

COALITION CALENDAR

April 1, 2018: AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Student Competitions

The 2018 AAAS Science and Human Rights Coalition Student [Essay](#) and [Digital Media](#) competitions are starting soon! Beginning April 1, undergraduate and graduate students are encouraged to submit essays and digital projects that explore the connections between human rights, and science, engineering and the health professions. The deadline for submissions is April 30. More information about the two competitions can be found [here](#).

April 17, 2018: Webinar - Innovations in Human Rights Program Evaluation

The Coalition's human rights evaluation webinar series is back for its first installment of 2018. [Join us at 10:00 AM EST](#) for a one-hour webinar of a case study on outcome harvesting to assess results achieved via American Jewish World Service's (AJWS) early and child marriage program in India. More information and registration information is available [here](#). Save the date for the second webinar, May 15, in which Veronica Gottret and David Legee of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) will share the innovative qualitative approach CRS is taking in the evaluation of its program addressing the needs emerging at the Colombia border from the significant increase of immigration from Venezuela. [Registration for the May 15 webinar is open](#).

July 12-13, 2018: Higher Education and Human Rights

Save the date for the next Coalition meeting, where we will explore the human rights responsibilities of academic institutions, how these obligations frame important issues such as inclusion, academic freedom, accountability, and community relationships, and ways Coalition members can help address these critical concerns.

COALITION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

SPSSI Hosts Congressional Briefing on the Psychological Effects of Genocide

On March 9, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) held a [Congressional lunch seminar](#) on the psychological effects of genocide and processes that may foster healing and prevent future violence. Watch the [recording on Facebook](#).

ASA Publication Features Special Issue on Human Rights

The American Statistical Association (ASA) released a special issue of its magazine *Chance*, focused on the [theme of human rights](#). This edition contains six featured articles, all centered at the crossroads of statistics and human rights. Stories range in focus from firearm data, to the challenges of measuring aspects of sexuality and gender, and the statistical analysis of genocide. Coalition Member Art Kendall co-authored a piece with Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) titled *Maryland Rent Courts Fail to Protect Human Rights to Due Process and Fair Trials* in which Art shared his experience working with MLA through the AAAS' On-call Scientists initiative.

The Human Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Science

On February 22, AAAS and the Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations hosted a [panel discussion](#) on the state-of-the-art developments of the scientific and legal aspects of the [right to science](#) and its link to human rights. A recording of the discussion can be found [here](#).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

March 30: Call for Input: UN Questionnaire on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities has issued a questionnaire seeking information on "[the right of persons with disabilities to the highest attainable standard of health.](#)"

April 5: Call for Input: Economic Reform Policies on Women's Human Rights

For its next thematic report to the UN General Assembly, the Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights will focus on the links and the impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women's human rights. The report will examine how austerity measures, structural adjustment, fiscal consolidation and, in general economic reform programs, have had a disproportionate impact on the life of women of all ages and what to do to address the negative impacts. States, international financial institutions, civil society, academia, trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders are invited to [share](#) with the Independent Expert information, documents, case studies or analysis by April 5, 2018.

April 8: Call for Proposals: Global Transformation in Gender Equality and Agenda 2030

The Network of Scholars on Gender, Sexuality and the Law (ALAS), together with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law, invite activists, practitioners, scholars, and judges interested in gender equality and gender-based violence to [submit individual abstracts for the upcoming September conference](#) titled *Global Transformation towards Gender Equality and Agenda 2030: A conversation about innovative approaches to break the cycle of violence against women.*

June 1: Call for Input on UN Report: Development and Human Rights

The [Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council](#) of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is seeking input on a questionnaire on the ways in which development contributes to the enjoyment of human rights.

Job: Tobacco Campaign Director, Corporate Accountability

Corporate Accountability, an organization that focuses on the practices of transnational corporations with respect to human rights and democratic and environmental standards, is seeking a [tobacco campaign director](#) to organize activists, experts, and policymakers, and advance the corporate accountability measures of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, a treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization, in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic.

Fellowship for Threatened Scholars

The Institute of International Education Scholar Rescue Fund, which is focused on preserving the lives, voices, and ideas of scholars around the globe that face harassment, detention, torture, and other forms of persecution as a result of their work, is accepting [applications](#) for fellowships for threatened scholars around the world.

July 1: Global Mental Health, Trauma and Recovery Certificate Program

The Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma and Harvard Medical School Department of Global and Continuing Education accredit an exciting [6-month certificate program](#) in Global Mental Health: Trauma and Recovery. The first two weeks (November 4-16, 2018) of the program will take place in Italy and the following six months (November 2018 to May 2019) will continue online. The application deadline is July 1, 2018.

CALLS FOR ACTION

Iranian Sociologist and Environmentalist Dies in Custody

Professor Seyed-Emami, a professor of sociology at Imam Sadiq University in Iran and a co-founder of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, has died while in government custody. He was arrested in early February 2018, with at least seven others who Iranian authorities claimed were "collecting classified information about the country's strategic areas under the guise of carrying out scientific and environmental

projects.” Human rights groups have called for an autopsy and investigation, pointing to the suspicious circumstances of his death. Professor Seyed-Emami's death follows two other recent incidents in Evin Prison in Iran in which activists died and authorities later ruled their deaths suicides. Scholars at Risk [calls for emails, letters, and faxes](#) urging Iranian authorities: to ensure a prompt, independent, and transparent investigation of Professor Seyed-Emami's death; to ensure the proper treatment of detainees at Evin Prison; and to guarantee the ability of intellectuals in Iran to exercise their right to academic freedom and its constituent rights and freedoms.

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USA

Inter-American Commission Recognizes Gun Violence as a Human Rights Concern

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), a principal and autonomous organ of the Organization of American States, a body of the states of the Western Hemisphere formed to promote economic, military, and cultural cooperation among its members, held a [hearing](#), “The Regulation of Gun Sales and Social Violence in the United States,” in Bogotá, Colombia in late February. The US government and four members of civil society—the Harris Institute, the Center for American Progress, Amnesty International, and the Igarapé Institute—provided testimony at the hearing, which highlighted measures that the US government can implement to reduce the number of deaths due to gun violence and discussed that an appropriate government response that takes a public health and human rights approach to this problem would reduce homicide and suicide rates in the US and reduce illegal gun trafficking in the Americas. In November 2018, the Harris Institute will host a [conference and experts' meeting](#), “Human Rights Perspectives on Gun Violence in America.” The meeting will be held at Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, Missouri, and is co-sponsored by Washington University’s Journal of Law and Policy, which will publish papers from the conference. A video of the IACHR hearing can be found [here](#).

Apple’s Interest in Direct Purchase of Cobalt Has Human Rights Implications

Apple is in talks to buy long-term supplies of cobalt directly from miners for the first time, according to a [news report](#) from Bloomberg, a move precipitated by business reasons but which has human rights implications. Apple is one of the world’s largest end users of cobalt for the batteries in its electronic devices but until now has not directly purchased cobalt, but instead, the companies supplying Apple with its batteries have purchased the ingredient. Apple’s interest in directly purchasing cobalt reflects its interest to ensure sufficient supplies given increased cobalt demand from electric vehicles and concerns over possible shortages. More than 50% of cobalt supply originates in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), of which 20% of the cobalt currently exported from the DRC comes from artisanal miners in the southern part of the country, who face serious human rights abuses, according to a [2017 report](#) by Amnesty International that examined the cobalt supply chain and human rights due diligence by companies sourcing cobalt. Apple was cited by the report as one of six companies that received the higher ratings for showing that they were taking steps to verify documentation or other information provided by suppliers about how they source cobalt. Some [analysts](#) regard the move by Apple to buy cobalt directly as a way to ensure an ethical and transparent supply chain for its products.

Binghamton University Proposes Master of Science in Human Rights

Faculty members at Binghamton University in New York have proposed a new [Master of Science in Human Rights](#) to the Faculty Senate, which, if approved, would add a new course of study to the university’s graduate programs. The proposal follows the launch of the Human Rights Institute, which aims to advance research and engagement on human rights issues among students, faculty and staff. If approved by the State University of New York (SUNY), the master’s degree will be offered through the College of Community and Public Affairs’ human development department.

Physicians for Human Rights Demands Access for Aid to Besieged Syrian Area

Following the UN Security Council unanimous passage of a resolution (Resolution 2401) demanding an end to hostilities in Syria to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian convoys, the assault on eastern Ghouta continues with Syrian authorities reportedly stripping medical supplies from convoys allowed to enter this area. In response, Susannah Sirkin, Director of International Partnerships and Policy at Physicians for Human Rights, issued a [statement](#) condemning this action. “The Syrian government cannot continue to block, restrict, or delay access to humanitarian aid convoys with impunity,” she said. “All parties to the conflict must ensure that all people in need receive aid in an immediate, unhindered, and sustained manner through the most direct routes, as required by international law and repeated UN Security Council resolutions.”

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

China is Using Big Data to Repress its Muslim Uighur Population, a Rights Group Says

Human Rights Watch (HRW) [reports](#) that Chinese authorities are building and deploying a predictive policing program based on Big Data analysis in Xinjiang. The program aggregates data about people, often without their knowledge, and flags those it deems potentially threatening to officials, according to HRW. HRW said Xinjiang authorities in recent years have increased mass surveillance measures across the region, augmenting existing tactics with the latest technologies. Since around April 2016, it estimates that Xinjiang authorities have sent tens of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities to “political education centers,” where they are held indefinitely without charge or trial, and can be subject to abuse.

Using Big Data and Machine Learning to Respond to the Refugee Crisis in Uganda

UN Global Pulse, through its lab in Kampala, Uganda, has been working with the UN and the government in Uganda to explore how [insights from public talk radio](#) can provide real-time information on what is happening on the ground as a means to respond to the refugee crisis in Uganda. The hypothesis is that the systematic analysis of what people say on the radio regarding their situation, concerns, and needs provides actionable insights for program implementation. UN Global Pulse has developed a technology prototype that allows analyzing public discourse on radio the same way that it is analyzed on social media. The lab and its partners used artificial intelligence and machine learning to develop a digital application called the Radio Content Analysis Tool. The tool transforms discussions taking place on radio into Big Data text, which is then mined for topics of interest relevant to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

BMW Partners with Circular to Bring Blockchain to Ethical Sourcing

Automotive giant BMW has recently partnered with London-based startup Circular to use blockchain technology to ensure the batteries for its electric vehicles contain cobalt sourced from ethical sources not using human rights abuses, such as child labor, [according to a Reuters report](#). If the partnership is successful, it could have global ramifications for supply-chain ethics using blockchain. Circular will begin working on its pilot with BMW by testing its system with cobalt that is already assumed to be sourced ethically from countries such as Australia and Canada, before working in artisanal mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which are a source of human rights abuses in cobalt mining. The pilot aims to examine if blockchain can be used a tool for ensuring ethical sourcing.

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