



AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition

Foundational Documents

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Mission and Goals Statement

Mission

The Science and Human Rights Coalition is a network of scientific and professional associations devoted to facilitating communication and partnerships on human rights within and across scientific communities, and between these and human rights communities. The Coalition strives to improve human rights practitioners' access to scientific information and knowledge and to engage scientists in human rights issues, particularly those issues that involve scientists and the conduct of science. The Coalition's work is grounded in the principles and laws set forth in the International Bill of Human Rights* and all other relevant international human rights treaties and norms.

Goals of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition include but are not limited to:

- 1) Increasing collaborative communication, networking, and partnerships between science and human rights communities to enable scientists to gain a better understanding of human rights issues and human rights practitioners to gain a better understanding of the tools, expertise, and other resources that science and scientists can offer.
- 2) Enhancing the capacity of human rights organizations to apply scientific methods, data, tools, and technologies to human rights work, but also the capacity of scientific associations to better incorporate the priorities, approaches, and methods of the human rights community into their work.
- 3) Encouraging scientific associations to explore ways in which skills and knowledge specific to their sciences may contribute to human rights.
- 4) Promoting human rights awareness and programs within scientific associations, professional societies, and academic institutions in the United States and abroad.

** Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols*

Membership

Who We Are

The AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition is a network of scientific organizations that recognizes a role for science and scientists in efforts to realize human rights. We invite eligible organizations who share the Coalition's goals (see Mission and Goals) to participate as members. Scientific organizations that wish to explore involvement in the Coalition may participate as an affiliated organization or may simply attend Coalition meetings. Individual scientists are encouraged to participate through their scientific organizations, but may also be involved as affiliated scientists.

Membership Categories

Member Organizations

Eligibility. Membership is open to:

- Scientific associations, inclusive of the behavioral, life, physical, and social sciences, whether or not the association is affiliated with AAAS
- Professional societies of scientists, engineers, technicians, medical professionals, public health practitioners, and related professions
- Academies of science
- Other formal networks of scientists

Organizations both inside the United States and abroad are welcome to participate.

Member organizations may vary substantially in their level of prior involvement in human rights. Member organizations do, however, share a recognition of the need for scientists to participate in efforts to realize human rights, and a commitment to do so in some way (applying their science to human rights work, promoting specific human rights, defending the human rights of scientists, etc.). We encourage member organizations to seek the support of their governing boards in order to affirm this commitment, build a foundation of support for association activities in this area, and raise awareness among member scientists.

Representation. Member scientific organizations set the direction through the Coalition Council. Member organizations must designate two committed representatives to serve on the Coalition Council. The two representatives of the scientific organizations may be members of the organizational leadership, membership, and/or staff. The aim is to ensure both a voice for professional members of the organization and continuity.

Participation. The Coalition meets semi-annually in Washington, DC, and committees and working groups meet as needed to accomplish their goals.* In keeping with human rights practice, the Coalition will promote a highly participatory membership, involving active and committed engagement. As such, member organizations are expected to make a meaningful contribution to the Coalition through regular and active participation in Coalition meetings, committees, and working groups. Member representatives will be called upon to serve on at least one committee or working group.

By joining the Coalition, organizational members also commit to raising awareness within their organizations about science and human rights. Organizations can do this by:

- Forming a science and human rights committee, working group, or section within their association
- Hosting science and human rights workshops for their association's members
- Writing articles about human rights for their organization's newsletter or website
- Organizing sessions at their association's annual meetings
- Drafting case studies of how their science has or can be used to address human rights concerns

Benefits of Participation. The Coalition is at present the only broad-based effort to mobilize scientific organizations and scientists in the service of human rights. Member organizations become an integral part of a collaborative effort to promote human rights through science. Through this collaboration, organizations will be able to:

- Benefit from the Coalition's programs, workshops, and materials in five areas of activity and joint initiative
- Receive assistance in organizing science and human rights workshops, annual meeting sessions, and fora
- Receive assistance in developing principles on science and human rights for ethics codes
- Link with scientists and scientific associations across disciplines
- Link with the human rights community both in the United States and abroad
- Access human rights expertise
- Join the Coalition listserv and receive news and information about science and human rights developments, events, and publications

Affiliated Organizations and Scientists

Scientific organizations that want to explore the relevance of human rights for their disciplines or associations are welcome to participate as affiliated organizations. Although member scientific organizations set the direction for the Coalition, affiliated organizations and scientists may help shape that direction through participation in Coalition committees and interactions with member organizations. Individual scientists and science professionals are encouraged to work through their professional societies but may affiliate with the Coalition. Only designated organizational representatives may speak on behalf of the member organizations, however.

Affiliated organizations and scientists will have the benefit of:

- Coalition support in introducing human rights to their associations
- Participation in all Coalition activities, including area of activity working groups
- Joining the Coalition listserv to receive news and information about science and human rights developments, events, and publications

How to Join

The Coalition does not impose dues for participation in its activities. To join, please send a letter or e-mail to shrp@aaas.org, indicating that you or your organization would like to join the Coalition in one of the following categories, together with the information requested:

- **Member Organization:** name and contact details for your organization, its executive director, and your two representatives
- **Affiliated Organization:** name and contact details for your organization, its executive director, and your representative
- **Affiliated Scientist:** your name, contact details, and area of scientific expertise

Collaboration

The Coalition welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with all networks of scientists and scientific associations to achieve mutual goals. Although based in the United States, the Coalition especially welcomes the opportunity to work with our counterparts abroad to facilitate the use of science and the involvement of scientists in human rights issues.

Coalition Support

The AAAS Science and Human Rights Program serves as the Secretariat and provides support for Coalition activities.

Organizational Structure

Principles: The Coalition is organized in accordance with the following principles:

- *Inclusive* of all interested scientific associations, societies, academies, and persons, in the United States and around the world, that recognize a role for science and scientists in the realization of human rights, or wish to learn more about this
- *Participatory* to a high degree, both by providing ample opportunities for members to contribute and become engaged and by relying on volunteer efforts to design and carry out its programs and initiatives
- *Decentralized* to encourage and support activities and new initiatives that advance collaboration between the science and human rights communities, and to be responsive to new needs, ideas, and opportunities
- *Transparent* by keeping all meetings open to both member associations and to affiliated associations and scientists (see Membership document) and keeping all materials publicly available and online.

Coalition: The Coalition is made up of all interested eligible scientific organizations, and includes member associations, affiliated associations, and affiliated scientists. The Coalition meets twice a year.

Coalition Council: The Council is composed of member associations' two committed and active representatives. The Council is the Coalition's highest policy-making and priority-setting body. It sets the direction of the Coalition, reviews recommendations from working groups, considers new initiatives, and reviews requests for new working groups. The Coalition Council meets annually (for the initial three years and every other year thereafter) to review and to deliberate.

Steering Committee: This body is comprised of the following:

- AAAS Science and Human Rights Program (one)
- One co-chair of each Area of Activity working group (five)
- Chairs of the following committees:
 - Membership;
 - Outreach and Communication; and
 - Special Events (three)
- Human rights community representatives (two, rotating biannually)

The Steering Committee ensures implementation of decisions taken by the Coalition Council; provides guidance to the activity working groups; and serves as the liaison between AAAS, the Coalition, scientific associations and human rights communities. With the exception of the representatives of the human rights community, Steering Committee members can only be representatives of member organizations (not affiliated organizations or individual scientists). The Steering Committee meets every two months (or as needed via conference calls) to carry out its responsibilities.

Working Groups: These are composed of interested members and affiliated organizations and scientists, and are focused on specific areas of activity. Working groups can be formed when two

members express readiness to take the lead on an area of activity, and they (1) see no possibility of carrying out the proposed activity within an existing working group, and (2) develop a concept paper that (3) is approved by the Coalition Council. Because working groups involve additional work and require Coalition resources, new areas of activity will only be pursued when: it has been determined that there is a clear need; they are not duplicative of other Coalition efforts; and they cannot be carried out within pre-existing working groups.

Currently, the Coalition has five functioning working groups:

- I. Welfare of Scientists
- II. Science Ethics and Human Rights
- III. Service to the Scientific Community
- IV. Service to the Human Rights Community
- V. Education and Information Resources

Working groups meet quarterly and as needed via conference calls.

Secretariat: The AAAS Science and Human Rights Program serves as the Secretariat and supports the Coalition through the facilitation and coordination of its activities; recruitment of qualified interns; organization of meetings; maintenance of a repository for Coalition documents and materials; coordination of the listserv; facilitation of links with the human rights community; and fundraising.

Coalition Meeting Schedule: The Coalition will meet, as a whole, twice annually. The schedule of meetings for the Coalition Council, Steering Committee, and working groups is included below. Meetings of the Council and Steering Committee will be coordinated to coincide with Coalition meetings.

- Coalition: semi-annually - 1 day (presentations and working meetings)
- Coalition Council: annually, with conference calls as needed
- Steering Committee: every two months, with conference calls as needed
- Working Groups: quarterly, with conference calls as needed

How we operate

Some examples follow:

Example 1: An affiliated scientist would like to set up a new working group: S/he will need to find representatives of two member associations who agree to form a working group. They draft a concept paper, which their associations' representatives present to the Coalition Council for approval based on the criteria set out in the section on "Working Groups" above.

Example 2: The Steering Committee receives a request to collaborate on a project involving the protection of scientists at risk: The Steering Committee member representing the Welfare of Scientists Working Group takes the request to the working group, which decides on matters in this area of activity.

Example 3: A working group wants to set up an online database related to its activities: The working group contacts SHRP to study the feasibility of the project and whether it might be set up on the Coalition website.

Area of Activity I: Welfare of Scientists

Rationale

The scientific community is a strong supporter of the human rights of individual scientists. There is a need, however, to expand participation and work in this area, and to improve its effectiveness. By increasing the number of scientific associations involved and coordinating their efforts, the Coalition will help the scientific community to better respond to cases of alleged human rights violations. By improving their advocacy on behalf of scientists, scientific associations and academies contribute to the broader defense of universal human rights.

Objectives

- Protection and defense of the human rights of scientists under threat;
- Enhanced effectiveness of scientific associations in responding to cases of alleged violations of the human rights of scientists; and
- Awareness and appreciation within the scientific community of the importance of acting on behalf of colleagues both at home and abroad.

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- Coordinate the variety of ways scientists under threat are identified;
- Create a central repository of cases on the Coalition website, and link to organizations (e.g., Scholars at Risk Network) with lists of threatened, missing, and imprisoned scientists;
- Draft and circulate calls for action on behalf of scientists;
- Identify and disseminate examples of what member organizations have done in individual cases;
- Establish a means by which to respond to extraordinary problems that affect the scientific community, publicize this information, and recommend action, if needed;
- Address problems related to scientists' right to travel, free circulation, and free inquiry to enable all scientists, regardless of nationality, to freely pursue science; and
- Collaborate with committees and organizations in the U.S. and abroad that are devoted to protecting scientists under threat.

Area of Activity II: Science Ethics and Human Rights

Rationale

The ethical underpinnings of research will be enhanced by raising the visibility of human rights principles as part of the practice of science, in the broadest sense, including but not limited to scientific research. Explicit linking of international human rights principles to science ethics enhances recognition that science and technology have both direct and indirect implications for humans and the world in which we live. Doing so also will serve to promote a common respect for those involved in, or affected by scientific research, regardless of institutional context. If ethics codes guide the work of scientists and help them identify with a profession, more firmly linking these to human rights principles will serve to bridge scientists across professions and geographical boundaries. These efforts will help to emphasize that science is not an exception in the application of human rights principles.

Objectives

- Appreciation by scientists and scientific associations of the relevance of human rights to science ethics;
- Engagement of scientific societies in the promotion of human rights principles in science practice and professional activities; and
- Infusion of human rights principles throughout the human research protection system.

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- Assemble and review ethics codes of scientific societies (life, physical, behavioral, and social), highlight those that are exemplars in integrating human rights principles with scientific ethics and practice, and identify those principles that are applicable across the sciences;
- Develop a set of common principles to guide scientists in the conduct of science in a manner consistent with human rights principles;
- Consider how to integrate a human rights framework more fully into the ethics codes of research societies and scientific associations;
- Examine ethical frameworks for conducting human research to identify areas in which human rights principles could improve process or practice (identify what a human rights approach adds to the current framework);
- Encourage IRB processes that are more clearly grounded in a human rights framework; and
- Develop best practices for how to effect IRB reform in human rights terms.

Area of Activity III: Service to the Scientific Community

Rationale

Scientific associations are dedicated to service, both to their members and to the public. Promoting the realization of human rights provides scientific associations an opportunity to meet their responsibilities to both. Indeed, many scientific associations have recognized this and have incorporated human rights into their work. They also have valuable experience to share in setting up and sustaining human rights programs. By developing human rights-related activities and services specifically for the scientific community, and by leveraging the experience of its members, the Coalition can build the commitment and capacity of scientific associations to engage meaningfully in human rights advocacy, develop effective responses to human rights challenges, and contribute their unique skills and knowledge to the larger community dedicated to the realization of human rights.

Objectives

- Increased awareness and appreciation within the scientific community of human rights issues and alternatives for addressing them;
- Greater capacity of scientific associations to address human rights issues through a variety of means, including the application of their discipline's tools and techniques;
- Greater and more varied forms of engagement by scientific associations in human rights activities.

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- Provide guidance to members of scientific associations who want to establish human rights committees, sections, working groups, etc.;
- Organize general and discipline-specific human rights training sessions for interested scientific associations and their leadership (e.g., in-coming human rights committee chairs);
- Encourage and assist scientific associations to incorporate human rights themes into annual meetings in the form of human rights workshops, trainings, lectures, and other appropriate vehicles;
- Conduct outreach activities to scientific and professional associations not already engaged in human rights, increasing their understanding of human rights and its interface with science and technology;
- Identify both general and discipline-specific options for introducing human rights into academic curricula, subfields, and/or clinics; and
- Compile and disseminate both general and discipline-specific human rights education and training resources.

Area of Activity IV: Service to the Human Rights Community

Rationale

All scientists – behavioral, life, physical, and social – have skills and knowledge of potential benefit to the human rights community. By providing timely, accurate, and verifiable data for human rights claims, scientists can help human rights organizations carry out more effective, evidence-based advocacy. Scientists can also assist with testing and evaluation of human rights projects and programs to ensure they benefit the intended populations. Analysis that is widely viewed as objective and based in evidence will buttress the credibility of human rights organizations and their claims. That all scientists have valuable tools and expertise to contribute is noted from the very important contributions that physical scientists (e.g., geospatial technologies) and life scientists (e.g., forensic and genetic sciences) have made to, for example, documenting human rights violations and identifying victims. This suggests that it would be valuable to build ongoing communication between the scientific and human rights communities to determine where and how quantitative and qualitative approaches and scientific tools and technologies can be useful to human rights work, and then assist in making these accessible to human rights practitioners.

Objectives

- Effective channels for communication between scientists and human rights groups;
- Direct involvement of diverse segments of the scientific community with human rights work; and
- Enhanced capacity of human rights practitioners to apply scientific methods, tools, and technologies in their work.

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- Determine what types of human rights work/issues might benefit from what types of scientific expertise (e.g., data collection, data evaluation, data analysis);
- Identify existing scientific resources used by human rights practitioners (or available for use) and successful collaborations between the scientific and human rights communities;
- Encourage scientists to volunteer their time and expertise to the human rights community through the AAAS “On-call” Scientists and other voluntary networks (e.g., GIS Corps, American Statistical Association Special Interest Group on Volunteerism);
- Promote the application of scientific techniques and methods by the human rights community through a variety of means (e.g., courses, fora, clinics, seminars);
- Develop dissemination strategies to publicize the value of collaboration between scientists and human rights practitioners; and
- Develop guidelines for scientists’ involvement that include conditions necessary for such involvement.

Area of Activity V: Education and Information Resources

Rationale

To encourage and facilitate efforts to bridge the scientific and human rights communities, the Coalition will need to identify, compile, and develop resources and create opportunities for exchange to establish a stronger foundation for productive, collaborative work on human rights. Crucial for this project is the exchange of information on scientists' understanding of what science can bring to human rights work and what human rights practitioners can bring to science. Other topics to be explored include what the scientific method entails, what the human rights approach requires, and the role the media traditionally has played in conveying information produced by both communities. By providing a variety of materials on such topics, the Coalition will make an important contribution to bridging science and human rights and their respective communities, and make their collaboration in tackling human rights challenges that face the world more likely.

Objectives

- Availability of a variety of excellent and accessible information materials that fill gaps in information not already covered by human rights organizations or scientific societies and that address an array of topics needed to promote and support collaboration between scientists and human rights practitioners; and
- Better-informed scientific and human rights communities, with members who are better-prepared to work together.

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- Identify the information about science, the scientific method, technologies, etc. that human rights practitioners require; compile what exists; develop a plan for producing what does not;
- Identify the information about human rights, the human rights system, methodology, etc. that scientists require; compile what exists; develop a plan for producing what does not;
- Develop an initial information piece on the connections between human rights and science (e.g., "translating one for the other," Article 15);
- Explore the possibility of producing a curriculum for teaching science and human rights;
- In all materials, consider discipline-specific contributions, and applications for both U.S. and around the world;
- Collaborate with science and human rights committees and organizations in the U.S. and abroad in disseminating the materials; and
- Explore a variety of information tools and forms, including articles, website content, brochures, teaching aids, and primers.

Joint Initiative
(Coalition-wide)

Article 15: Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Scientific Progress and its Applications

Rationale

The right to “enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications” elevates fundamental scientific values, such as equitable access to scientific knowledge, scientific freedom, and international cooperation, to universal standards that governments everywhere must protect. A right unto itself, this right is also a key prerequisite for the realization of other human rights, including the rights to health, food, water, and to a healthy environment. Although universally recognized, this human right remains largely ignored by governments, as well as the scientific and human rights communities. As a network of scientific associations that recognize a role for scientists in promoting human rights, the Coalition has a unique and vital contribution to make to efforts to ensure that governments respect, protect, and fulfill this neglected right to the benefits of scientific progress.

Objectives

- Knowledge among scientific associations of the meaning, significance and potential applications of the right to the benefits of scientific progress;
- Engagement of scientific associations in the realization of the right to the benefits of scientific progress; and
- Demonstration of the importance of this right in accomplishing the objectives of each of the areas of activity as well as the Coalition as a whole.

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- Develop materials to introduce “Article 15” to Coalition members;
- Promote awareness among scientific societies and associations of Article 15, including through workshops, and trainings;
- Identify potential applications of Article 15 in scientific associations’ work, including in the areas of research, policy advising, and education;
- Encourage and assist scientific associations to incorporate Article 15 into their activities, including annual meetings;
- In conjunction with working groups, identify applications of Article 15 specific to their areas of activity;
- In conjunction with scientific associations, identify discipline-specific applications of Article 15;
- Develop information materials on the links between Article 15 and each of the areas of activity, as well as discipline-specific applications of Article 15; and
- Engage scientists in UN processes relevant to the advancement of Article 15.

Appendix: Definitions, Elaborations, and Clarifications

What are “human rights”?

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. All human beings are entitled to all human rights: civil, political, economic, social, and cultural. These universal rights are guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles, and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. (From the Web site of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)

Who is a part of the “Human Rights Community”?

The human rights community consists of individuals and organizations explicitly committed to and engaged in activities aimed at the realization of international human rights as laid out in the International Bill of Rights and/or related international, regional and national human rights instruments. The activities of these individuals and organizations may take many forms, including monitoring, reporting, advocating, educating, training, and advising. The focus of their work may be international, regional, national, or local, and may address specific rights, the rights of specific groups, or be centered around one activity, for example, litigation or research.

What is the role of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program?

The AAAS Science and Human Rights Program (SHRP) serves as the Secretariat. As such its principal role is to facilitate the work of the Coalition. In coordination with Coalition members, SHRP will: seek funding for Coalition activities; organize and coordinate Coalition meetings; facilitate partnerships between the Coalition and other groups/individuals working in related fields; identify appropriate trainers, experts, organizations and materials to assist the working groups in their activities; host and maintain the Coalition website and listserv; publicize Coalition events and activities online and through the SHRP newsletter and listserv; and provide other logistic and material support to activities of the Coalition, as appropriate.

What is the relationship of the Coalition to other networks and coalitions?

The Coalition will actively welcome and seek partnerships with networks and coalitions devoted to science and scientists with an interest in exploring human rights.

What is the relationship of the Coalition to international scientific networks and organizations?

Membership of the Coalition is open to international scientific networks and organizations, including both those based within and outside the United States. Networks and organizations that are not members of the Coalition are welcome to participate as affiliated associations. The Coalition also will lend assistance to efforts to form similar coalitions of scientific associations around the world.

What is the relationship of the Coalition to the United Nations?

The SHR Coalition does not have a formal relationship with the United Nations. Representatives of UN agencies, programs, and bodies engaged in human rights work may be invited to partner with the Coalition, as appropriate. Once established, operational, and able to demonstrate its value with examples of tangible impact, the Coalition may consider seeking consultative status before the UN Economic and Social Council, thereby allowing the Coalition to be represented in the activities of the Human Rights Council.

What is the relationship of the Coalition to individual nations?

The Coalition is independent of all governments. In keeping with international human rights norms and law, the Coalition upholds the responsibility of governments, including the United States, to international human rights obligations.