

COALITION CALENDAR

April 20: Webinar: Artificial Intelligence and the Rise of Digital Repression (11 am ET)

How may the growing availability of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies impact democratic governance, fuel repressive practices, or undermine the rule of law? The Coalition's next webinar, [Artificial Intelligence and the Rise of Digital Repression](#), will discuss efforts to craft new norms around AI. The webinar is co-sponsored by the Coalition and the Movement Engaged Research Hub of the Center for Social Science Research at George Mason University. [You can register here.](#)

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Recorded Coalition Webinar on The Right to Science & Infectious Diseases

Thanks to Ollie Moles and the Coalition webinar team, 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 organizing an important and thought-provoking webinar on March 9 on "[The Right to Science and Infectious Diseases: Past, Present and Future](#)." Special thanks to speakers Gisa Dang, Mike Frick, and Dr. Fifa A. Rahman. You can [watch the recording here.](#)

Update on Academic Freedom in Florida

The Florida House of Representatives continues to consider [HB 999](#), a bill that [would ban](#) state colleges and universities from using funds to promote, support, or maintain any programs or campus activities that espouse diversity, equity, or inclusion (DEI) or critical race theory. The bill would also give the state's board of governors the ability to remove any major or minor that is based on or otherwise utilizes pedagogical methodology associated with critical theory. Earlier this month, the American Council of Learned Societies denounced the bill as a "[frontal attack](#)" on academic freedom. Coalition members signing on to that statement include the American Anthropological Association, American Philosophical Association, American Political Science Association, American Sociological Association, Linguistic Society of America, and Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD). SRCD also issued [a statement to its members](#) that reiterated the importance of DEI to developmental science research, and shared relevant resources.

SPSSI/APA Provide Input on UN Report on Racial Justice in Law Enforcement

The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) and the American Psychological Association (APA) provided [feedback](#) in response to a call for input by the United Nations in examining racial justice and equity in law enforcement in the U.S. The organizations addressed the psychological dynamics underlying systemic racism and the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement officers against African Americans, as well as promising mechanisms to improve policing practices and accountability. A list of staff from SPSSI and APA involved in drafting the letter may be found [here](#).

CALLS FOR INPUT

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

University Project Seeks to Reduce Bias in Medicine and Healthcare

A recent [article](#) in *Science* outlines a collaboration between various departments at the University of Washington and the University of California, San Diego, in which a team is developing a tool to give physicians feedback in real time during patient visits—or shortly after—on what they can do to mitigate their unconscious prejudices in patient care. The project, called UnBIASED (Understanding Biased patient-provider Interaction and Supporting Enhanced Discourse), is at the leading edge of a wave of efforts to counter the negative effects of bias in medicine. From creating new models of education and training, to developing accurate tests to objectively measure pain, scientists are working to provide healthcare workers and institutions with the tools to diminish bias and provide equitable care.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Job: AccessNow, Director of Policy and International Programs

Access Now, an international human rights organization focused on digital rights of users, including issues of privacy, security, freedom of expression, and transparency, is seeking a Director - Policy & International Programs to manage three primary areas: leading a team of regional managers by facilitating coordination on international programs across regions; overseeing and driving global policy positioning in coordination with experts across the organization's Advocacy Arm; and serving as a member of a joint leadership team for the Advocacy Arm. Further information may be found [here](#).

Webinar: April 11: Addressing Attacks on Researchers and Health Professionals

The Committee on Human Rights (CHR) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine is holding a webinar, *Beyond the Pandemic: Addressing Attacks on Researchers and Health Professionals*, on April 11 to explore practical steps that scientists, researchers, and health professionals are taking to protect themselves and their colleagues from targeting—including violence, harassment, and other attacks. The webinar follows a CHR webinar series, *Silencing Scientists and Health Workers during the Pandemic*, which examined threats and attacks against science and health researchers and practitioners connected to their work to combat the spread of COVID-19, as well as related implications for internationally protected human rights. Further information may be found [here](#).

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

National Academies Panel on Role of Race, Population Descriptors in Genomics Research

An interdisciplinary committee of experts assembled by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine has issued a [report](#) that examines existing methodologies, benefits, and challenges in using race, ethnicity, ancestry, and other population descriptors in genomics research. The report focuses on understanding the current use of population descriptors in genomics research, examining best practices for researchers, and identifying processes for adopting best practices within the biomedical and scientific communities. A key finding of the report is that “race,” or the notion that populations fall into a few distinct, stable biological groups, is a social classification and not a scientifically valid way to measure genetic variation. A recent article in *Science* provides further analysis of the report's findings.

Alphabet Releases Results of Civil Rights Audit

Earlier this month, Alphabet, the parent company of Google, [released](#) the results of a [voluntary company civil rights audit](#) conducted by the Washington, D.C.-based law firm, WilmerHale, which examined how the company's policies and services impact civil rights and the steps the company should take to improve its role in human rights protections, including addressing misinformation and hate speech. A key

[recommendation](#) was to put into place a civil rights infrastructure adequately scaled to reach across Google's varied work and initiatives, including in critical areas, such as artificial intelligence, content moderation, and ads, in addition to what the company's head of civil rights, head of human rights, and chief diversity officer and their teams are already doing. Other recommendations included: (1) making equitable hiring practices mandatory; (2) updating YouTube's policies to prohibit intentional misgendering or deadnaming, which is when transgender or nonbinary people are referred to by their previous name; (3) expanding equity assessments for policies across product areas; (4) getting formal input from in-house civil rights and equity experts about content-moderation policies; and (5) ensuring that principles and practices for artificial intelligence regulations are made with deep product knowledge and are scalable across the company.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN Secretary-General Says the Gender Digital Divide is Source of Gender Inequity

During a dialogue with women civil society leaders at a meeting of the UN Committee on the Status of Women held earlier this month, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [heard about the critical need](#) to make the internet safer for women and girls and to ensure that they are equal participants globally, both online and in person. The UN Committee on the Status of Women meets each March, and the theme of this year's session was innovation, technological change, and education in the digital age. Mr. Guterres noted that digital technology, the product of an industry that is predominantly male, represents a new source of discrimination and bias. "Rather than presenting facts and addressing bias, technology based on incomplete data and badly designed algorithms is digitizing and amplifying sexism with deadly consequences," he said, pointing in part to medical decisions based on data that are biased or do not reflect women's healthcare needs. He added that the gender digital divide is fast becoming the new face of gender inequality. He called on leaders to take up UN recommendations that promote education and training in digital skills for women and girls, as well as algorithms that align with human rights and gender equality, among other measures.

Economist and Engineer among Nicaraguan Political Prisoners Released to the U.S.

Scholars Juan Sebastián Chamorro García, an economist and former Vice Minister of Finance in Nicaragua, and Félix Alejandro Maradiaga Blandó, a renewable energy engineer, were among the more than 200 Nicaraguans [released](#) from jail last month and flown to the U.S. as part of a diplomatic arrangement between the two countries with the detainees' consent. Those released included academics, opposition leaders, civil society representatives, journalists, and university students, who are widely considered to have been detained for exercising their fundamental human rights. Many had been held under deplorable conditions of confinement without access to needed medical care. Following their release, the individuals were deported and banned from returning to Nicaragua. Immediately after their release, the country's National Assembly voted to revoke their citizenship—in violation of international human rights norms—after passing a reform to Nicaragua's Political Constitution. Media reports indicate that the U.S. government has granted them humanitarian parole, a two-year process that allows foreigners to enter the country and apply for asylum. The Spanish government also has offered all of them citizenship.

UN Express Outrage Over Human Rights Abuses Against Women, Girls in Iran

UN experts [have expressed outrage](#) at the deliberate poisoning of more than 1,200 schoolgirls in Iran's major cities and the government's failure to protect them, prevent further attacks, and conduct swift investigations. The first reported poisoning of schoolgirls in Iran occurred in late November 2022, in the city of Qom. Since then, targeted chemical attacks against girls' schools have been reported in 91 schools located in 20 provinces. The UN experts also expressed grave concern that a journalist who was covering these attacks was arrested in Qom. According to the UN experts, dozens of women human rights defenders, women and girls who participated in the protests in Iran remain in jail, and some of them have already been sentenced to prison terms.

UN Calls on Myanmar's Military to End Using Social Media Against Human Rights Defenders

UN experts [are calling out](#) Myanmar's military junta for its role in using online campaigns of terror and weaponizing social media platforms to suppress democratic opposition. According to the experts, pro-junta accounts regularly use hateful, sexualized, and discriminatory rhetoric in an attempt to discredit women activists and human rights defenders. They are urging Telegram and other social media platforms to meet their responsibilities to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights abuses.

Scholars at Risk Seeks Release of Researchers, Students Imprisoned in Iran

Scholars at Risk (SAR), an international network of more than 600 universities and colleges dedicated to protecting the human rights of scholars, [has issued a letter](#) to Iranian authorities, urging Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to extend the amnesty granted to hundreds in prison to scholars and students who remain in prison. The letter calls for the release of Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a scholar of disaster medicine; Ms. Niloufar Bayani, Program Manager of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation; and Mr. Ali Younesi and Mr. Amirhossein Moradi, students in computer engineering and physics, respectively, at Sharif University of Technology. SAR is also urging Iranian authorities to ensure freedom of movement for Dr. Fariba Adelkhah, an anthropologist and Director of Research at the Paris Institute of Political Studies at Sciences Po, who although was granted amnesty and released from prison, has not been returned her identity card, passport, and computer.

NEW REPORTS AND RESOURCES

UN Report Examines Misuse of Certain Technologies in Fight Against Terrorism

The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, issued a report to the UN Human Rights Council that [warned](#) of an alarming increase in the use of intrusive and high-risk technologies, including drones, biometric data, artificial intelligence (AI) and spyware in the global fight against terrorism, without due regard for the rule of law, governance, and human rights. The UN expert joined the call for a global ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems and highlighted the specific obligations of UN counter-terrorism bodies to ensure that any guidance and advice provided on new technologies is fully consistent with the UN Charter and international law norms and principles. She presented a new approach to spyware regulation, focusing on ensuring that minimum human rights standards are applied by both governments and companies in the development, use and transfer of high-risk surveillance technologies. The full report may be downloaded [here](#).

Report Examines Impact of the War in Ukraine on Healthcare and Human Rights

A joint [report](#) by Physicians for Human Rights and other human rights and healthcare groups (eyeWitness to Atrocities, Insecurity Insight, the Media Initiative for Human Rights, and the Ukrainian Healthcare Center) documents the impact of the war in Ukraine on Ukraine's healthcare system since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Using 10 case studies and a joint dataset of attacks, the report shows how Russia appears to be violating international humanitarian law by deliberately and indiscriminately targeting Ukraine's healthcare system as part of a broader attack on its civilian population and infrastructure.

New National Academies Resource Collection on Human Rights and Climate Change

The Committee on Human Rights of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine has compiled [a list of resources](#) that examine the human rights dimensions of various climate change-related issues.

Recorded Webinar: Justice & Equity-Focused Energy & Climate Change Research

A [recorded webinar](#) organized by the National Academies, *Approaches to Justice and Equity-Focused Energy and Climate Change Research*, is available for viewing. The webinar explores approaches on how to use scientific and engineering tools in ways that center human considerations in energy, health, and climate change research and systems development.

Paper Examines Global Spyware Industry and Protections Against It

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has issued a [paper](#), “Why Does the Global Spyware Industry Continue to Thrive? Trends, Explanations, and Responses,” which explores the commercial spyware market and offers ideas about how to limit the spread of invasive cyber surveillance tools. The paper highlights several factors driving the industry, including elevated demand for intrusion technology from government clients and private customers, as well as inconsistent political will from democratic governments to crack down on these technologies. The paper was co-authored by Steven Feldstein, Senior fellow in Carnegie’s Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, where he focuses on issues of democracy and technology, human rights, and U.S. foreign policy. He spoke at the October 2022 Coalition conference and will be speaking at the April 20 Coalition [webinar](#), *Artificial Intelligence and the Rise of Digital Repression*.

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