



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

HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS AND VIEWS

»»» NEWSLETTER «««



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

»»» EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

- 3 COUNTERING RELIGIOUS HATRED
- 6 HEALTH SUSTAINING PEACE PROCESSES

»»» UN HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS

- 7 SPOTLIGHT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
- 8 GIRLS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE
- 8 A GLIMPSE INTO THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

»»» RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

- 9 VORTEX OF PAIN: THE ISRAEL-GAZA WAR
- 11 WOMEN CHAMPIONING ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS
- 13 PATHWAYS TO TACKLE RELIGIOUS HATRED
- 14 REFLEXIONS UPON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS AND MECHANISMS

»»» HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

- 15 SCIENTIFIC CAFÉ
- 16 SENIOR WOMEN FOR CLIMATE WRITING HISTORY
- 17 IT'S IN THE NEWS!

»»» FURTHER INSIGHTS

- 18 NEW PROMISING PARTNERSHIPS
- 19 WHAT'S NEXT?



COUNTERING RELIGIOUS HATRED

On 24 April 2024, the Geneva Centre had the pleasure of hosting an online event on countering religious hatred for what was an incredibly engaging round of reflections centred on international approaches to countering religious hate while upholding fundamental freedoms.

»»» BACKGROUND

Freedom of religion and belief and freedom of expression are mutually dependent and reinforcing, and are critical to sustain tolerance and cohesion in societies. Despite the rich corpus inholding clarifications on the interlinkage between faith, peace and human rights, claims that certain religious or faith groups are inherent threats to national security, public order or national values are gaining ground in the political and public debate globally. It can be argued that these claims often hinge on theories of civilizational cleavage, and often instrumentalize religions and beliefs to undermine the legitimate political demands of certain communities.

In a context of escalation in religious hatred, growing right-wing extremism, and increase of stifling policies for freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, atrocities in Gaza have set the world further back from the achievement of peace and tolerance. Given the gravely dehumanizing character of religious hatred and that tensions on this front are sadly on the rise, this panel event could not have been more timely.

»»» LEGAL FOUNDATIONS AND INTERPRETATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Enshrined in the ICCPR, freedom of religion or belief (art. 18), freedom of expression (art. 19) and the prohibition of incitement to hatred (art. 20) express the consensus reached by international community to tackle religious intolerance. Findings by UN Treaty Bodies and Special Rapporteurs further gave life to these legal provisions, which may be seen as 'too legal' as opposed to the social and cultural reading of the norm. In order to determine in each single case the fine line between hate speech and free speech, the international community adopted in 2012 the Rabat Plan Action which introduced a six-tier threshold test that requires a careful scrutiny ocontext; speaker; intent; content or form; extent of the speech; and likelihood of harm.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION



24 APRIL 2024 | 3:00 PM (C.E.T)



ONLINE (ZOOM)

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR AN
INTERNATIONAL APPROACH TO
COUNTER RELIGIOUS HATRED AND
PROMOTE FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

REGISTER NOW



OHCHR'S 'FAITH FOR RIGHTS' FRAMEWORK

In the course of the last seven years, OHCHR's Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch has been working under the Faith for Rights framework as a space for engaging with faith-based actors and other stakeholders on cross-disciplinary reflections and actions to tackle incitement to religious hatred and other human rights violations. Faith for Rights is essentially based on two salient commitments. First, all instances of advocacy of hatred that incited to discrimination, violence or hostility must be publicly denounced. Second, the instrumentalization of religion, belief or their followers to incite to hatred or violence must be averted, notably for electoral purposes or political aims. Furthermore, violence shall not be justified by previous provocation. In all these situations, religious and political leaders have an heightened responsibility to speak out.

'FAITH FOR RIGHTS' EFFORTS ON THE GROUND

Concrete efforts on the ground have been deployed for engaging with governments, religious authorities and several civil society actors. For instance, several religious leaders part of the Faith for Rights community of practitioners have advocated for people of all faiths to be granted unimpeded access to their respective places of worship and have publicly condemned incitement to violence, discrimination and acts of hostility in the name of religion.

Another impactful action on the ground was carried out by the Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance. Back in 2012, he met with a Pastor of a tiny congregation in Florida to dissuade him from burning the Coran. Subsequently, he launched a worldwide appeal by emphasizing that this self-proclaimed antagonism did not represent Christians and stressed Jesus' call to love people everywhere.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

🕒 24 APRIL 2024 | 3:00 PM (C.E.T)

📍 ONLINE (ZOOM)

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR AN INTERNATIONAL APPROACH TO COUNTER RELIGIOUS HATRED AND PROMOTE FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

With the participation of **Mr. Michael Wiener**, Human Rights Officer - OHCHR and moderated by **Dr. Umesh Palwankar**, Executive Director of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights



Dr. Ibrahim Salama, Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch - OHCHR



Dr. Hacı Ali Açıkgül, Vice-chairperson of Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission - OIC



Mrs. Armela Krasniqi, President of the Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA).



Dr. W.Y. Alice Chan, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Centre for Civic Religious Literacy.



Dr. Jasdev Rai, Director, Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG)

➤➤➤ CHALLENGING DEMARCATION(S): SETTING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN FREE SPEECH AND HATE SPEECH

The most prominent complexity of the subject matter is how to define the demarcation line between free speech and hate speech, namely how to flesh out legal provisions into a clearly defined threshold and objective criteria. The key features of hate speech – contextual, cultural, inflammable and politically exploitable – pose a further challenge. Particularly insidious aspects are the fact that it takes time to make a determination and ill-intentioned actors could deliberately exploit it for misinformation campaigns and/or political purposes.

➤➤➤ COMMON DUTIES AND PATHWAYS FOR ACTIONS

Acting jointly and promptly is certainly an imperative. As every religious community is only focusing on own community, a genuine joint action is lacking and the divide is thereby amplified. Good-intended forces need to act promptly to overpower the ill-intended ones. This goes hand-in-hand with empowering through knowledge and education to defuse political instrumentalization.

Education on tolerance must be fully unbiased and firmly grounded on human rights, not just on good intentions. Investing in religious literacy to foster genuine listening and peer-to-peer dialogue was also highlighted, as well as the key role played by the media and media literacy. Action by faith-based and secular actors needs to be based on objective criteria such as the Rabat threshold providing for concrete criteria to make a determination. While being already used by actors such as Facebook and other media regulatory authorities, the Rabat threshold remains largely unknown.

HIGH COMMISSIONER VOLKER TÜRK'S VISION

'Peer-to-peer leaning and awareness-raising may promote respect and understanding between individuals and communities, across religions and beliefs, upholding dignity for all'

➤➤➤ CREATING SPACES FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE AND JOINT ACTION

Panellists highlighted the need of bringing together faith actors, educators and the media influencers to dialogue and act jointly.

The faith-based civil society space should be widened through supportive, multistakeholder policies that have the potential of truly contributing to the shaping of tolerant and pluralistic societies.

Noteworthy also the idea of creating an observatory conceived as a space and a methodology for observing events, learning from trends and strategically forecasting.

➤➤➤ THE WAY FORWARD: FROM WORDS TO DEEDS

To overcome implementation challenges, we need to concretize events into processes, transform dialogues into projects and build synergies within initiatives. The Geneva Centre stands very keen to work more closely with key stakeholders such as faith-based organizations, OHCHR and the European Union to explore new approaches to youth and institutional engagement in genuine interfaith dialogue. The next newsletter will provide in detailed lessons learned and new insights into this promising journey.

HEALTH SUSTAINING PEACE PROCESSES

On 1 February 2024, the Geneva Centre co-organized a panel event in partnership with the Mohamed Bin Rashid School of Government in Dubai. The event shed light on how ensuring the right to health can positively contribute to peace processes.

HEALTH UNDER ATTACK

Interlinkages between armed conflicts, health, and peace are well known. Violence and armed conflicts have devastating implications for health. Health is always under attack. A recent report found that there were 1,335 incidents affecting healthcare facilities reported across 49 countries and territories in 2021; these conflicts not only constrained access to care but directly affected nearly 1,500 health workers, with at least 94 assaulted, 161 killed, 170 kidnapped, 320 injured and 713 arrested. These attacks on health and healthcare workers are obviously unacceptable under international human rights and humanitarian law.

HEALTH FOR PEACE AND PEACE FOR HEALTH

The constitution of the World Health Organization recognizes health as fundamental to the “attainment of peace and security”. It is dependent upon the fullest cooperation of individuals and States. Health can be a bridge to peace, especially in settings where conflict torments people’s lives. It may be both, a contributor to and a beneficiary of peace. While there cannot be health without peace, there cannot be peace without health either: lack of access to basic social services, such as healthcare, for specific population groups, often on ethnic or religious grounds, leads to feelings of exclusion, sentiments of unfair treatment by the government and perceptions of unequal treatment vis-à-vis other groups.

CAPITALIZING ON PEACEBUILDING HEALTH INITIATIVES

These conference offered the perfect setting to delve into the integration of healthcare into peace processes and conflict resolution, highlighting the essential role of health and medical sector professionals. The discussion further emphasized the significant contribution of women in health services towards successful peace processes. From the fruitful expert discussion emerged three potential intervention avenues for health as a bridge for peace programs, namely delivering health services in conflict zones, providing a neutral platform to collaborate on health issues, and offering mental health and rehabilitation services to aid reconciliation in conflict-affected communities. The emerging reflections and recommendations have been encapsulated in a comprehensive report available [here](#), thereby contributing further to the discourse on healthcare’s role in peacebuilding.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The 55th session of the Human Rights Council drew to a close after successfully adopting 27 resolutions, including 18 thematic resolutions under item 3, six resolutions under item 4, and three resolutions each relating to item 7 and item 10.

➤➤➤ HRC REPORTING INITIATIVE

The Geneva Centre's HRC Reporting Initiative continued to be a crucial and authoritative reference for Permanent Missions and UN Agencies. During the 55th Session, the Geneva Centre focused strategically on producing high-quality reports on key meetings, including the High-Level Segment of MENA Region Dignitaries; General Debates 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9; and the Universal Periodic Review outcomes.

Furthermore, the Centre covered several Oral updates, Panels, and Interactive dialogues, and continued to produce its Weekly Overview Report with summaries of all reports and sessions of the upcoming week. It also reported the Annual Discussion on the Rights of the Child (14 March) and the Panel on Countering Religious Hatred (8 March).

The Centre also prepared the final the detailed and much appreciated Adopted Resolutions report, published early April 2024 just after the session closed all voting procedures. The Centre's steadily growing HRC mailing list is now composed of 617 contacts. 566 of these are subscribed, including diplomats, UN experts, NGO representatives, academics, journalists and other stakeholders. [Click here](#) to access all our reports on the 55th HRC session.

➤➤➤ SURVEY: YOUR VIEWS MATTER

The Geneva Centre launched a survey on its flagship Human Rights Council Reporting Initiative. Conceived as a user-friendly feedback form, the aim pursued by this survey is to build on the constructive inputs provided by its users to fine-tune the Reporting Initiative with the ever-evolving needs, requests and interests of Permanent Missions, UN specialized agencies, entities and programmes, as well as our audience at large. Please fill out this short survey, your views and opinions matter! <https://lnkd.in/ezamfQzg>

The further expansion of the Reporting Initiative with new insights and analytical views will allow the Geneva Centre to preserve its positive image as a laboratory of innovation and to strongly reaffirm its leadership role in the field.



➤➤➤ GIRLS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Responding to a call for inputs, the Geneva Centre sent a written submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on climate change for his report on how climate change may impact the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl. The report included input from partners and was submitted on 29 February 2024.

➤➤➤ A GLIMPSE INTO THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

The Geneva Centre's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) country reports continued to be a major reference within the international community. In the framework of the 45th Session of the Working Group on the UPR, the Geneva Centre attended and reported on the reviews of [Saudi Arabia](#) (22 January) and [Jordan](#) (25 January 2024). Furthermore, the Geneva Centre reported on the reviews of [Afghanistan](#) (29 April 2024) and [Yemen](#) (1st May 2024) during the 46th Session of the Working Group.

➤➤➤ SAUDI ARABIA'S UPR HIGHLIGHTS

During its previous review in 2018, Saudi Arabia stressed that it received 258 recommendations, of which 181 were endorsed and 31 were partially endorsed. To date, 173 recommendations have already been implemented and 39 are under implementation, which amounts to an 80% implementation rate. Noteworthy to mention, the abolition of the death penalty in Taziri-based cases, replacing it with a 10-year prison term for juveniles, as well as the fostering of women's empowerment, free access to services, and gender equality. In terms of job opportunities, 37% of Saudi women were working in 2022 compared to a 17% rate in 2017. Educational projects focused on human rights-based approaches resulted in a reduction in illiteracy rates to 3.7% (ranking 7th in the G20).

➤➤➤ JORDAN'S UPR HIGHLIGHTS

The drafting process of Jordan's national UPR report was informed by 13 interactive sessions marked by the participation of more than 1,700 stakeholders. Jordan will receive the Special Rapporteurs on cultural rights and on the right to food in 2024 and 2025 respectively, while reiterating its openness towards visits by all Special Procedures. Jordan adopted a manual of procedures and prepared a training on issues depending on the Sharia prosecutor's office in order to adequately address matter health, education, shelter, family environment and other issues for families and children. Legal amendments were made in 2019 and 2023 to enhance women's participation based on equal wages and non-discrimination. On the protection of workers' rights, inspection visits were conducted on workplaces. More than 29,000 institutions were inspected throughout 2022.





VORTEX OF PAIN: THE ISRAEL-GAZA WAR

»»» RESEARCH PAPER BY THE GENEVA CENTRE

The date of 7 October 2023 marked the eruption of a vortex of pain with no end in sight yet. This humanity's umpteenth defeat added itself to the appalling list of scourges of war that the international community solemnly pledged to prevent in June 1945 by giving body and life to the Charter of the United Nations.

Indiscriminate attacks encompassing brutal killings, assault and hostage-taking of largely civilian Israelis were followed by an unprecedented military response in the Gaza Strip both in terms of number of casualties and scale of destruction, whose repercussions have also reached the West Bank.

»»» FILLING THE VACUUM: MAPPING MULTIFACETED HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

While thematic reports focussing on specific human rights issues continue to be issued by authoritative sources such as UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes, no comprehensive report offering a broad overview on the various facets of human rights violations has been compiled so far.

Therefore, this research paper intends to fill this vacuum by providing the very first concise but comprehensive mapping of the multifaceted human rights implications of the Israel-Gaza armed conflict. For ease of reading, the research is articulated around three main pillars, namely the immediate consequences of the armed hostilities, their long-term impacts, and available avenues for redress under national and international law

»»» IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF ARMED HOSTILITIES

From a human rights perspective, armed hostilities have first and foremost immediate consequences on the right to life, which goes far beyond the avoidance of the deprivation of life and liberty and the obedience to the imperative of a necessary and proportionate use of force. Indeed, the right to life also encompasses protection from threats to life that are reasonably foreseeable, including famine, or environmental degradation.

➤➤➤ IMPACT ON THE RIGHT TO AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

The section dedicated to the immediate consequences explores the impact of armed hostilities on the right to an adequate standard of living, which encompasses most notably repercussions on the healthcare and food production systems, as well as access to vital goods and services such as water, sanitation, shelter and electricity. The jeopardy of displacement with no safe haven in sight adds to the plight of children, women, persons with disabilities and journalists who are exposed to compounded risks.

➤➤➤ LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF ARMED HOSTILITIES

The long-term impacts of still ongoing armed hostilities span across the labour market, human development, household consumption rates and poverty, as well as the economy more broadly. Explosive remnants of war create additional barriers to the resumption of ordinary life and the recovery of key infrastructure. The long-term consequences of armed conflict on the environment are also noteworthy to be emphasized as they gravely affect human health; water and soil safety; the proper functioning of waste management and sewage facilities, while noting in passing the impact of armed conflict on climate change.

➤➤➤ THE WAY OUT OF THE VORTEX

Against this backdrop, combating impunity for human rights violations and identifying legal, political and diplomatic avenues for bringing parties in compliance with international law is the only possible way to get out of the vortex. This section is dedicated to exploring available avenues under national and international law by resorting to the right to an effective remedy as a guiding thread towards establishing facts and responsibilities grounded on impartial, thorough and extensive investigations.

The reflection then moves forward to assess the potential in terms of legal and political weight carried by pronouncements of international bodies, especially Geneva-based human rights treaty bodies. Furthermore, a special emphasis is placed both on recent pronouncements of domestic courts in third countries and the crucial role played by third states in exercising increased influence over the belligerent parties with the aim of changing their behaviour and bringing their conduct in compliance with international law.

➤➤➤ PUBLICATION AND OFFICIAL PRESENTATION EVENT

Stay tuned on the Geneva Centre's social media platforms for more details on the publication and presentation event of the research paper.



WOMEN CHAMPIONING ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS

»»» THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECOGNITION AWARDS IN A NUTSHELL

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. To contribute to the celebration of this commemorative day, in 2021, the Geneva Centre initiated its Human Rights Recognition Awards (HRRRA), which received widespread attention upon its inauguration.

The HRRRA stands as more than just a recognition - it is a celebration of perseverance, dedication, and unyielding commitment to bettering our global community. While the awards come with a modest financial contribution, their true value lies in the unique opportunity they offer to the recipients: a platform for collaboration, amplified visibility, and avenues for professional growth.

Each year, the HRRRA focuses on a distinct theme, illuminating particular facets of human rights advocacy. As applications for the awards pour in through public calls and individual invitations, we are reminded of the vast reservoir of human spirit and determination that exists globally.

»»» PASSIONATE WOMEN INSPIRING ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION ALL AROUND THE GLOBE

For the 2023 edition, our lens was firmly focused on 'Women Championing Environmental Rights'. This theme resonates today more than ever, as the world grapples with environmental challenges that necessitate collective action.

By celebrating women at the forefront of environmental rights, the Geneva Centre hopes to underscore the indomitable spirit and resilience of female advocates in this crucial realm. From safeguarding our precious natural resources to advocating for climate justice, their contributions are paramount.

UNVEILING AND CELEBRATING THE WINNERS AT THE OFFICIAL CEREMONY

Held on 8 December, the highlight of the ceremony was the announcement of the HRRA 2023 awardees: Monique Ntumngia's (Cameroon) transformative work in renewable energy solutions in Africa, Fatou Jeng's (Gambia) advocacy for climate change policy, Hero Wakil's (Iraq) grassroots efforts in environmental conservation, and Dr. Priscilla Achakpa's (Nigeria) lifelong dedication to environmental advocacy were not only celebrated but also served as a source of inspiration for all attendees. Each awardee, through their unique and impactful contributions to environmental rights, demonstrated the power and resilience of women in leading the charge against climate change and advocating for sustainable practices.

In a special feature, Ms. Aiysha Siddiqua, Climate Adviser to the UN Secretary-General, delivered a compelling video message from COP 28 in Dubai, offering insightful observations on the current state of climate action and the role of women in leading these efforts.

A POWERFUL APPEAL BY MS. AYISHA SIDDIQA, GUEST OF HONOUR

To me, being a human rights advocate is synonymous with being a climate justice advocate. And I make this distinction of human rights because the loss of biodiversity and land is intimately connected to women's issues and human rights. The same structures that we are using to obstruct and excavate, harming Planet Earth, we have used against women. This brings me to share that I am incredibly inspired by the women who are champions in their own right, tirelessly working to protect their little corners of the world.

I urge you all, nominees and women and girls around the world, to step forward to embrace your role as leaders and changemakers. Take even the smallest step you can, and advocate for policies that protect our planet. Engage in community efforts to promote sustainability, and most importantly, believe in your power to make a difference. Let us be the change we wish to see. Let us be nature defending itself, for our planet and for our future.



GET INSPIRED! THE REPORT IS IN YOUR HANDS!

To all our readers across the world: get inspired and take action! The world needs your creativity, inventiveness and passionate commitment for achieving a sustainable, equitable, and just world. Read our report [here](#) to get inspired: you could become the next awardee!

PATHWAYS TO TACKLE RELIGIOUS HATRED

➤➤➤ SETTING THE SCENE

Defining the fine line between freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief is more than an arduous task. Although it may seem easy to just affirm from a theoretical point of view that hate speech is outlawed, as well as incitement and advocacy of hatred, but in practice, the reality is much more complex.

➤➤➤ FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF: A VERY COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

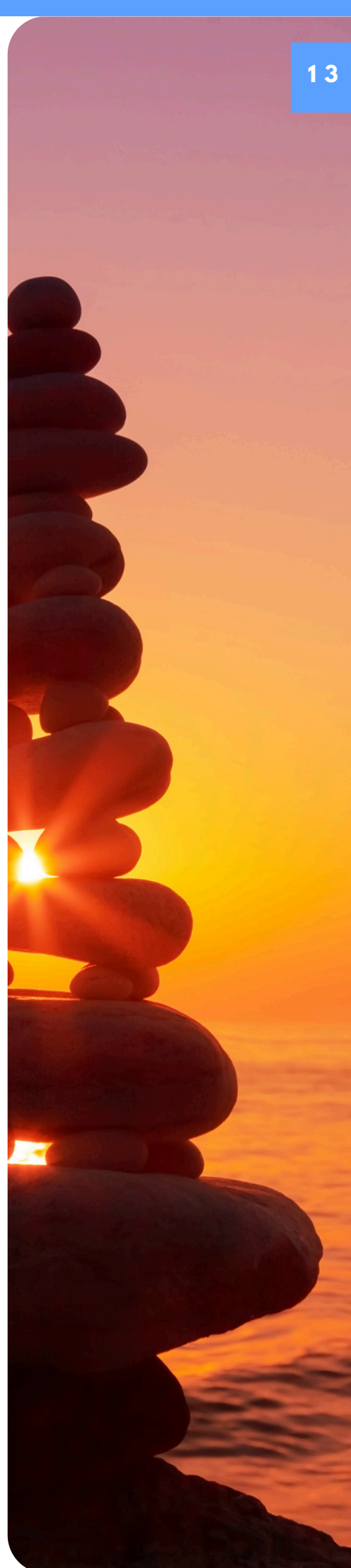
Special protection of religious speech does not imply a lack of protection for speeches critical of religions, religious leaderships, behaviours, and advocated beliefs, among others. This explained by the fact that the right to freedom of expression has an extremely broad coverage to encompass all types of expressions, including offensive, shocking, or disturbing speeches.

Furthermore, as emphasized by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, 'despite its significance to numerous individuals and communities', the concept of 'holiness remains a quality that cannot be adequately or exhaustively captured by human rights norms or entities.'

The picture becomes even more blurry when looking at the intersection between national security, public order, and moral values. This often becomes a grey area where states can wield significant arbitrary power to curtail the right to freedom of religion. The ambiguity surrounding these concepts provides ample opportunity for states to impose arbitrary limitations on religious freedoms.

➤➤➤ GRASPING THE RISKS OF HARM AND HUMAN RIGHTS DISRUPTIONS

What is undisputed, is that the potential risks of harm to individuals, minorities, communities and society at large can be far reaching, including social instability leading to the disruption of social peace. Despite the formulation of recommendations on root causes, in general, they tend to focus on proximate causes rather than ultimate causes, and do not expand on the proximity of causation that ought to be encompassed in the analysis of the issue. Arguably, the duty to ensure a conducive environment for dialogue, peace and tolerance would infer a task to generate a structural design that addresses the igniting element of human rights violations.



➤➤➤ A MULTISTAKEHOLDER, TRANSVERSAL APPROACH TO COUNTERING RELIGIOUS HATRED

This ambitious reflection aims at exploring these multiple aspects by adopting an innovative multi-stakeholder, transversal approach to countering religious hatred, with due consideration to other forms of intolerance and discrimination and the social, economic, cultural and institutional factors shaping them, while upholding the power of education and the pivotal role that civil society, faith leaders and political actors must assume. This publication will be disseminated soon on our social media platforms. Stay tuned!

REFLECTIONS UPON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS AND MECHANISMS

➤➤➤ A RENEWED GLOBAL COMMITMENT: EMERGENT PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEMS AND MAINSTREAMING

Over 75 years ago, the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights marked the culmination of a historical political process and an unprecedented coming-together of States, setting the modern foundation international human rights law. Today, we are left with a rich legacy embodied in international human rights regimes.



Yet, these regimes must engage in a challenging process of renewal towards actualization of their purpose. At this stage, the international community's commitment to the UDHR seems ambivalent, oscillating between disillusionment and promising impetuses.

As the global human rights agenda human expands further into new areas and asserts itself into a diversity of policy areas, this think-piece offers an overview of human rights mainstreaming strategies and explores emergent trends and practices to bolster the impact of human rights mechanisms and facilitate network-building outside of the traditional confines of human rights practice.

By discharging its key mandate as an independent human rights think-tank, the Geneva Centre will widely disseminate this think piece on its website and through all its social media channels. Stay tuned!

SCIENTIFIC CAFÉ

THE FINAL EPISODES OF THE 2023 THEME "RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE ORDINARY CITIZEN"

In December 2023, the Geneva Centre conducted a Scientific Café interview with Mr. Jevanic Henry, a UNSG Youth Climate Change Adviser and Fellow and UN Climate Change well-equipped with first-hand experience in leading and supporting the development of environmental projects at multi-levels. In February 2024, the Geneva Centre successfully conducted its last Scientific Café interview on the 2023 theme with Ms. Christine Adam, Director of Legal Affairs of the UNFCCC Secretariat.

2024 BRAND NEW THEME, BRAND NEW SPECIAL GUESTS!



The Geneva Centre is proud to announce its brand-new theme for the 2024 Scientific Café edition titled "Migration and Business: Safeguarding Human Rights Amidst the Climate Crisis". The discussion analyses the impact of climate change and environmental damage – manifest in all spheres of life from agriculture to health, migration, labour 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 realised.

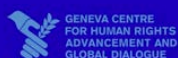
The kick-off took place with Mr. Neill Wilkins, Head of the Migrant Workers Programme at the Institute for Human Rights and Business. In May, the Scientific Café Initiative will welcome on its digital stage a high-ranking UN official, namely Ms. Adriana Quiñones, Head of Human Rights and Development and Deputy Director of UN Women Geneva. She brings to the Scientific Café more than 20 years of experience in leading efforts in fields such as gender equality, elimination of gender-based violence, access to justice and women's economic empowerment. In May, another UN expert joined our Scientific Café stage, namely Mr. Seán O'Connell, Global Focal Point on Environmental Justice with the United Nations Development Programme, working on corporate respect for human rights and environmental protection. Click on [this link](#) to discover all the interviews!

2024 QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY GUEST INTERVIEWEES

- What are the major determinants of vulnerability to climate change for migrants and how can business activities impact it?
- How are States due to protect human rights and labor rights for migrants and their families? What are some common barriers?
- What are the responsibilities of businesses regarding climate-related risks for the rights of their workers and the communities they impact?
- What are the standards and best practices for businesses in terms of self-reporting, self-assessment, and data gathering? To what extent are migrants (including refugees and IDPs) accounted for?
- How can migrants be better included in climate action and adaptation?
- What is your view on the current global policy agenda for migration and business and human rights?

SENIOR WOMEN WRITING HISTORY

In April 2024, the Swiss Association 'Senior Women for Climate Protection' managed the impossible: winning a climate change litigation case before Europe's leading Human Rights Court based in Strasbourg, France. It's a world's *premiere*, and one can bet that many other similar cases will follow suite. For the occasion, the Geneva Centre created and published an informative carousel to make a very technical judgement accessible and understandable to the general public. It explains in a very simple, illustrative and concise manner the human rights at stake, the legal reasoning of the Court and the far-reaching impact of a judgement that wrote history.



Senior Women for Climate Protection v. Switzerland

Understanding the very essence and the impact
of a groundbreaking judgement by the
European Court of Human Rights



SHORTCOMINGS IN SWITZERLAND'S CLIMATE ACTION

In a sweeping 260-page judgement, the Europe's Supreme Court for Human Rights condemned Switzerland for its inadequate climate action. In particular, European judges pointed their fingers at Switzerland's insufficient legal framework to protect citizens from the adverse effects of climate change on their life and health, as well as the lack of any specific carbon budget to quantify its GHG emissions limitations.



A MILESTONE TOWARDS CLIMATE JUSTICE

In its pioneering judgement, the Court clearly acknowledged that scientific evidence shows that climate change has a negative impact on human rights and stressed the urgency of combating climate change, given the gravity of the risks arising if the targets for reducing overall global emissions are not reached. Furthermore, the eminent judges affirmed that climate protection carries considerable weight when putting on the balance competing interests. A landmark judgement that will resonate through courts and parliaments worldwide by setting the benchmark in any future climate litigation.



IT'S IN THE NEWS!

»»» DISSEMINATING HUMAN RIGHTS VALUES AND AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Since November 2023, the Geneva Centre has been disseminating video messages for international commemorative days relevant to its mandate. Through the power of images depicting scenes of every day's life, the Geneva Centre intends to raise awareness among the general public about key human rights issues transcending national borders and affecting the daily life of a common person. You are warmly invited to discover our videos on the Geneva Centre's dedicated [webpage](#) and [YouTube](#) channel and take part in the conversation. We highly value your opinion!

- International Day of Tolerance (16 November)
- International Day for the Elimination Violence against Women (25 November)
- International Human Solidarity Day (20 December)
- International Day of Education (24 January)
- International Day of Human Fraternity (4 February)
- World Day of Social Justice (20 February)
- Zero Discrimination Day (1 March)
- International Women's Day (8 March)
- International Day to Combat Islamophobia (15 March)
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March)
- World Water Day (22 March)
- World Health Day (7 April)
- International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace (24 April)
- International Labour Day (1st May)
- International Day of Living Together in Peace (16 May)
- World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (21 May)

As during the month of June the Palais des Nations will convene the 112th International Labour Conference followed by the 56th session of the Human Rights Council with a spotlight on women's rights, the Geneva Centre decided to dedicate its world labour day video to female workers and women all around the world, while calling upon the international community to deliver on social justice, decent work and the eradication of women's poverty.

*'A culture of peace is inseparable from human rights,
respect for diversity, and fairer societies'*

UNSG Antonio Guterres

High-Level Forum on the Culture of Peace, 13 September 2019



NEW PROMISING PARTNERSHIPS

»» BRINGING CIVIL SOCIETY VOICES INTO THE HOUSE OF PARLIAMENTS

On 17 April 2024, the Geneva Centre, represented by its Director Dr Umesh Palwankar, had the privilege to meet in person with Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Held at the charming House of Parliaments, the insightful dialogue revealed many intersections between the IPU's core missions and the Geneva Centre's main areas of work.

The Geneva Centre highly appreciates the Secretary General's forward-looking spirit and open-door approach towards civil society, and his truly passionate commitment to democracy and human rights.

In this spirit, the Geneva Centre looks forward to embarking on a constructive and fruitful journey with the IPU towards the furtherance of human rights and democracy for all.

»» JORDAN'S COMMISSIONER GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VISITS THE GENEVA CENTRE

On 7 May 2024, the Geneva Centre was honoured to host H.E Jamal Al Shamayleh, Commissioner General of the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR Jordan) at the Geneva Centre's premises. The meeting underscored our ongoing commitment to strengthen collaborations in the field of human rights, aimed at their effective and robust promotion.

In the discussions, H.E Jamal Al Shamayleh, along with Dr. Umesh Palwankar, Executive Director of the Geneva Centre, and Ms. Alia Fares, Training and MENA Region Specialist at the Geneva Centre, engaged in a very fruitful dialogue on various pressing issues. The focus was on leveraging our partnership to tackle human rights challenges both regionally and globally.

The visit of H.E Jamal Al Shamayleh highlights the strong partnership between the Geneva Centre and NCHR Jordan, setting the stage for future cooperative endeavours that aim to enhance human rights practices and education through innovative solutions. In this vein, the two Centres are working on a Memorandum of Understanding with a view to formalizing their joint efforts to tackle human rights challenges more effectively.

WHAT'S NEXT?

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' HEALTH IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

Perfectly in line with the main theme of the Human Rights Council's June session, the Geneva Centre will dedicate its June panel event to 'Addressing Women's and Girls' Right to Health in Humanitarian Contexts: Overcoming Barriers to Ensure Data-driven Responses.' The in-presence side event will be organized jointly with the Gender Centre of the Geneva Graduate Institute, under the expert guidance of Professor Claire Somerville.

FULL-IMMERSION INTO GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

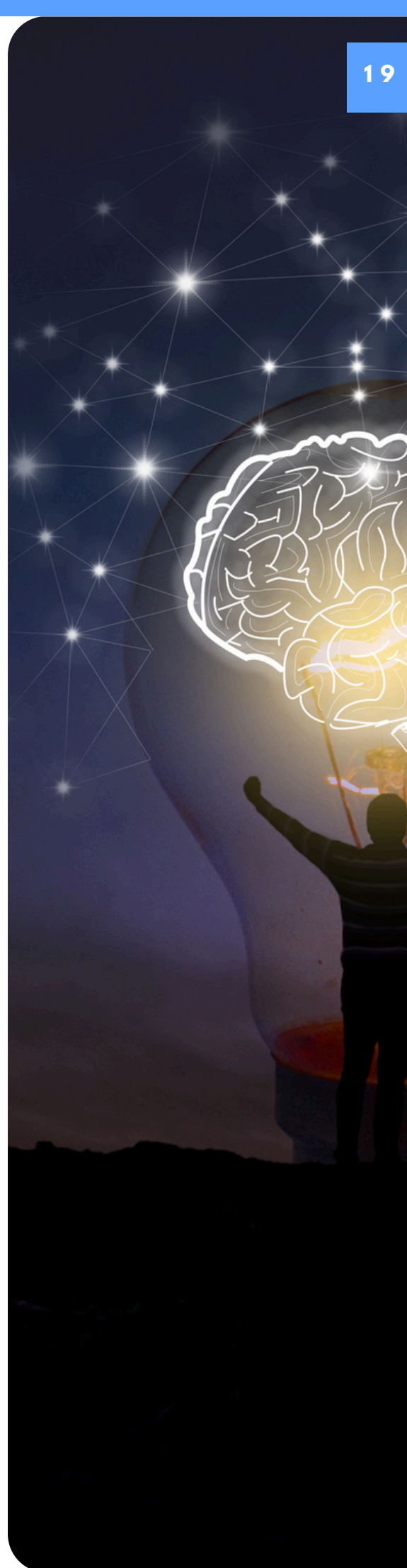
Drawing on past editions and hands-on expertise, the Geneva Centre along with Professor Joseph Marques, Director of the Global Governance program at Webster University, are delighted to launch the third edition of the Joint Summer Course.

The Joint Summer Course offers a full-immersion into the fascinating world of global governance and human rights. Held in-person in Geneva, the Course offers unique opportunities to discover the Human Rights Council and the fine mechanisms of global governance from the world's most emblematic House of the Peoples of the World, namely the iconic Palais des Nations, HQ of UN Geneva.

The Geneva Centre looks forward to welcoming a very motivated and dynamic group of participants to embark on a fruitful learning journey.

TRAINING ENCOUNTER AMONG MENA NHRIS AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS

The Geneva Centre is very glad to announce the development of an in-region, five-day training course in Arabic jointly with the UAE Permanent Committee for Human Rights. This training will take the form of a Regional Seminar aimed at equipping NHRIs from the MENA region with extensive, in-depth knowledge of the UN Human Rights Council mechanisms and working methods. The training course will be facilitated by international human rights experts with vast hand-on experience and based in Geneva.





YOUTH, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND SMALL ISLANDS AT THE FOREFRONT OF CLIMATE JUSTICE

Building upon the remarkable success of the September 2023 conference on Environment, Climate Change and Women's and Children's Rights, the Geneva Centre intends to continue raising the voices of experts and all those at the forefront of climate change ahead of the COP 29 to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024.

The major October conference will feature three roundtables focussing on empowering youth, indigenous peoples and small island countries under the common thread of promoting environmental rights and climate justice.

The Geneva Centre, from its side, has already secured the participation as panellists of Ms. Christine Adam, Director of Legal Affairs at UNFCCC. Others will follow.

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Planned to be held at the margins of the November UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, the panel will be jointly organized with the Geneva-based Webster University. Two selected Webster's students will be interning with the Geneva Centre and providing support all along the various aspects of the preparation process.

INNOVATIVE HRRA 2024

We are excited to announce the Human Rights Recognition Awards (HRRA) 2024 in our May newsletter. This year, the awards will expand its scope under the theme 'Expanding Horizons from Individuals to Institutions', celebrating not only individual achievements, but also recognizing the impactful contributions of human rights institutions, organizations, and NGOs. This strategic evolution aligns with our objective to acknowledge efforts that foster sustainable human rights advancements globally.

The HRRA 2024, set for presentation on International Human Rights Day, December 10, promises to be a significant event, furthering our commitment to a robust human rights ecosystem. The Geneva Centre passionately call upon all eligible entities dedicated to the noble cause of human rights advocacy to seize this unparalleled opportunity and submit your nominations without delay. Follow [this link](#) to learn more!



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

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