

Note: We are taking a brief break from this newsletter in May. Our next issue will be published in June.

COALITION CALENDAR

June 30: Apply to Be a Coalition FutureGen Scholar!

Calling all graduate or undergraduate students passionate about science and human rights: apply to be a Coalition SciTech and Human Rights FutureGen Scholar! Up to three Scholars will each receive a \$5,000 stipend to support a project that addresses issues of SciTech and Human Rights on their campus or in their community. Applications are open through June 30. More information, and a link to the application, [available here](#).

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Recorded Coalition Webinar: Artificial Intelligence and the Rise of Digital Repression

The Coalition webinar team organized another terrific session on April 20 on [Artificial Intelligence and the Rise of Digital Repression](#) with speaker Steven Feldstein. Thanks once again to Ollie Moles and webinar team colleagues, as well as John Dale and his team at the Movement Engaged Research Hub of the Center for Social Science Research at George Mason University, for all the work they put into this event. You can [watch the recording here](#).

CALLS FOR INPUT

May 5: Coalition on Health AI Seeks Input on Blueprint for Trustworthy AI Implementation Guidance and Assurance for Healthcare

The Coalition for Health AI is working to develop guidelines to drive high-quality healthcare through the adoption of credible, fair, and transparent health AI systems and is seeking input on a [draft blueprint](#) for trustworthy AI implementation guidance and assurance for healthcare. Comments are due Friday May 5, 2023, and further information may be found [here](#).

WHAT WE'RE READING

Promoting Access to Medical School and Physician Workforce Diversity

A new study in *JAMA Health Forum* examines the barriers to medical school access and a broader set of contributing factors to consider and address. The study analyzed data from a sample of more than 81,000 Medical College Assessment Test (MCAT) examinees nationwide during 2015 through 2018, and the authors of the study found significant differences by race and ethnicity. Black and Hispanic examinees were significantly less likely to apply to medical school despite taking the MCAT, and American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black, and Hispanic examinees were significantly less likely to matriculate into medical school compared with White examinees. In addition, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black, and Hispanic examinees, compared with White examinees, were significantly more likely to report that a pre-health adviser negatively influenced their decision to apply to medical school. An editorial summarizing the article may be found [here](#), and the full article [here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

May 3 & 10: Thriving Earth Exchange Seeking Community Projects and Community Science Fellows

The American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange program, which connects communities with scientists and supports them as they work together to tackle local challenges related to natural

hazards, natural resources, and climate change, is seeking communities to apply for projects. Applications are due May 3, and further information may be found [here](#).

The program is also seeking Community Science Fellows, who are volunteers responsible for facilitating and leading collaborative, co-developed community science projects that produce on-the-ground impact in local communities. They can have any background, experience level, or location. Applications are due May 10, and further information may be found [here](#).

May 15: 2023 Global Program on More Than Human (MOTH) Rights

The More Than Human Rights (MOTH) Project, an initiative of Earth rights advocacy at New York University's School of Law, is seeking practitioners, advocates, judges, researchers, and advanced students to apply for the 2023 Global Program on More Than Human Rights, which will take place in Quito, Ecuador, at the Andean University Simón Bolívar from September 25, 2023, to September 29, 2023. Applications are due May 15, and further information may be found [here](#).

May 24-26: Nobel Prize Summit (In Person and Virtual)

The Nobel Prize Summit, organized by the Nobel Foundation in partnership with the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, will take place May 24–26, 2023, in Washington D.C., and can be attended in person or virtually. The Summit brings together Nobel Prize laureates and other esteemed researchers with policy makers, business leaders, civil society groups, and youth leaders to share ideas, propose real-world solutions grounded in evidence, and inspire action. This year's Summit has a theme of "Truth, Trust and Hope," and will focus on how relevant parties can build trust in truth, facts, and scientific evidence to create a more hopeful future for all. Further information, including how to register, may be found [here](#).

June 30: Nominations Due for 2024 AAAS Award for Scientific Freedom and Responsibility

The AAAS Award for Scientific Freedom and Responsibility is presented by AAAS to honor organizations or individuals (including but not limited to scientists, engineers, or health professionals) who have advanced scientific freedom and responsibility under challenging circumstances. Their exemplary actions advance trustworthy science – science that is conducted and communicated responsibly, upholding the values of scientific freedom and human rights, including the right of everyone to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress. Nominations are due June 30. Learn more and [make a nomination here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

Article Examines Role of NIH in Actions against Asian Scientists, Researchers

A recent [article](#) in *Science* examines actions taken by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, which beginning in 2018 directed letters to 100 institutions to investigate allegations that one or more of their faculty receiving NIH funding had violated NIH policies designed to ensure federal funds were being spent properly. Some 81% of the scientists cited in the NIH letters identified as Asian, and 91% of the collaborations under scrutiny were with colleagues in China. Most commonly, NIH claimed a researcher was using part of a grant to do work in China through an undisclosed affiliation with a Chinese institution. Four years later, 103 of those scientists—some 42% of the 246 targeted in the letters, most of them tenured faculty members—had lost their jobs. Besides the dismissals and forced retirements, more than one in five of the 246 scientists targeted were banned from applying for new NIH funding for as long as four years, and almost two-thirds were removed from existing NIH grants.

National Science Foundation Will Pilot Questions on Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity in Annual Survey of Earned Doctorates

A recent [article](#) in *Science* says the National Science Foundation will include questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in a pilot test to be conducted in July as part of its annual Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), which provides information about recent Ph.Ds. with respect to race, gender, disability status, educational background, and postgraduate plans. The long-running census is used to understand which groups are underrepresented in the U.S. science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) community, but has not previously had demographic questions about how many Ph.D. recipients are LGBTQ.

California Seeks to Regulate Automated Decision Tools in Employment

A [bill](#) in the California state legislature (A.B. 331) that would impose assessment requirements on the private sector's use of automated decision tools in employment-related decision-making has passed the State Assembly's Privacy Committee and is eligible to be considered by the full Assembly. The bill requires developers and users of automated decision tools, such as machine-learning algorithms, to conduct and record an impact assessment, including the intended use, the makeup of the data, and the rigor of the statistical analysis. The data reported must also include an analysis of potential adverse impact on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, national origin, or any other classification protected by state law. The bill is the first of its kind in California and builds on President Biden's "AI Bill of Rights" to create a first-in-the nation standard to prevent algorithmic bias, according to Assembly member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, who sponsored the bill.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN Adopts Resolution on Climate Justice; Seeks Clarity from Int'l Court of Justice

The United Nations General Assembly [adopted](#) a resolution late last month that seeks clarity on States' legal and human rights obligations relative to climate change. The resolution requests that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) provide an Advisory Opinion on the legal obligations of States with respect to climate change and its adverse impacts. The ICJ Advisory Opinion would help establish whether there is legal obligation for countries to do what they have committed to in non-binding treaties, such as the 2015 Paris climate accord, and whether failure to do so can be challenged through litigation, according to an [analysis](#) in *The Guardian*. The UN resolution follows efforts by small island States, including Vanuatu, a South Pacific Ocean country that faces an existential threat due to sea-level rise, to oblige governments to address the adverse impact of climate change.

"The Advisory Opinion will have tremendous potential to bring into clearer focus such obligations, including towards people in vulnerable situations, and in international cooperation, as well as providing guidance for policy and litigation to come," said Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a March 29 statement. "This could be an important catalyst for the urgent, ambitious, and equitable climate action that is needed to stop global heating and to limit and remediate climate-induced human rights harms."

UN Expert Calls for Human Rights Protections in Accelerating Climate Goals

Ian Fry, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, is [urging](#) States to accelerate climate goals and action, in line with recommendations by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC issued last month its latest [report](#) that summarizes the state of knowledge of climate change, its widespread impacts and risks, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. "As noted in the IPCC report, adaptation and mitigation actions that prioritize equity, social justice, climate justice, rights-based approaches, and inclusiveness lead to more sustainable outcomes," said Fry. He added his support to the [Acceleration Agenda](#) presented by the UN Secretary-General on March 20, which includes recommendations on phasing out fossil fuels and achieving net-zero emissions, and scaling up climate finance.

Türk: Action Needed to Reduce Digital Divide Among Children

Volker Türk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, [is urging](#) that the “digital divide” among children be reduced by increasing access to the internet, which now varies widely depending on country income group, the rural-urban divide, and household wealth. He spoke at the first-ever child-led panel discussion on the rights of the child and the digital environment at the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, held last month in Geneva, Switzerland. He said that the digital divide equates to 2.2 billion children and youth under 25 who don’t have access to the internet in their homes. “It means that they are being left behind, unable to access education and training, or news and information that can help protect their health, safety and rights,” he said in a March 29 statement.

UN Urges Moratorium on Bangladesh’s Digital Security Act

Türk [is calling](#) on Bangladesh to immediately suspend its application of the country’s Digital Security Act and reform the law over concerns that the government is using the law to arrest, harass, and intimidate journalists, human rights defenders, and those critical of the government. The law was passed with the aim of preventing the spread of racism, sectarianism, extremism, terrorist propaganda, and hatred against religious or ethnic minorities through social media, print media, or any other electronic media, but critics says it has been misused by the government. More than 2,000 cases have been brought under the law, which became effective in October 2018. “I call again on the authorities to impose an immediate moratorium on its use and to reform comprehensively its provisions to bring them in line with the requirements of international human rights law,” Türk said in a March 31 statement. In June 2022, the UN put forth a [set of recommendations](#) to the government of Bangladesh to bring the law in line with international human rights standards and prevent possible arbitrary application or abuse. Türk is also calling for the creation of an independent judicial panel to review all pending cases brought under the Digital Security Act.

Experts Call for Protection of Human Rights with Respect to Hazardous Chemicals

UN experts [are calling](#) on all parties to the Rotterdam Convention, a multilateral treaty that promotes shared responsibilities in relation to the importation of hazardous chemicals, to adopt measures that would list hazardous chemicals and facilitate informed decision-making by countries with regard to trade in chemicals. Such actions, they say, are necessary to address the serious risks and harms posed by chemicals to human rights, human health, and environmental integrity, particularly for people in vulnerable situations that are disproportionately harmed by exposure to hazardous chemicals.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

Article Examines Use of Digital Technology in Gov’t-Based Surveillance Activities

The Citizen Lab of the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto has published an [article](#) that examines the work of QuaDream, an Israeli company that specializes in the development and sale of advanced digital technologies to government clients and the human rights impact on the use of those technologies. The article details the authors’ investigation into the activities of the company, including several examples of how the technology was used to surveil journalists, political opposition figures, and an NGO worker. QuaDream has now [reportedly ceased operations](#).

New Report: How Crowd-Control Weapons Impact Health and Human Rights

The International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations and Physicians for Human Rights, in collaboration with the Omega Research Foundation, have issued a [report](#), *Lethal in Disguise 2: How Crowd-Control Weapons Impact Health and Human Rights*. The report examines the global use of crowd-control weapons by government-controlled security forces, the impact on the physical and mental health of both protesters and bystanders, and implications for the enjoyment and safe exercise of fundamental civil and political rights.

Committee on Human Rights of the National Academies Issues Proceedings Brief Examining Attacks on Scientists & Health Professionals During the Pandemic

The Committee on Human Rights of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine has issued a [Proceedings Brief](#) to summarize five webcasts that examined the global problem of COVID-19-related attacks on researchers and health professionals, along with concerns regarding repression of information during the pandemic and implications for internationally protected rights. The webcasts, which began in September 2021, examined a wide range of topics including: the targeting of scientists and public health professionals for providing evidence-based health information; global patterns of violence against health personnel; censorship and the right to information; science communication and human rights amid public health emergencies; and a human rights framework for online health-related speech.

New Toolkit for Developing Evidence That Protects Health Care in Armed Conflicts

The Center for Public Health and Human Rights at Johns Hopkins University, Insecurity Insight, the International Rescue Committee, and Physicians for Human Rights have produced a [toolkit](#), “Evidence That Protects Health Care,” to provide tools and guidance to increase protection and respect of protected facilities in armed conflict and improve access to healthcare. The toolkit can be of specific use to humanitarian organizations, human rights actors, researchers, clinicians, policymakers, donors, and all actors committed to protecting healthcare in conflict who seek to: (1) participate in existing data-collection mechanisms and adjust their internal reporting systems to do so; (2) collect detailed information on violence against health care to inform their response and donor discussions; (3) coordinate a joint study measuring violence against health care and its impact; or (4) initiate an evidence-based advocacy initiative to reduce such violence.

PEOPLE

Youssef Farhat Named Executive Director of Center for Human Rights and Global Justice

Congratulations to Coalition member Youssef Farhat, who has served as a member of the AAAS Science, Technology and Human Rights Conference Host Committee, on being named the new executive director of the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice (CHRGJ) at NYU School of Law. More information is available on [CHRGJ’s website](#).

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