

COALITION CALENDAR

2023 AAAS Annual Meeting: March 2-5 (Washington, DC and Online)

This week! The 2023 AAAS Annual Meeting takes place in Washington, DC, and online March 2-5. The theme of this year's meeting is "Science for Humanity," and includes numerous sessions relevant to the work of the Coalition, from sessions on environmental justice to connecting your research and teaching with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. More information and the meeting program are available at <https://meetings.aaas.org/>.

March 9: The Right to Science and Infectious Diseases: Past, Present and Future

The Coalition's next webinar will take place on March 9 from 11:00am-12:00pm EST and focus on "[The Right to Science and Infectious Diseases: Past, Present and Future](#)." The presentations will explore lessons learned from the AIDS movement, as well as ongoing work on tuberculosis and COVID-19, to highlight how the connections between chronic underinvestment in public health and research and development reverberate in everyday life and how science and technology have the ability to promote, or – through their inaccessibility – hinder equitable human advancement for everyone. The event is co-sponsored with the Movement Engaged Research Hub of the Center for Social Science Research at George Mason University. [Register for the webinar here](#).

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Conference Panel Recordings Available on YouTube

Recordings of the plenary sessions from the 2022 Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference are now available on the [AAAS YouTube channel](#)! These include the American Psychological Association's session on [Public Psychology and the Right to Science](#), [A WHO Pandemics Instrument: The Right to Science as a Game-Changer](#), and much more. Stay tuned for more information about how you can contribute to the annual conference compendium highlighting the takeaways from each session.

SPSSI, Other Coalition Members Speak Out, Share Resources in Response to Florida Measures Targeting Academic Freedom

In response to recent actions by Florida authorities, including Governor Ron DeSantis, that target alleged "indoctrination" at the state's colleges and universities, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues has issued a [Special Policy Update on Academic Freedom](#). The Policy Update includes more details about threats to academic freedom in Florida and elsewhere and shares relevant resources. Other Coalition member organizations or partners who have issued statements or signed on to related letters include the [American Anthropological Association](#), [American Association of Geographers](#), [American Mathematical Society](#), [American Philosophical Association](#), [American Political Science Association](#), [American Psychological Association](#), [American Sociological Association](#), and [Scholars at Risk](#).

American Mathematical Society Apologizes for Past Exclusionary Practices

The American Mathematical Society (AMS) issued a [Statement of Apology](#) over policies, practices, and actions that have contributed to past and ongoing discrimination against mathematicians of color, especially African-Americans, that resulted in exclusion from AMS activities and benefits. The apology was adopted on January 3, 2023 in the name of the Society following adoption by the AMS Council in April 2022. An AMS Task Force had issued [a report](#) in March 2021 to document the AMS's historical role in racial discrimination and made recommendations to increase inclusion. The Task Force was

created following the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2020, with the AMS issuing an initial apology at the time. The AMS has pledged its commitment to ensure that the Society is inclusive. “Concrete actions must be taken by both AMS leadership and the mathematics profession more broadly, and structural changes in policies and practices are needed to sustain progress,” it said in its statement.

COMING SOON

Meet a Coalition Member: The American Chemical Society

Over the course of 2023, in this newsletter and on the AAAS website, we will highlight the human rights activities of four different Coalition member associations. First up: the American Chemical Society (ACS)! Stay tuned for an interview with ACS’ Dorothy Phillips and Karen Flores Garcia about the origins of ACS’ human rights work, its challenges and satisfactions, and future directions for human rights at ACS. If you are interested in being part of this series, please contact Nate Weisenberg at nweisenberg@aaas.org.

CALLS FOR INPUT

March 3: Call for Input: UN Report on Human Rights and Technical Standard-Setting Processes for New and Emerging Digital Technologies

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is [seeking input](#) for a thematic report that will examine the relationship between human rights and technical standard-setting processes for new and emerging digital technologies. Among the questions the report will address are how do technical standards for new and emerging digital technologies impact the enjoyment of human rights and what are related risks and opportunities? Input is due by March 3, 2023, and further information may be found [here](#).

April 14: Call for Input: UN Report on the Use of Technology in Contemporary Slavery

The UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, is [seeking input](#) for a thematic report on the use of technology in facilitating and preventing contemporary forms of slavery. The report seeks to gain input from survivors/victims who have been recruited and exploited, particularly for forced labor, child labor, and forced and early marriage, with the use of modern technology, as well as from other stakeholders and sources. Input is due by April 14, and further information may be found [here](#).

WHAT WE’RE READING

Article Examines Work of Forensic Scientist in Identifying Missing Migrants

A recent [article](#) outlines the work of organizations using forensic science to identify the remains of missing migrants in Europe and the need to further support these efforts. The article describes the work of forensic anthropologist Cristina Cattaneo, Head of the Anthropological and Odontological Lab at the State University of Milan, who since 2013 has used the tools of forensic science—antemortem photographs, dental superimpositions, body markings, personal belongings, DNA samples—to help identify the bodies of missing migrants in Italy. The article also outlines the work of the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), which started in 1996 and continues to work to assist families of missing individuals. The article further describes the challenges these groups face, including getting support from European authorities to provide funding for recovering bodies of the missing, conducting autopsies, outreach, DNA testing, and databasing forensic and identifying information.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Job: Senior Research Fellow, Surveillance Resistance Lab

The Surveillance Resistance Lab is [seeking](#) a Senior Research Fellow to conduct qualitative and quantitative research on surveillance systems where government and corporate forces intersect and align. The Surveillance Resistance Lab is a non-profit founded in January 2023 and was formerly the [Surveillance, Tech, & Immigration Policing Project](#), which was housed at the Immigrant Defense Project until 2022. Further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

President Biden Issues Executive Order To Further Advance Racial Equity in Gov't

President Joe Biden issued an [executive order](#) earlier this month to extend and strengthen equity-advancing requirements for U.S. federal agencies to build on an earlier executive order issued in January 2021. The new executive order directs federal agencies to establish agency equity teams to coordinate the implementation of equity initiatives and ensure that their respective agencies are delivering equitable outcomes. It also creates a White House Steering Committee on Equity for coordinating government-wide efforts to advance equity and establishes an annual requirement for federal agencies to submit Equity Action Plans to detail their actions, performance measures, and milestones for advancing equity, including their performance on the Environmental Justice Scorecard, which evaluates the federal government's performance in addressing historic and current environmental injustices. The first Equity Action Plan by federal agencies will be required by September 2023 and on an annual basis thereafter.

In addition, the executive order requires the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy to report on the progress of the National Science and Technology Council's Subcommittee on Equitable Data. Also, the executive order requires agencies to increase engagement with underserved communities by identifying and applying innovative approaches to improve the quality, frequency, and accessibility of engagement. It further requires agencies to use their respective civil rights authorities and offices to prevent and address discrimination and advance equity for all, including increasing the effects of civil rights enforcement and to increase public awareness of civil rights principles.

Judge Gives Measured Sentence to U.S. Scientist for Not Disclosing Research Ties in China

In a case involving charges brought under the China Initiative, a controversial program launched in 2018 aimed at rooting out intellectual property theft and economic espionage of U.S.-based research to China, a federal judge last month sentenced Franklin Tao, a former University of Kansas chemistry professor, to time served and two years of supervised release for making false statements about undisclosed ties to a research university in China. The China Initiative was launched by the Trump Administration in 2018 and was criticized for having a chilling effect on U.S.-based scientists of Chinese origin and international research collaborations. The program has since been re-focused under the Biden Administration to a broader strategy for countering nation-state threats. Tao had been found guilty in 2022 of three charges of wire fraud (which were subsequently dismissed) and one count of making a false statement to U.S. government officials about his ties to a Chinese research institution. His sentence handed down last month with no jail time or fines is considered the latest rejection by U.S. courts of the government's prosecution of Chinese-born scientists. A recent [article](#) in *Science* discusses the ruling.

US Gov't Holds Hearing on AI, Automated Systems and Employment Discrimination

Late last month, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [held a public hearing](#), "Navigating Employment Discrimination in AI and Automated Systems: A New Civil Rights Frontier," to examine the use of automated systems, including artificial intelligence (AI), in employment decisions. The Commission heard from witnesses including computer scientists, civil rights advocates, legal experts, industrial-organizational psychologists, and employer representatives. The witnesses discussed how discrimination may occur when employers use automated systems. The discussion also included ways in which AI and automated systems in the workplace might support or hinder diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts. The hearing continues the work of the EEOC's AI and Algorithmic Fairness

Initiative, an agency-wide initiative to ensure that the use of software, including AI and other emerging technologies used in hiring and other employment decisions, comply with the federal civil rights laws that the EEOC enforces.

AP Report: U.S. Gov't Evaluating AI Screening Tools in Child Protective Services

The Associated Press [reports](#) that the U.S. Department of Justice has been scrutinizing an AI tool used by a Pittsburgh-area child protective services agency following concerns that the tool could lead to discrimination against families with disabilities. Several civil rights complaints were filed in the fall about the Allegheny Family Screening Tool, which uses an AI program to assess a family's risk level when they are reported for child welfare concerns. The cases highlight potential legal implications over the use of AI-based tools and algorithms in child protective services.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Researchers Concerned Over New Iranian Gov't Official and Anti-Science Ties

A recent [article](#) in *Science* reports that Iranian scientists are concerned that the appointment last month of a hardline conservative cleric as the new Secretary of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR), a body with power over science, academic life, and culture in Iran, will strengthen anti-scientific forces in Iran. The appointment follows anti-government protests and the emergence of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died while in custody of Iran's morality police in September 2022. The protests have led to crackdowns at some Iranian universities. Among other responsibilities, SCCR elects university deans and the presidents of the Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Medical Sciences, and the Academy of Arts.

UN Experts Intervene in Toxic Legacy Class Action Against Lead Pollution

A court in South Africa [has admitted](#) several UN experts as *amici curiae* in a class action suit filed by alleged victims of mining pollution in Zambia's central Kabwe District. The experts named were the UN Special Rapporteurs on toxics and human rights, extreme poverty and human rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and the UN Working Groups on business and human rights and discrimination against women and girls. The class action suit was filed on behalf of children and women of child-bearing age who suffered injury and harm as a result of exposure to lead pollution. The applicants allege that the company Anglo American South Africa, through its prior involvement in the activities of the local lead mine, assumed a duty of care toward the residents of Kabwe, especially protection against lead exposure. The South African court will consider arguments based on international human rights law, including the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that commit businesses enterprises to respect human rights, state that businesses should avoid infringing on human rights of others, address the adverse human rights impacts linked to business activity with which they are involved, and provide access to remedies in case of violations.

Dutch Universities Step Up Support for Academics Facing Threats and Intimidation

A recent [article](#) in *Nature* outlines an online platform that supports scientists who face threats or intimidation that was developed by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), an association representing 14 Dutch universities. The platform, SafeScience, was developed in two stages. First was a set of guidelines that were launched in October 2021 for the 14 universities of the UNL to share best practices in dealing with online and other forms of threats and harassment to not only help researchers, but also employers on how to deal with that harassment. The [actual website for SafeScience](#) was launched in November 2022, as a national website open to all scientists and researchers employed at the 14 Dutch universities and institutes of the UNL affiliated with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences or the Dutch Research Council.

UN Secretary-General Calls for More Action To Increase Women, Girls in Science

UN Secretary-General António Guterres [called for greater action](#) to increase the ranks of women and girls in science in recognition of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, which was observed on

February 11. “On this International Day of Women and Girls in Science, we highlight a simple equation: More women and girls in science equals better science,” he said. “Women and girls bring diversity to research, expand the pool of science professionals, and provide fresh perspectives to science and technology, benefiting everyone.” The Secretary-General called for initiatives such as new scholarships, internships, and training schemes, but also quotas, incentives, and mentorship programs to help women overcome entrenched hurdles and build their careers. He further stressed the need to affirm women’s rights and break down stereotypes, biases, and structural barriers.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Guidance Provides Human Rights Principles for Content Governance in Times of Crisis

The human rights organization AccessNow and other partners [have released](#) an “[Declaration of Principles for Content and Platform Governance in Times of Crisis](#),” to provide human rights-respecting principles for Internet/social media platforms to follow before, during, and after situations of armed conflict, fragile governance, and crisis, where violence, hate speech, and other human rights abuses often arise. The principles build on the [Santa Clara Principles on Transparency and Accountability in Content Moderation](#), which were developed and launched by a group of human rights organizations, advocates, and academic experts in 2018 and that put forth three principles for how best to obtain meaningful transparency and accountability around Internet platforms’ moderation of user-generated content.

National Academies Host Lecture on Equity and Clean Energy

The Geographical and Geospatial Sciences Committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently held the latest addition to the Gilbert F. White lecture series, which focuses on connections between the geographical sciences and society, to discuss the U.S. Department of Energy’s approach to prioritizing equity and place-based strategies in the U.S. government’s national climate goals and its transition to clean energy and to consider the impact to underserved communities, including those historically overburdened by the energy system. The lecture features Shalanda H. Baker, Director of the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity at the U.S. Department of Energy. The recording may be found [here](#).

Stanford Study Examines Algorithmic Fairness in IRS Tax Audits

The Institute for Economic Policy Research at Stanford University has [issued](#) a white paper, “[Measuring and Mitigating Racial Disparities in Tax Audits](#),” which examined differences in Internal Revenue Service (IRS) audit rates between Black and non-Black taxpayers. Despite race-blind audit selection, the study found that Black taxpayers are audited at 2.9 to 4.7 times the rate of non-Black taxpayers with the main source of the disparity being differing audit rates by race among taxpayers claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit, which provides a tax credit to low- to moderate-income workers. The study raises the question of algorithmic fairness used in the IRS audit selection process. A follow-up [article](#) from Stanford’s Institute for Human-Centered AI examines the key issues from the study.

Scholars at Risk Holds New “Free To Think” Podcast Episode on University Raid in Peru

Scholars at Risk, which works to protect threatened scholars and promote academic freedom around the world, has released its [latest episode](#) of its “Free to Think” podcast that features an interview with Salvador Herencia-Carrasco, Director of the Human Rights Clinic of the Human Rights Research and Education Center at the University of Ottawa, Canada, and a member of the Coalition for Academic Freedom in the Americas. Carrasco spoke about his work with colleagues inside and outside Peru to free students from unlawful detention and to defend academic freedom and university autonomy following the arrest of more than 200 people, including students, at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Lima last month.

NIST Publishes AI Risk Framework & Playbook

The U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) has released

its [Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework \(AI RMF 1.0\)](#), a guidance document for voluntary use by organizations designing, developing, deploying or using AI systems to help manage the many risks of AI technologies. The AI RMF follows a direction from Congress for NIST to develop the voluntary framework and was produced in collaboration with the private and public sectors.

PEOPLE

AAA's Ed Liebow to Retire

The American Anthropological Association has announced that its Executive Director, Ed Liebow, will step down effective July 1 after serving in that role for ten years. More information [is available here](#). Thank you, Ed, for your contributions to the Coalition.

New Coalition Council Member: Heather Washington

Heather Washington, the Deputy Director of the American Sociological Association (ASA), has been appointed as one of ASA's representatives to the Science and Human Rights Coalition Council. Welcome, Heather!

New Executive Directors of LSA and SSSP

Margaret Vitullo, formerly Deputy Director at ASA, has been named as the new Executive Director of fellow Coalition member the Linguistic Society of America. We are also pleased to welcome to the Coalition Dr. Elroi Windsor, the new Executive Officer of the [Society for the Study of Social Problems](#). Please join us in congratulating Margaret and Elroi!

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