



**GENEVA CENTRE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND
GLOBAL DIALOGUE**

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NEWSLETTER

Human Rights Without Prejudice



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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES AND THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

6 September 2023

The world is facing an acute climate crisis, with natural disasters, at times of epic proportions, occurring at an alarmingly increasing frequency across the globe, with calamitous consequences for entire populations and subsequently for their basic human rights. Indeed, we are at the edge of what could legitimately be considered humanity's survival, vitally dependent on the environment, ecosystems and nature at large. However, and thankfully, all hope is not lost, but universal collaboration in the adoption and effective implementation of the necessary measures already identified as appropriate remedial action needs to be urgently and robustly undertaken.

Climate change and environmental degradation affect the most vulnerable first. As we slowly and unevenly transition to greener societies, how can we reverse the trend for women and children and ensure their rights are upheld and advanced? It is thus that the Geneva Centre decided to organize an international conference at the United Nations Office in Geneva on 6 September, on the heels of the Bonn Climate Conference and in anticipation of COP 28, with the aim of offering a platform for in-depth discussions among eminent specialists.

In the course of the high-level segment and three thematic panel discussions, speakers hailing from the UN, including Special Rapporteurs, international bodies, civil society and academia from all major regions of the world delivered insightful reflections and concrete recommendations on the rights of women and children in the context of the climate emergency, and the role that the ancestral knowledge and practices of Indigenous Peoples could play to effectively address this crisis.

 [Read the follow-up publication here](#)

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES AND THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

6 September 2023

Allocution by the Guest of Honour

Ms. Nathalie Fontanet, State Councillor, Republic and Canton of Geneva

OPENING STATEMENTS

H.E. Mrs. Claudia Fuentes Julio, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the UN in Geneva

H.E. Mrs. Clara Manuela da Luz Delgado Jesus, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde to the UN in Geneva

H.E. Ms. Lubna Qassim Albastaki, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the UN in Geneva

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Mr. Todd Howland, Chief of Branch, Development, Economic and Social Issues, OHCHR

Dr. Ian Fry, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the context of Climate Change

The conference was moderated by **Dr. Umesh Palwankar**, Executive Director of the Geneva Centre.



Read more about the event [here](#).

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES AND THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

6 September 2023

PANEL 1: PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Dr. David Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Environment. (pre-recorded video message)

Prof. Liliana Andonova, Professor of Political Science and International Relations and Academic Co-Director, Center for International Environmental Studies at IHEID

Ms. Nahla Haidar El Addal, Member of the CEDAW and ICJ Commissioner

Ms. Gina Cortès Valderrama, co-Focal Point of the UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency

PANEL 2: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: INTEGRATING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS INTO CLIMATE ACTION

Dr. Octavian Bivol, Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UNICEF

Ms. Saher Rashid Baig, Representative of the Child Rights Working Group of the UNFCCC Children and Youth Constituency

A voice for children

Ms. Licypriya Kangujam, Young Environmental Activist and Founder of The Child Movement, India

PANEL 3: TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN RECONCILING PURSUIT OF LIVELIHOODS WITH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND SAFEGUARDING NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. José Francisco Cali Tzay, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (pre-recorded video message)

Dr. Pasang Dolma Sherpa, Executive Director, Center for Indigenous Peoples' Research & Development (CIPRED)

Dr. Handaine Mohamed, President, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordination Committee (IPACC)

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES AND THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

6 September 2023

The conference consisted of a high-level segment, followed by three panels that addressed the three themes:

- 1) Promoting and protecting the rights of women and ensuring gender equality in the context of climate change and environmental degradation.**
- 2) Children's rights, environment and climate change: integrating children's rights into climate action.**
- 3) Traditional knowledge and practices of Indigenous peoples in reconciling pursuit of livelihoods with environment protection: innovative approaches to addressing climate change and safeguarding natural resources.**

Climate change and environmental degradation affect the most vulnerable first. The conference examined appropriate ways and effective means to address the challenges currently faced, drew upon the lessons learned thus far, explored future perspectives and offered concrete recommendations with regard to rights-based climate and environmental practices and policies. With just transition and human-rights-based climate action as an underlying framework for the discussion, it sought to attain the following specific objectives: Strengthen the understanding of the impacts of climate change on women and children and reinforce their role as agents of change; and bring to the discussion best practices from the field, voices of children as well as Indigenous Peoples' unique experience in order to promote an environment for continuous engagement.

The outcomes of the conference, including conclusions and recommendations, together with the Geneva Centre's own research and analyses, and best practices of indigenous peoples in annex, are presented in the report by the Geneva Centre. The report represents an effort to complement other similar initiatives in providing informative and useful inputs for appropriate consideration at the crucial COP 28.

SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS: BEYOND THE SECURITY - FREEDOM DILEMMA

14 JUNE 2023

In reaction to the current debates taking place in multilateral fora in Geneva and New York regarding surveillance, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism; the Geneva Centre convened a panel discussion exploring the impact of surveillance tech on human rights, on ZOOM.

The discussion was moderated by Dr. Palwankar and benefited from the participation of the following speakers:



Mr Sempala Allan Kigozi is a Tech Lawyer and a Digital Rights Activist. He promotes the right to privacy, free expression both online and offline and a strong enthusiast of Internet Governance. He is an expert on the intersection of technology, law and human rights.



Ms Tamar Kaldani is a data protection consultant. From 2018 to 2022, Tamar served as a First Vice-Chair of the Consultative Committee of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108). She established the independent supervisory authority and developed it during two consecutive terms from 2013 to 2019.



Ms Meredith Veit, Technology and Human Rights Researcher. Ms. Veit's work sits at the intersection of business, human rights and technology, with a particular focus on at-risk groups. She has worked on various projects related to the protection of human rights defenders, journalists, migrants' rights and children's rights in the digital age. She specializes in fact-finding, trauma-informed and gender-sensitive interviewing, and project management.



Dr. Catarina Fontes is a postdoctoral researcher at the Technical University of Munich. She works directly with Christoph Lütge, Professor and director of the TUM Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence, and an interdisciplinary team of researchers on the research project Ethics for the Smart City. Applied socio-technical frameworks to assess the implementation of AI-related solutions.



SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS: BEYOND THE SECURITY - FREEDOM DILEMMA

14 JUNE 2023

Although it has great potential for positive impact, surveillance technologies, including AI are sparking a debate that too often overlooks human rights considerations. From opaque, targeted use of spyware against journalists and human rights defenders, facial recognition disproportionately targeting minority communities, to the use of monitoring centres to nip protest movements in the bud; unbridled surveillance practices have shown to dangerously threaten the enjoyment of human rights.

Most evidently, this results in the reinforcement of discrimination, including through racial profiling, censorship, violation of individuals' right to privacy, abusive detention, forced labour and torture, and enabling attacks against human rights defenders. In her latest report, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism stressed "the lack of comprehensive regulation [...] including an absolute lack of human rights protections and enforcement" in this domain.

”

[...] it is not helpful to talk of 'privacy versus security' but rather of 'privacy and security', since both privacy and security are needed.

[...] Security is an enabling right for the overarching right to life, while privacy may also be viewed as an enabling right in the overall complex web of information flows in society, which are of fundamental importance [...].

Prof. Joseph Cannataci, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy

”



Read more about the event [here](#).

REGISTER NOW!

SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

BEYOND THE SECURITY - FREEDOM DILEMMA

ONLINE PANEL EVENT

PANELLISTS

Mr. Sempala Allan Kigozi
Head of Programmes: Unwanted Witness, Uganda

Ms. Tamar Kaldani
Vice-Chair of the Consultative Committee of the CoE Convention 108, Georgia

Ms. Meredith Veit
Tech & Human Rights Researcher, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, USA

Dr. Catarina Fontes
Postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence, Technical University of Munich, Germany

MODERATION

Dr. Umesh Palwankar
Executive Director, Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue

14 JUNE 2023
11 - 12:30 PM CET

REGISTRATIONS (ZOOM)




HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL REPORTING INITIATIVE

Through its unique monitoring initiative, the Geneva Centre provided summary reports on some of the key meetings during the **53rd and 54th regular sessions of the Human Rights Council** (19 June to 14 July and 11 September to 13 October), with **68 reports** produced on both **country specific** and **thematic topics**, as well as on several **panel discussions, urgent debates** and **general debates**. At the end of each of the regular sessions the Geneva Centre prepared and distributed a detailed **resolutions report**, containing all the resolutions adopted by the Council.

Access all our HRC53 reports [here](#).

Access all our HRC54 reports [here](#).



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 54TH SESSION

The Geneva Centre will closely monitor the 54th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in September – October 2023.



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 53RD SESSION

The Geneva Centre closely monitored the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in June – July 2023.



UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW 43RD SESSION

The 43rd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has started on 01 May 2022 at the United Nations Office in Geneva, and will continue until 12 May 2023.



Stay up to date on our reports by subscribing to our unique HRC Newsletter [here](#).



Currently, the Geneva Centre's UN Human Rights Council mailing list consists of **607 contacts. 568 of these are subscribers**, including representatives from Permanent Missions, Foreign Ministries, the OHCHR, INGOs, NGOs, National Human Rights Institutions, Universities as well as News Media including Reuters and The New York Times.

RAISING AWARENESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Videos and **social media posts** are an important medium for the Geneva Centre to raise awareness and bring attention to issues related to human rights. With our communications we participate in global dialogue, give our support to different actors and join the celebration of international days. During May - October the Geneva Centre produced 6 videos and 3 posts.

International Day of Non Violence (2 October)



International Day Commemorating Victims of Violence Based on Religion or Belief (22 August)



International Day of Peace (21 September)



World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (30 July)

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“This is not just an environmental issue; it's a call for justice, for a sustainable future. Let's break free from the chains of plastic pollution. We owe it to the next generation. Together, we can make a difference.”

(World Environment Day, 5 June)

”

Access all our short videos [here](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

FACTS AND FIGURES

The Geneva Centre is active in all of its main social media platforms. We share news, create visual content, and exchange with our partners and followers via our **Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook** and **YouTube channels**,



*“Every **child** deserves a **right to education and a safe and peaceful childhood, free from exploitation**. Let us unite to vanquish the scourge of **child labour**, through robust social protection, targeted interventions and wide-ranging, sustained prevention.”*

“Congratulations to the Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies for the 2023 UN Human Rights Awards, for dedicated efforts at a critical time”.



4,600
followers



31,105
followers



11,407
followers

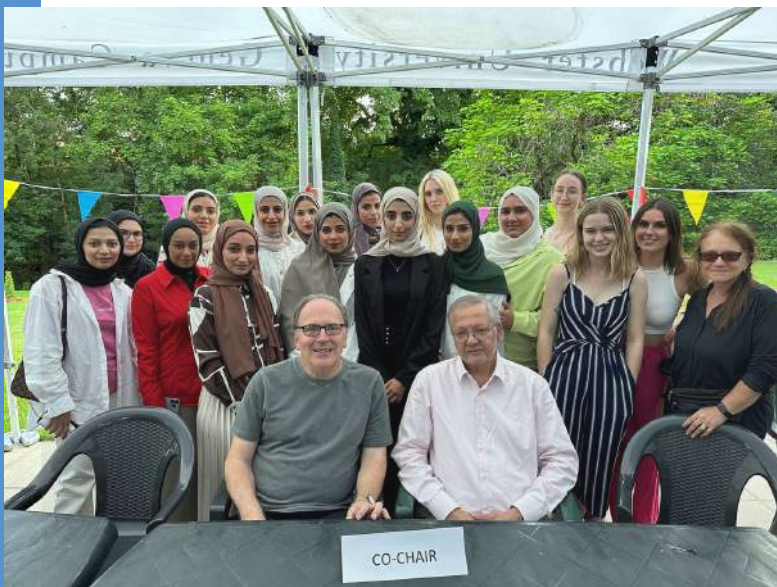


582
subscribers

This unique and innovative program brought together undergraduate students in their final year of international relations and politics from **Zayed University's Abu Dhabi and Dubai Campuses**, comprising a cohort of talented and motivated female students. The program also welcomed international students from Webster University.

Throughout the two-week course, participants exhibited remarkable engagement and enthusiasm, attributing it to the program's diverse range of lectures and an enlightening field visit. By bridging the gap between theoretical studies and real-life experiences, participants honed practical skills and gained valuable insights into the field of human rights. The harmonious interaction between Zayed University and Webster University students further enhanced the learning experience.

The resounding success of this training program further underscores the commitment of the Geneva Centre to advancing human rights education and empowering future leaders in the field through effective capacity-building initiatives. This accomplishment highlights the Centre's unwavering dedication to fostering a comprehensive understanding of human rights and nurturing individuals who will drive positive change in the realm of human rights advocacy and governance.



Program Themes:

*Global Governance,
Human Rights,
International Trade,
Migration & Refugees,
Health Diplomacy,
Sustainable Development,
Humanitarian Affairs,
Green Finance,
Technology, Cyber &
Innovation*

SCIENTIFIC CAFÉ INITIATIVE

INTERVIEWS

Since 2021, the Geneva Centre is hosting the **Scientific Café initiative**, consisting of short interviews with academic experts and field practitioners on issues linked to human rights. Questions are posed with the request to provide explanations in simple terms to make the information accessible to all viewers. The interviews are posted on the Geneva Centre's website and announced on social media.

The theme for the 2023 edition is "**Right to a Healthy Environment: Significance for the Ordinary Citizen**". The discussions analyze the impact of climate change and environmental damage – manifest in all spheres of life from agriculture to health, migration, labor and trade – on ordinary citizens. It considers the disproportionate effects on different groups based on their age, geographical location, socio-economic situation, ethnicity, disability and gender, and what can be the role of different actors in ensuring impactful policies to safeguards people's right to a clean and healthy environment are realized.

During the May-October period, the Geneva Centre interviewed the following experts:

- Ms **Rewa Assi**, Young Climate Acticits, Youth Representative, UNICEF MENA and Program Coordinator, Water Innovation Lab Lebanon (WIL)
- Ms **Lucy Ntongai**, Project Officer, Gender Responsive Alternatives to Climate Change, ActionAid Kenya
- Dr **Matthew Scott**, Leader of the Human Rights and the Environment Thematic Area
- Ms **Shaila Seshia Galvin**, associate professor, anthropology and sociology affiliated with the centre for international environmental studies, Graduate Institute

The questions posed to the experts:

1. What are some of the short and long-term effects of climate change and the environment on ordinary citizens and which groups are particularly affected?
2. What does this human right offer concretely to the ordinary citizen? Who is responsible for ensuring this right and what means of redress are available to the common man in case of violations?
3. How can countries be prompted to enshrine the right to a healthy environment in national legislation and be encouraged to robustly implement these laws?
4. What could be the role of intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, the business sector, especially multinationals, and the media in defending and promoting this right?
5. Do you have any recommendations on how to ensure the right to a healthy environment is brought to the forefront of political discourse and public debate?

Access the videos [here](#).



PUBLICATIONS

Environment, Climate Change and Women and Children's Rights: Challenges, Perspectives and the Role of Indigenous Peoples

There has recently been encouraging developments in the United Nations Office in Geneva and on international fora, including the historical recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment by the United Nations General Assembly; establishment of a long-awaited mandate of Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the



context of climate change by the United Nations Human Rights Council; adoption of the General recommendation No. 37 on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; as well as the adoption of General Comment No. 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The adoption of a breakthrough decision on the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund at the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP-27) in November 2022, is also a positive leap forward. This year, as the world celebrates the 75th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, more than ever, the right-based approach to climate action should drive higher ambition and ensure more effective engagement, while the new mechanism should be rooted in human rights, ensure meaningful action, and include the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and children.

This report draws on the conclusions and recommendations of the Geneva Centre Conference on Climate Change and Human Rights and provides an analysis and best practices of recent developments in the climate – human rights nexus.



Access all our publications [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Surveillance technologies and human rights: Beyond the security - freedom dilemma

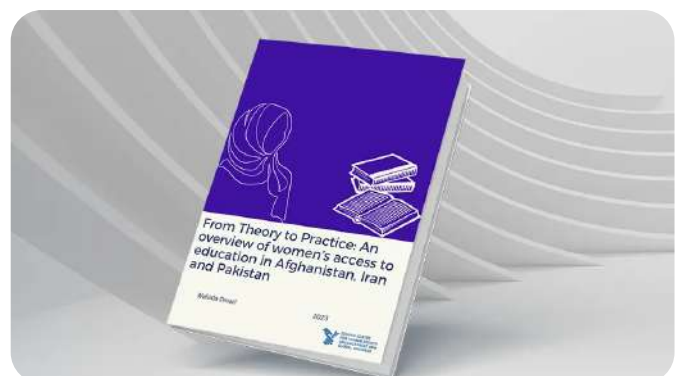
Although it has great potential for positive impact, surveillance technologies, including A.I, are sparking a debate that too often overlooks human rights considerations. From targeted use of spyware against journalists and human rights defenders, facial recognition disproportionately targeting minority communities, to the use of monitoring centres to nip protest movements in the bud; unbridled surveillance practices have shown to dangerously threaten the enjoyment of human rights. The idea underpinning this mass buy in of surveillance technology is that more – and better – data ensures safety and security enables better risk management. Individuals



should seemingly forgo parts of their privacy and stake other rights and freedoms that intersect with it for the sake of security and development. A framework that, although not new, merits to be re-examined. Noting the upsurge in all world regions of bills and of legal reforms in the areas of data protection and privacy, the panel discussion with the aim to contribute a new perspective, beyond the perceived dilemma.

From Theory to Practice: an Overview of Women's Access to Education in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan

This paper sheds light on the prevailing challenges women face in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in their pursuit of education. Despite the progress, access to education for women in these countries remains significantly limited due to cultural, societal, and institutional barriers. This study explores the existing laws and policies and the evolving status of women's education while examining key challenges, such as gender-based discrimination, social norms, early marriages, security concerns, and inadequate



infrastructure. In conclusion, the paper proposes policy recommendations and interventions aimed at fostering gender equality and empowering women to gain access to quality education, thus contributing to sustainable development and inclusive growth in the region.



Access all our publications [here](#).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Participation in HRC53 Side Event on Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue



“Religions and belief systems are in essence a call for action. They are a collective inducement for solidarity that resonates deeply across regions, social classes, and age groups.”

On 6 July 2023, Geneva Centre’s Project Officer, Ms. Catia Trevisani, joined the discussion panel convened by Interfaith International on **“Promoting Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue for Peace and Cooperation”**. This event took place on the sidelines of the 53rd Human Rights Council session, hosting prestigious panellists. The Geneva Centre was honored to have been represented among prominent voices for peace and dialogue and remains committed to promote greater understanding and tolerance among people and societies.

Read the News [here](#).

Visit from Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi

The Geneva Centre had the honour of hosting a delegation from **Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi** on 27th July 2023. Dr Umesh Palwankar, the Centre’s Executive Director, warmly welcomed Ms Shamsa Al Qubaisi and Ms Alia Al Shamsi, engaging in a fruitful discussion about the Centre’s ongoing efforts to promote and advance human rights.

The visit was organized as part of the Sorbonne delegation’s one-month Human Rights and International Relations training program in Geneva. The meeting, also attended by Ms Alia Fares, the Training and Partnerships Officer of the Centre, proved to be an engaging session. The delegation showed keen interest in learning about the Centre’s work based on its four pillars.



Read the News [here](#).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Geneva Centre signs MoU with the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG)

The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG),

Dubai. The agreement was signed on 10 October 2023 by MBRSG's Executive President, His Excellency Dr. Ali bin Sebaa Al Marri, and Dr. Umesh Palwankar, GCHRAGD Executive Director, with Prof. Raed Awamleh, Dean of MBRSG, and several officials from both parties in attendance.



Dr. Palwankar recalled that collaboration with MBRS had already begun before the signing of the MoU, with two visits from MBRS students to the Geneva Centre in 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, academic experts from MBRS had participated in the Geneva Centre's Scientific Café initiative and in one of its panel events. He observed that several areas of future collaboration were envisaged, including joint seminars, research and co-authored articles and policy papers, joint training and internship programs.

Read the News [here.](#)

COMING UP NEXT

Human Rights Recognition Awards

The Geneva Centre's Human Rights Recognition Awards 2023 edition will celebrate **Women championing environmental rights**. This year's edition highlights, celebrates and honour the incredible contributions of **“Women Championing Environmental Rights”**.

International Human Rights Day is celebrated annually to commemorate the adoption of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948.

Upcoming events

The Geneva Centre will organize a **panel event** on human trafficking, migration and human rights (30 November 2023).

Furthermore, the Centre's **Scientific Café Initiative** will continue across the 2024 with experts from different fields and regions.

Capacity building

The Geneva Centre is establishing good and concrete collaboration with the **Graduate Institute** and the **Webster University**, in terms of both, internship programmes and experts' engagement in the various collaborations envisaged. These steps are contributing to rapid progress in our collaborative agenda.



To contribute to this celebration, the Geneva Centre will present its awards at the Awards Ceremony, which will be held online on Zoom, **Friday 8 December**. Read more about the awards and application process [here](#).



Annual Report

The Annual Report 2023 will be published in January 2024. **Read our previous Annual Reports [here](#).**



**GENEVA CENTRE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND
GLOBAL DIALOGUE**

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