

AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Council Meeting – DRAFT Minutes

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AAAS Headquarters, Abelson-Haskins

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Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Mark Frankel (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) welcomed the Council. **Jessica Wyndham** (AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program) outlined the agenda for the meeting, the objectives of which were to: review progress in engaging scientific and engineering associations in bringing human rights to their membership; consider the impact of the introduction of annual contributions for the Coalition; review progress in implementing the Plan of Action 2012-2014; finalize a planning and evaluation strategy to inform the development of the Plan of Action 2015-2017; and determine how to effectively engage members in the Coalition's 5th anniversary activities.

The Council adopted the January 2014 Meeting Report.

Member Actions to Address Human Rights

Human Rights Activity Updates:

- **Protecting colleagues at risk:** the American Political Science Association continues to monitor the situation of Egyptian scholars; the Linguistic Society of America has been working together with Scholars at Risk on behalf of a linguist in China who was arrested for teaching a native language (these efforts were informed by consultations with the American Chemical and Physical Societies); the American Physical Society disseminated a petition at its Annual Meeting on behalf of Omid Kokabee, an Iranian physics student studying in Texas who has been imprisoned in Iran; the American Sociological Association as well as the Association of American Geographers have been working on behalf of a political science graduate student in Tajikistan who was arrested following an interview he conducted of a Tajik activist (the AAG has been cooperated with the Department of State on this case); the American Chemical Society provided input into the Department of State *Human Rights Report 2013* on the case of Kemal Guruz, a retired professor of chemical engineering and former President of the Turkish Council of Higher Education; the Human Rights Committee of the American Statistical Association continued to work with Argentine statisticians on behalf of statisticians persecuted for their public contradiction of official consumer price index data.
- **Connecting human rights with disciplinary practice:** the American Psychological Association will hold three sessions on human rights at its upcoming Convention (one generally on the connections between psychology and human rights, another on psychology related to Article 15, and a third on working with partners to apply psychology to human rights); the American Sociological Association's section on Sociology and Human Rights

has planned several sessions at the Association's upcoming annual meeting, similarly the American Anthropology Association; the Council on Undergraduate Research biennial meeting included a session on human rights; the American Chemical Society plans a webinar on the Coalition and AAAS's On-call Scientists initiative as part of their chemistry and human rights webinar series; the Association for Information Science and Technology is planning a webinar on ethics and information communication technologies; the SENCER (Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities) Summer Institute included a session on integrating human rights into STEM education, and the Washington Symposium organized by the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement will also include a plenary presentation on science and human rights; the Association of American Geographers has been working with the United Nations on issues related to disaster relief in the MENA region, and is also in the process of updating its online geography and human rights clearing house.

- **Issuing public statements on human rights:** Several organizations have either endorsed the AAAS statement urging United States ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or have adopted their own statement to the same effect. These organizations are the American Educational Research Association, the American Statistical Association, the American Othopsychiatric Association, and Sociologists Without Borders. Others are currently considering appropriate action: the Linguistic Society of America; the American Sociological Association; the American Psychological Association; the Association of American Geographers; the Council on Undergraduate Research; and the Acoustical Society of America.
- **Including human rights in their organizations' publications:** the Council on Undergraduate Research made human rights the theme of its quarterly issue; Sigma Xi published an article on human rights in *American Scientist* by one of its representatives, Jeff Toney; several organizations inform members about the Coalition and other human rights related news through their newsletter (Federation of Associations in Brain and Behavioral Science, the Council of Social Science Associations, the American Psychological Association, the National Center for Science and Civic Engagement; American Chemical Society) or social media outreach (American Statistical Association).
- **Creating organizational structures for addressing human rights:** the American Anthropological Association is in the process of designing a human rights forum that would provide a place for members to present human rights-related grievances that could then be addressed by the Association; the American Acoustical Society has created an ad hoc sub-committee on human rights, with the end goal of establishing a permanent human rights committee;
- **Awarding a human rights prize:** the Association of American Geographers presented their Atlas Award to Julian Bond, a renowned civil rights pioneer and political leader. Bond delivered a speech on "Race Around the World," focusing on how civil rights figures and organizations have shaped and changed American foreign policy.

In addition, some Member Organization representatives reported on human rights activities that they individually or their fellow representatives have carried out: **Michel de Graf** (Linguistic Society of America) has been doing significant work in Haiti concerning the teaching of minority languages; **Art Kendall** (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) led sessions on the Coalition at political psychology conferences in Italy and Rome.

Follow-up: Coalition Meeting January 2014

Jessica Wyndham (AAAS) provided information to follow up on several outcomes of the January 2014 meeting. First, since the Council adopted annual contributions for members in January, 23 organizations have confirmed they will continue as members of the Coalition and one organization has confirmed its involvement as an affiliated member. Ten associations have decided not to continue their membership in the Coalition. Others who were previously members are still considering the question. For those that decided to withdraw, the main reason was that the connections between their disciplines and human rights were still not clear; however, in all instances, their representatives said their associations are still committed to the goals of the Coalition and hope to continue to engage as opportunities arise. Several Council members expressed their interest in meeting with organizations that have withdrawn so as to encourage them to reconsider membership in the future.

Moving forward, the Coalition will need to consider how the annual contributions are to be spent across staff time, meetings, and activities of the working groups. This will be discussed by the Steering Committee. In addition, the foundational documents must be updated to incorporate the member contributions.

The Council discussed the plans for an event on October 23 commemorating the Coalition's fifth anniversary. In addition to invited speakers, the event will premiere a short video about the Coalition. The Secretariat would like to forge connections with the press offices at each organization and provide templates for member outreach.

Wyndham then addressed the challenges that have emerged in engaging students in the work of the Coalition. While the essay and poster competitions have worked well, we have not done as good a job of building the cohort of student delegates. She asked the question of Council, how can we most effectively involve a student in a way that is meaningful to them and to you? Several Council members mentioned the financial impediment to identifying student delegates as well as the need to more clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of student delegates as well as their host organizations. Other suggestions that were made included: rather than bringing the students to Coalition meetings, for the Coalition to go to member meetings where the students are already attending, raise interest and recruit members, to host student targeted workshops as part of the Coalition meeting; work with students to develop science and human rights department clubs on campus and assist them in hosting webinars; work with students' host universities to fundraise for their participation; and to focus on Coalition organizations that are hubs for students such as the Council on Undergraduate Research.

Finally, Wyndham added that she will continue to serve as a resource for organizations that seek to adopt statements or endorse the AAAS statement urging US ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Progress Reports: Areas of Work

Welfare of Scientists: Melvyn Nathanson (American Mathematical Society) explained that there was discussion of expanding their list of contacts for various human rights organizations to include officers of human rights organizations. The working group also considered a potential opportunity to work with the Scholar Rescue Fund. **Theresa Harris** (AAAS) added that the group also discussed adding to and expanding the Primer on scientific freedom and human rights to include more tools.

Ethics and Human Rights: Doug Richardson (Association of American Geographers) explained that the group discussed a summary of the questionnaire on scientist's social responsibilities and the development of a paper on the topic. There was also talk amongst members around the issue of big data and the role of privacy and data confidentiality. **Mark Frankel** (AAAS) added that the American Geosciences Institute is looking to adopt a joint code of ethics. There may be a place for the Coalition to add input into their process with regard to incorporating human rights.

Service to the STEM Community: Margaret Vitullo (American Sociological Association) commented that she and Jessica Wyndham recently presented the results of the Article 15 focus group report at the Swiss Embassy. There are two subcommittees within the working group. One is aimed at revising the Starter Kit. They plan to hold a workshop at the January 2015 Coalition meeting to identify how the Starter Kit can coalesce with other resources that have been developed by the Coalition and be best used to serve Coalition members. The other subcommittee is working on establishing a series of webinars that will focus on "your discipline and human rights - what are the connections?" She added that the template for the webinars is nearly complete.

Members were invited to contact Margaret Vitullo if they are interested in co-hosting a webinar on human rights and their discipline.

Service to the Human Rights Community: Oliver Moles (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) reported that the group is continuing its work on the indicators project through Brian Gran. They plan to host a workshop this fall at American University to educate law students. Bill Mawby is undertaking a project to look at the annual reports of different human rights organizations to see which of those may utilize On-call Scientists in their work.

Education and Information Resources: Sheryl Luzzadder-Beach (Association of American Geographers) said that the working group reviewed a new annotated bibliography entry on history and human rights. She added that they still need original entries and updates to existing entries for a variety of disciplines. They also reviewed an update of Sam McFarland's backgrounder on Human Rights that is posted on the SENCER website.

Outreach and Communication Committee: Ali Arab (American Statistical Association) reiterated that there were 53 entries from 11 countries for the student essay competition. The Committee used crowd-sourcing to raise funds for the students to travel to the July meeting. While they did not meet their goal, they did raise over \$1,100. The group has decided to keep the poster competition at the January meetings and the essay competition at the July meeting. They are also working on outreach to non-member organizations, particularly engineering and economic organizations.

Members approved the Steering Committee roster with the amendment that Oliver Moles should replace Susan Hinkins.

Evaluation and Planning Process: Plan of Action 2015-2017

Theresa Harris (AAAS) introduced the discussion by reviewing highlights from the evaluation interviews. Members find the Coalition meetings to be stimulating, educational and useful for networking. They also commended the Coalition for its resource creation and the interdisciplinary nature of the group. Members suggested several areas that could be expanded, such as engagement within the Coalition and between meetings, with members located outside of Washington D.C., and more policy advocacy. Other suggestions included the involvement of more people/groups, greater development of leadership, greater focus on domestic issues, creation of a development group, seed project funding for pilot projects and improving access to resources.

The discussion that followed focused on four issues: the need to further strengthen the Coalition as a multidisciplinary network of organizations with shared goals; the importance of increasing the impact of Coalition activities, opportunities for individuals to contribute their scientific knowledge on policy issues in a way that both advances their career as well as contributes to improved policy making; and the potential risks associated with advocacy.

Doug Richardson (Association of American Geographers) said that the Coalition needs to focus on cohesion and growth. He suggested that the Coalition needs an outreach program to bring Coalition resources to annual meetings of various associations, with the presence of a Coalition representative or a knowledgeable Secretariat staff member. **Art Kendall** (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) added that further interdisciplinary interaction within the Coalition should be encouraged.

Beth Ambos (Council on Undergraduate Research) said that the main question is where the Coalition can have the most impact. What's the Coalition's niche? She suggested that the Coalition needs to refine the direction and particular flavor of its work, adding that domestic issues demand greater focus from the Coalition. She suggested that the Coalition serve as an incubator for information products and should consider ways of providing useful information on policy. **Sheryl Luzzader Beach** (Association of American Geographers) agreed that the Coalition should promote evidence-based policy decisions. **Alyson Reed** (Linguistic Society of America) raised her concern that the Coalition moves too slowly to really impact change on a broad array of policies, though focusing on an annual case study could be realistic and effective.

The suggestion of becoming more involved in policy raised two responses, one of caution and another of optimism. **Margaret Vitullo** (American Sociological Association) agreed that the Coalition should work towards the addition of domestic and international social justice issues to the Coalition agenda and framed this as an opportunity to incentivize people to become more actively involved in Coalition work. She noted the need to identify how involvement in the Coalition can help progress individuals' professional careers, and providing opportunities for publication is one way. She supported the idea of the Coalition as an incubator of research contributing to domestic social justice issues, and drawing from the particular strength and uniqueness of the Coalition as a multidisciplinary network of scientists, engineers and health professionals. With regard to potential publication, **Betsy Super** (American Political Science Association) suggested soliciting advice from science journal editors about how to improve publishing capabilities arising from Coalition actions.

A note of caution was raised. While **Alyson Reed** (Linguistic Society of America) suggested the Coalition revisit its earlier decision not to make public statements as a Coalition, **Beth Ambos** (Council on Undergraduate Research), **Ark Kendall** (Capital Area Social Psychological Association) and **Mark Frankel** (AAAS) each raised the risks associated with the Coalition taking policy positions and cautioned against moving in that direction. In response, Margaret Vitullo suggested that the Coalition could focus on the science and disseminate useful information to policymakers without taking positions, as the Coalition has done with regard to Article 15.

Action: As part of the planning process, consider opportunities for the Coalition to contribute to domestic policy making and other mechanisms for engaging individuals in Coalition activities.

Meeting Attendees

Beth Ambos	Council on Undergraduate Research
Ali Arab	American Statistical Association
Lori Brown	American Chemical Society
Chris Cameron	Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
Toni Carbo	Association for Information Science and Technology
Lori Hill	American Educational Research Association
Michele Irwin	American Physical Society
Art Kendall	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
Anju Khubchandani	American Psychological Association
Sheryl Luzzader-Beach	Association of American Geographers
Julia Milton	Council of Social Science Associations
Oliver Moles	Capital Area Social Psychological Association
Melvyn Nathanson	American Mathematical Society
Karen Oates	National Center for Science and Civic Engagement
Alyson Reed	Linguistic Society of America
Doug Richardson	Association of American Geographers
Betsy Super	American Political Science Association
Jeff Toney	Sigma Xi
Ed Walsh	Acoustical Society of America
Margaret Wieggers Vitullo	American Sociological Association

AAAS Staff:

Rebecca Carlson	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Josh Ettinger	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Mark Frankel	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Theresa Harris	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program
Jessica Wyndham (Coalition Coordinator)	AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights and Law Program