to enable downstream tabulations, classifications, analysis, and actions. Given the growing importance of datafication in public and private decision-making the author emphasizes the importance for human rights practitioners of understanding the ways in which such processes of change might affect the rights and interests of people and power relationships at large to enable an effective defense of human rights now and in the future.

Interview with Head of the Syrian Archive and Mnemonic on Human Rights Documentation

A recent [article](#) in *Forbes* features an interview with Ashoka Fellow Hadi al-Khatib, founder of the Syrian Archive and Mnemonic, which preserves audiovisual documentation that can be used as evidence for lawyers,

human rights investigators, historians, prosecutors, and journalists. He discusses this work and the limitations in machine-learning-based algorithms used on social media platforms to archive such content.

Physicians for Human Rights Report: Detention of Healthcare Workers in Syria

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has issued a [report](#) that examines patterns in the Syrian government's forced disappearance, detention, and abuse of healthcare workers during the early years of the Syrian uprising. The findings are based on new data set of 1,685 detentions that occurred in 2011 and 2012, which PHR compiled using data sets provided by the Open Society Justice Initiative, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and the Violations Documentation Center.

Scholars at Risk Releases *Free to Think* 2021 Report

Scholars at Risk has issued the 2021 edition of its annual *Free to Think Report*, which analyzes attacks on higher education communities globally. [Free to Think 2021](#) documents 332 attacks on higher education communities in 65 countries and territories. The report details the types of attacks and the causes behind them and makes recommendations on how to address and limit them.

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