# HUMAN RIGHTS CHRONICLE

*March 2026 - n°1*

## NEW PUBLICATION BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure that the team at the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue introduces the first edition of the Human Rights Chronicle. Through this new periodic publication, the Centre aims to help bridge the gap between academic research in human rights and the professionals and practitioners who work daily to advance and protect these rights. At a time when reliable information can be difficult to navigate—despite the growing volume of high-quality research—the Centre has chosen to play a curatorial role by identifying and highlighting some of the most relevant contributions in the field. Each edition will present a curated selection of scientific articles addressing contemporary human rights challenges, with particular attention to developments affecting the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. In doing so, we aim to provide accessible entry points into current debates and emerging research shaping the global human rights agenda. The Human Rights Chronicle will also serve as a platform for academics and practitioners to share their perspectives on recent developments and pressing issues. In this first edition, we have the honour of featuring an analysis on multilateralism by our Board Member, the Rt Hon Alistair Burt. Readers will also find key updates in the news section, as well as information on events and initiatives organised by the Centre and its partners. We hope this Chronicle will strengthen dialogue between research and practice, and we warmly welcome your feedback as it evolves.

*Dr Fabrice Crégut* - Executive Director



**OPINION PIECE**

## RETHINKING MULTILATERALISM: HUMAN RIGHTS AT A DEFINING MOMENT

The United Nations is not merely navigating geopolitical turbulence; it is confronting a deeper crisis of political coherence that directly affects the global human rights system. Rising power rivalries, regional polarization, and selective engagement with international norms have not only strained multilateral institutions, but also weakened the shared commitment to universal human rights standards that underpins them.

Today's challenge is not institutional irrelevance, but normative fragmentation. When consensus on the universality of human rights erodes, multilateralism loses its moral anchor. Representation alone cannot compensate for the absence of a common political purpose.

The transition from a post–Cold War unipolar order to a more multipolar

international system need not undermine human rights protection. Pluralism can, in fact, strengthen global governance. The difficulty, however, lies in the growing divergence over how human rights norms are interpreted, prioritized, or applied. Geopolitical alignments increasingly shape voting patterns within the Human Rights Council, influence accountability debates, and complicate responses to country situations. This fragmentation is particularly visible in discussions surrounding accountability mecha-nisms, investigative mandates, and responses to gross violations. Competing narratives (sovereignty versus universality, stability versus accountability) have deepened divides. The risk is not simply paralysis, but the normalization of selective standards.

Recent initiatives outside established UN frameworks further illustrate this trend. Various ad hoc diplomatic arrangements and state- driven coalitions have emerged to address international crises beyond traditional multilateral structures. While such initiatives are often framed as more flexible or efficient, they raise important questions about legitimacy, inclusivity, and adherence to universal human rights norms. When discussions on peace, security, or

human rights occur in *fora* not anchored in established international legal frameworks, the risk of normative fragmentation increases, particularly if accountability safeguards are treated as secondary to political expediency.

Yet it would be misleading to frame the UN's role as diminished. The organization's comparative advantage has never rested on coercive authority, but on normative legitimacy. The United Nations provides a universal platform where states, civil society, and independent experts articulate, contest, and refine human rights standards. Even amid polarization, the preservation of this space remains essential.

In a fragmented world, the strategic role of the UN may lie less in enforcing consensus and more in safeguarding the architecture of accountability and dialogue. Special procedures, treaty bodies, and investigative mechanisms continue to generate documentation, maintain scrutiny, and preserve legal memory, even when political agreement proves elusive. Their existence ensures that violations are neither invisible nor uncontested.

The organization therefore stands at a crossroads. It can allow geopolitical competition and parallel diplomatic

architectures to hollow out the normative foundations of the human rights system. Or it can reaffirm the centrality of universality, impartiality, and dialogue as guiding principles of multilateral engagement. Multilateralism in this context is not a nostalgic project. It is the necessary framework through which human rights promotion, prevention, and accountability remain possible in a divided world.

As the global order becomes increasingly complex, the challenge for human rights defenders, diplomats, and scholars is to sustain the shared norms that give multilateralism its legitimacy.

## Protecting the universality of human rights requires vigilance, strategic engagement, and a commitment to inclusive dialogue.

By reinforcing these principles, the UN can continue to serve as the indispensable hub for advancing human rights, even amid the most profound geopolitical shifts.

**Rt Hon Alistair Burt -** GCHRAGD Board Chairman
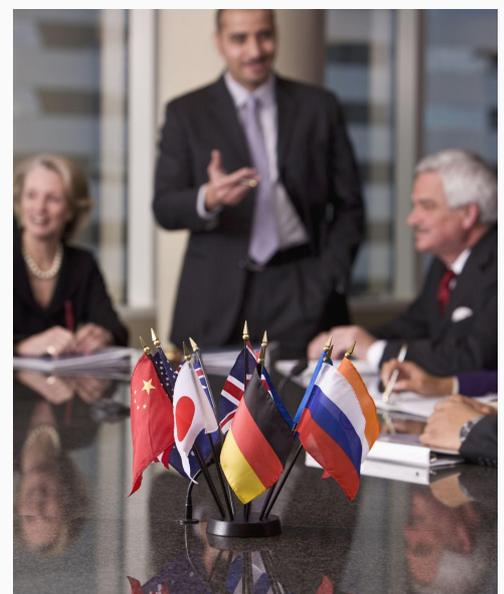
# WHAT'S NEWS?

## SECURITY COUNCIL ADOPTS GULF-BACKED RESOLUTION AMID RISING REGIONAL TENSIONS

The UN Security Council adopted a Bahrain-led resolution on 11 March 2026 condemning Iranian attacks on several Gulf states, following escalating tensions after Israeli and US strikes on Iran in late February. The resolution passed with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia), calling for an immediate cessation of attacks and compliance with international law, including civilian protection. China cited concerns that the text did not reflect the broader conflict dynamics, while a separate Russian-led draft failed. Human rights experts have urged all parties to exercise restraint and uphold international humanitarian law, emphasizing civilian protection.

## DRAFT UN RESOLUTION SEEKS TO ADVANCE ACTION ON ICJ CLIMATE OPINION

A draft UN resolution aims to translate the ICJ's 23 July 2025 advisory opinion on states' climate obligations into concrete action. The opinion clarifies duties under international law to protect the climate system and environment. It also highlights concerns about violence linked to armed actors, raising serious issues under international humanitarian and criminal law, and calls for greater international attention, civilian protection, and accountability.

## UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR WARNS OF GLOBAL RISKS FROM AI SURVEILLANCE

In early 2026, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy warned the Human Rights Council of growing risks from AI-driven surveillance technologies. The report highlights concerns over biometric identification, predictive policing, and large-scale data use, which may undermine privacy, freedom of expression, and assembly. It calls for stronger regulation, transparency, and oversight to ensure AI use aligns with international human rights standards.

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL EXTENDS IRAN INVESTIGATION MANDATES

The UN Human Rights Council has extended the mandates of its independent fact-finding mission and the Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, while calling for an urgent investigation into alleged violations linked to protests that began on 28 December 2025. The move aims to ensure continued evidence collection and documentation of abuses, with findings to be reported to the Council and the international community as part of ongoing accountability efforts.

## UN REPORT FINDS "HALLMARKS OF GENOCIDE" IN SUDAN CONFLICT

A UN report presented to the Human Rights Council on 27 February 2026 finds that violence in parts of Sudan, particularly around El Fasher in North Darfur, bears the "hallmarks of genocide." It documents killings, forced displacement, and targeted attacks against ethnic communities, raising serious concerns under international humanitarian and criminal law. The report calls for greater international attention, strengthened civilian protection, and accountability.

## AI IMPACT SUMMIT EMPHASISES INCLUSIVE AND RIGHTS-BASED GOVERNANCE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The AI Impact Summit, held in New Delhi from 16–20 February 2026, brought together governments, international organisations, and technology leaders to discuss the global governance of artificial intelligence. Under the theme "AI for All," participants emphasized inclusive rights-based development, highlighting both AI's potential in sectors like healthcare and education and concerns around inequality, access, and ethics. The summit stressed the need for accountable AI systems that respect fundamental rights and help bridge the global digital divide.

## ECTHR ADVISORY OPINION ON WHETHER A NUN'S CELL MAY QUALIFY AS A "HOME" UNDER ARTICLE 8

On 5 March 2026, the European Court of Human Rights issued an advisory opinion on whether a nun's monastic cell can qualify as a "home" under Article 8 of the Convention. The Court held that this depends on the existence of sufficient and continuous links to the premises, including whether the residence is grounded in civil law or tied to religious status. It also noted the communal nature of monastic living and the property rights of monasteries, which must be considered in assessing Article 8 protection.

# IDEOLOGICAL CAPTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

*Context and Insight on: Nina Reiners, "Hard(er) Times for Human Rights Advocacy," Ethics & International Affairs, 2025.* Read more [here](here).

In her article, "Hard(er) Times for Human Rights Advocacy" Nina Reiners offers a clear and timely analysis of the pressures shaping international human rights institutions today. Rather than arguing that multilateralism is collapsing, she shows that human rights bodies are operating in a more contested environment, marked by political tensions, strategic engagement, and limited resources.

One of her key points is that the challenge is not only external: it is not just about states rejecting human rights norms, but also attempts to reinterpret those norms from within institutions themselves. Reiners highlights the United Nations Human Rights Council as a central space where these tensions play out. Debates on issues such as sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), minority rights, and non-discrimination show a clear shift in how some states engage with the system.

Rather than stepping away from multilateralism, these states are increasingly participating in order to influence it from the inside. They seek to reshape human rights norms along more sovereignty-focused or culturally conservative lines. This is a more subtle approach than open opposition, but potentially just as impactful.

This creates difficult trade-offs. Security considerations, for example, can sometimes come into tension with established human rights protections. As a result, human rights institutions are being asked to operate in increasingly complex and politically sensitive environments.



A good example is the recognition of the right to water.

Although it is not explicitly stated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it was later clarified through General Comment No. 15 (2002).

This development did not happen through formal state negotiations alone. It was the result of collaboration between committee members, legal experts, and organizations such as the World Health Organization.

This portrayal of human rights treaties as "living instruments" underscores both adaptability and fragility.

Informal coalitions can serve as engines of progressive interpretation, but they also reveal how much of norm development depends on expert configuration and institutional access.

## Expanding Pressures on Human Rights

At the same time, broader global challenges are adding pressure to the system. Issues such as climate change and counter-terrorism are becoming more central in international debates, often intersecting with human rights concerns.

## Innovation Through Informal Coalitions

One of the most interesting aspects of Reiners' research is her focus on transnational lawmaking coalitions (TLCs). These informal networks, composed of independent experts, academics, and civil society actors, operate within formal UN structures yet retain a degree of procedural flexibility.

## The Risk of Ideological and Corporate Capture

Reiners does not romanticize these dynamics. The same institutional openness that allows innovation can enable regression. Strategic nominations of experts aligned with more restrictive interpretations of rights can shift interpretative trajectories.

Some governments, she notes, have adopted increasingly assertive roles in shaping debates, often promoting sovereignty-based readings of international law and building coalitions to reinforce them.

She also points to the growing role of the private sector. Budgetary constraints have pushed UN bodies toward deeper engagement with public-private partnerships. Large law firms, through pro bono initiatives, now participate in human rights processes, sometimes supporting treaty body submissions or contributing expertise to environmental and social governance frameworks.

Reiners invites readers to consider a delicate balance: while such engagement can provide technical capacity and global reach, it also raises structural questions. Law firms operate within profit-driven models and may represent corporate clients whose interests diverge from human rights objectives. The potential for conflicts of interest, reputational calculations, or selective withdrawal from sensitive cases introduces new vulnerabilities into the governance ecosystem.

More broadly, Reiners identifies a trend toward the "marketization" of advocacy. In this context, access to international processes may depend more on resources and capacity. Grassroots actors, in particular, may find it harder to compete with well-funded organizations.

## A System at a Crossroads

Reiners' research ultimately presents a nuanced portrait of a human rights system neither collapsing nor stable, but deeply contested. Informal coalitions can push normative boundaries forward; they can also serve as vehicles for ideological retrenchment. Private partnerships can strengthen institutional capacity; they can also distort priorities.

What makes her contribution particularly relevant for observers of the Human Rights Council and treaty body system is the reminder that institutional design alone does not determine outcomes.

Much depends on who participates, how alliances are formed, and which interpretative frames gain traction.

**In this context, the future of human rights advocacy may depend less on formal withdrawals from the system and more on what happens within it – through gradual shifts, reinterpretations, and strategic engagement.**

# INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSIVE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

*Curated Insights on: Prof. Joel Gyorgy and Amb. György Busztin "Interfaith Dialogue: Seeking Common Ground and Building Trust", Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, 2025.* Read more here.

Each February, World Interfaith Harmony Week reminds the international community of the importance of coexistence. But beyond these symbolic moments, Gyorgy and Busztin show that interfaith dialogue can play a much more practical role. In their analysis, dialogue is not just a gesture of goodwill—it can be a concrete tool for more inclusive governance.

## Bridging the Legitimacy Gap

At a time when multilateral institutions face growing criticism and societies are becoming more polarized, interfaith dialogue helps address an important gap. While diplomacy usually takes place between states, social cohesion depends on relationships within communities.

Structured dialogue can help bridge this divide, especially in contexts where there is mistrust between groups, exclusion of religious minorities, or narratives that justify discrimination or violence.

Interfaith initiatives are often most useful where formal institutions struggle. By bringing together religious leaders, policymakers, and civil society actors, they create spaces for exchange that are built not only on rules, but also on trust. Examples from national and international platforms show that sustained dialogue can help address issues such as hate speech, extremism, and social exclusion before they escalate.

## The Importance of Design

One of the key points in the study is that dialogue does not automatically lead to positive outcomes. Its impact depends on how it is designed. When it is inclusive and well-structured, dialogue can amplify marginalized voices, encourage mutual understanding, and strengthen commitments to equality and non-discrimination. But if certain groups, such as women, youth, or minority communities, are excluded, dialogue risks reinforcing existing power imbalances.

## A Preventive Tool

Interfaith dialogue also has an important preventive role. In fragile or post-conflict settings, creating spaces for communication across cultural and religious divides can help ease tensions before they turn into open conflict. In this way, dialogue complements formal mechanisms such as accountability processes and the rule of law. It works earlier in the process, by addressing misunderstandings and grievances at their source.
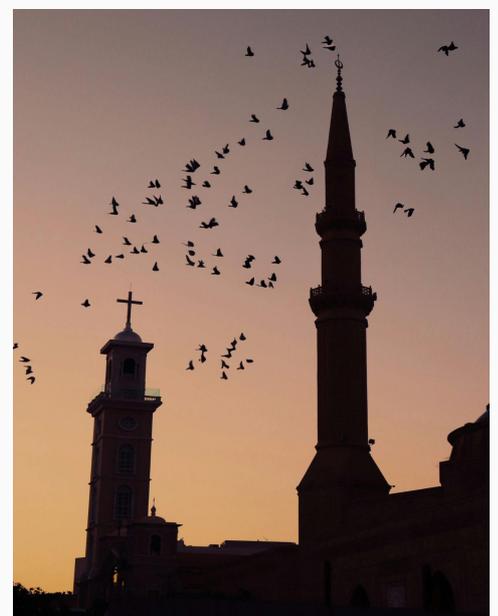
## Rethinking Governance

More broadly, Gyorgy and Busztin invite us to rethink what governance means in today's world. In a context of growing identity-based tensions, the strength of human rights norms depends not only on laws and institutions, but also on trust within societies. Interfaith dialogue highlights this reality. It shows that inclusive governance is not only about formal structures, but also about relationships between people and communities.

## Dialogue as Strategic Investment

Their work ultimately reframes dialogue not as a soft diplomatic gesture, but as a strategic investment in social resilience.

**Structured interfaith engagement offers a quiet but powerful tool, one that connects human rights principles with lived community realities.**

# TECHNOLOGY AND CLIMATE DISASTERS: INNOVATION AT THE SERVICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*Research Highlights on: Joe Y. Battikh, "How Technology is Reshaping Disaster Response in the Era of Climate Change", Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, 2025. Read more* [here](here).

When floods engulf entire regions or wildfires advance faster than evacuation orders, the difference between life and death often depends on minutes. In an era of accelerating climate change, disaster response is no longer only about humanitarian logistics: it is increasingly about data, connectivity, and predictive capacity.

## Technology as Governance Infrastructure

In his study, Joe Y. Battikh explores how technology is changing the way disasters are managed. Rather than treating it as a support tool, he shows that it is becoming a central part of preparedness and response, especially in climate-vulnerable regions. Climate-related disasters disproportionately affect communities already exposed to structural inequalities. As extreme weather events intensify, the rights to life, housing, food, water, health, and development are placed under severe strain. Battikh's analysis situates technological innovation within this human rights framework: early warning systems, satellite monitoring, artificial intelligence, and geospatial mapping are not simply technical upgrades, they are mechanisms that can strengthen states' capacity to meet their protection obligations.

## The Acceleration of Response

One of the clearest changes high-lighted in the research is the speed of response. Satellite images can now assess damage within hours. AI models can predict floods before they happen.

Mapping tools help responders send aid more quickly and to the right places.

Recent examples illustrate this shift. During the 2024 floods in Kenya, the use of machine learning, drones, and targeted SMS alerts helped improve coordination and deliver assistance more efficiently. After Storm Daniel in Libya in 2023, AI tools also helped speed up damage assessments and humanitarian response.

## The Rise of "Technological Humanitarianism"

Battikh also highlights the rise of what has been termed "technological humanitarianism." Private-sector actors, particularly in the ICT sector, are increasingly embedded in disaster response efforts. Telecommunications companies restore connectivity in crisis zones, while technology firms develop forecasting systems and cloud-based coordination tools. These partnerships can bring valuable expertise and resources, especially where public systems are underfunded.

## The Limits of Innovation

At the same time, the picture is not entirely positive. A major challenge remains: the people most affected by climate disasters are often those with the least access to digital tools.

Early warning systems only work if people have access to phones, internet, and reliable networks. More advanced technologies, such as AI, also depend on strong data governance to protect privacy and

avoid bias. This raises a broader governance question. Can technological innovation enhance human rights protection without deepening inequality? Battikh suggests that the answer depends less on the tools themselves and more on how they are used. Without proper safeguards, technology can reinforce existing gaps instead of reducing them.

## Climate Justice Meets Digital Governance

For multilateral actors and Geneva-based institutions, the implications are significant. Disaster response is no longer solely a humanitarian issue; it is a domain where climate justice, digital governance, and human rights intersect. Integrating technological tools within a rights-based framework requires attention to inclusivity, non-discrimination, and equitable access.Ultimately, the research invites reflection on the evolving architecture of climate resilience. Innovation can enhance preparedness and save lives. But its legitimacy (and its long-term effectiveness) depends on whether it remains anchored in human dignity and equality.

**As climate risks intensify, governance systems must evolve to ensure that innovation strengthens preparedness, accountability, and protection for affected communities.**

# CLIMATE CRISIS, HUMAN MOBILITY, AND SECURITY IN THE MENA REGION

*Context and Insight on: Mathbout, S., Boustras, G., Papazoglou, P., Martin-Vide, J., & Lopez-Bustins, J. A., "Climate Crisis, Human Mobility and Security Challenges in the MENA Region: Implications for Sustainable Development and Regional Stability," Sustainable Development, 2026.*

*Read more [here](#).*

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is often described through its extremes: droughts, economic fragility, and ongoing conflicts. But what actually drives people to leave their homes?

Mathbout and colleagues show that migration is rarely caused by a single factor. Instead, it usually happens when several pressures come together—climate stress, political instability, and economic hardship. Syria's 2006–2010 drought is a good example. Crops failed and rural livelihoods collapsed, but large-scale displacement only followed when conflict broke out and the economy could no longer absorb the shock.

## Understanding a Complex Reality

To better understand these dynamics, the authors use a machine-learning tool called a Random Forest Model (RFM). Unlike more traditional approaches, this method can capture how different factors interact with each other.

Their findings are clear: migration does not follow a simple pattern. Economic conditions, levels of violence, and environmental stress all play a role and their effects often reinforce each other.

The model also performs much better than traditional methods in predicting asylum applications to Europe. This shows that looking at these factors together gives a more accurate picture of migration pressures.



## Conflict as Catalyst, Climate as Multiplier

One of the key insights of the study is that climate change alone does not usually trigger migration. Instead, it makes existing problems worse.

For example, even a small increase in conflict-related deaths can lead to a sharp rise in displacement. Droughts and water shortages add pressure, but mainly in places where institutions and economies are already weak.

It intensifies existing vulnerabilities rather than creating them on its own.

Gender dynamics also matter. Higher female-to-male ratios correlate with greater displacement, reflecting how conflict environments disproportionately expose women and girls to insecurity and limited economic opportunities. These findings underscore that mobility is shaped not only by geography, but by social structure.

## After the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring reshaped the map of migration. Distance to Europe mattered less as crises intensified, pushing Syrians, Iraqis, and others on journeys to Germany, Sweden, and Austria. Environmental stress became a threat multiplier, not a direct cause. Political, economic, and climatic forces converge in ways that traditional models struggle to capture, but the RFM can.

## Migration as a Governance Indicator

The study encourages us to look at migration differently. Rather than seeing it only as a humanitarian or border issue, it can also be understood as a sign of deeper governance challenges. Displacement often reflects a combination of factors: limited climate adaptation, weak economic systems, and unresolved conflicts. When these pressures build up, migration becomes more likely.

This perspective shifts the focus from reacting to migration to addressing its root causes.

## Climate Mobility in the Era of Compound Risk

The MENA region illustrates a broader global transformation: crises are no longer singular. Climate change interacts with governance fragility, demographic pressures, and geopolitical instability. Migration patterns increasingly reflect compound risk environments rather than isolated shocks.

This complexity challenges simplistic narratives of "climate refugees." Environmental stress rarely operates in isolation. By demonstrating how climate variables interact with conflict and economic decline, Mathbout et al. caution against reductionist framings and advocate for integrated policy responses.

## Beyond Humanitarian Response

For policymakers, the message is clear: humanitarian responses alone are insufficient. Integrated strategies are essential: climate adaptation, agricultural resilience, conflict mitigation, economic inclusion, and gender-sensitive protections must all work together.

For researchers, the study underscores the power of high-dimensional, nonlinear modelling while reminding us that predictive insight is not causal certainty. Subnational data, probabilistic ensembles, and household-level analysis could reveal even more about the tipping points that spark migration.

## Looking Ahead

Ultimately, this research offers a clearer way of thinking about human mobility in a changing climate. Migration is not just about movement—it reflects the pressures people face and the limits of the systems around them.

**In an era of accelerating environmental change, anticipating displacement is not simply about forecasting flows; it is about strengthening resilience before mobility becomes the only remaining option.**

# UNLOCKING AI POTENTIAL IN MENA: GOVERNANCE, COMPETITIVENESS, AND INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

*Curated Insights on: Dr. Fadi Salem, Sarah Saher, and Salma Alkhoudi, "Bridging the AI Divide: Inclusive Governance Innovation & Competitiveness in the MENA Region" Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, 2025. Read more here.*



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing economies, societies, and governance worldwide. In the MENA region, however adoption is uneven. Gulf states such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia invest heavily in infrastructure, talent, and public-private partnerships, while other countries face fragmented regulations, limited digital capacity, and institutional challenges. This gap affects economic growth, social development and the region's ability to influence global AI governance.

AI offers clear benefits. In healthcare, education, and urban planning, AI tools can improve decision-making, efficiency, and service delivery. At the same time, AI comes with real risks: algorithmic bias, data privacy concerns, job displacement, and misuse of AI for misinformation. Without clear governance, these risks can undermine the region's potential and widen existing inequalities.

## The Role of Governance

The study highlights the importance of inclusive and transparent governance. Countries that provide clear regulations, invest in education, and support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can harness AI responsibly. This drives innovation and ensures that benefits are shared broadly, rather than concentrated among a few advanced states or large corporations. Cultural and language considerations, such as Arabic language AI, are key to making these technologies accessible and equitable.

## Building an Inclusive Ecosystem

AI can be a strategic opportunity. By combining governance clarity, talent development, and support for startups and SMEs, MENA countries can move from simply using AI to actively shaping global AI standards. When managed responsibly, AI becomes a tool for inclusive innovation, sustainable development, and stronger human-centered governance.

## From Users to Leaders

The authors stress that MENA countries, by using AI, can help shape its rules and standards globally. By combining clear policies, skills development, and support for local businesses, the region can move from following global trends to setting them.

**When used responsibly, AI can drive inclusive innovation, support sustainable development, and ensure technology works for people, not just profits.**

# DIGITAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE LEGITIMACY OF MULTILATERALISM

*Research Highlights on: Florian Cafiero, Jean-Philippe Cointet & Grégoire Mallard, "Digital Accountability Can Re-Legitimate Multilateralism", 2025.* Read more [here](#)

Multilateralism today faces a growing crisis of legitimacy. Scepticism comes both from states, through criticism or withdrawal from international organizations, and from citizens who often see global governance as distant, opaque, and insufficiently democratic.

In this context, rebuilding public trust requires concrete steps. Multilateral institutions must make their decision-making processes clearer and easier to understand. Cafiero and colleagues argue that strengthening digital accountability can help rebuild trust and reinforce multilateral cooperation.

## Secrecy and Its Limits

The article highlights the long-standing tension between diplomatic discretion and public accountability. Traditionally, a degree of secrecy has been considered necessary in diplomacy. Confidential negotiations allow states to test ideas, explore compromises, and discuss sensitive issues without immediate political pressure.

However, this discretion often extends further than necessary. When negotiations remain opaque long after they have ended, it becomes difficult to understand how agreements were reached. This lack of transparency can fuel speculation, misinformation, and mistrust.

As a result, citizens may perceive multilateral governance as remote and unaccountable. In an age of digital communication and instant information flows, such opacity no longer protects institutions, it weakens their credibility.

## From Opacity to Traceability

Digital accountability does not mean exposing negotiations while they are taking place. Instead, it involves releasing diplomatic records in a structured and timely way once negotiations have concluded.

Documents such as draft texts, agendas, and meeting minutes can help make negotiations easier to understand and study. Citizens, researchers, and journalists can follow how discussions evolved, how compromises were reached, and how specific language emerged in final agreements. Making this process traceable strengthens institutional memory and encourages informed public debate.

## Practical Pathways to Reform

The article outlines several practical measures that could strengthen digital accountability:

*Time-bound release*
Agendas, non-sensitive minutes, and draft texts could typically be published within 6–12 months, with longer delays considered only for security concerns.

*Metadata standards*
 Documents would benefit from consistent identifiers, dates, sources, language tags, and links to related materials, with reasons noted when release isn't possible.

*Multilingual care*
Translations should be aligned, with key terminology clarified, especially where wording may vary across languages.

*Cross-venue linkage*
Related documents across institutions and negotiation platforms could be connected to reflect negotiations unfolding across multiple forums.

## Transparency Without Paralysis

A common concern is that increased transparency could make negotiations more difficult. Cafiero and colleagues challenge this assumption. Careful systems for sharing information let negotiators stay flexible while making the process clear afterward.

In fact, predictable transparency rules may strengthen credibility. When negotiators know that records will eventually become public, there is greater incentive to present clear arguments and pursue well-founded compromises.

## Re-Legitimizing Multilateral Governance

Ultimately, the study suggests that legitimacy is built through processes. Citizens are more likely to trust international institutions when they can understand how decisions are made.

At a time when scepticism toward global governance is growing, digital accountability offers a practical way forward. By making negotiation processes more traceable and understandable, multilateral institutions can demonstrate that diplomacy is neither arbitrary nor detached, but structured, reasoned, and accountable.

**The future legitimacy of multilateralism may therefore depend not only on the agreements it produces, but also on the transparency of the processes that lead to them.**

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# ABOUT THE GENEVA CENTRE: LOOKING AHEAD

The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue is an independent think tank dedicated to advancing research, dialogue, and international cooperation on human rights, with a particular focus on developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

In recent months, the Centre has been engaged in a process of internal strategic reflection aimed at strengthening its role as a platform connecting academic research, policy discussions, and practical action.

The launch of the *Human Rights Chronicle* is part of this evolving vision to enhance knowledge-sharing and foster informed dialogue on pressing global issues.

## Stay connected!

As this process unfolds, the Geneva Centre will introduce new initiatives and projects in the months ahead. Readers interested in our work are encouraged to stay engaged and follow our activities through our website and social media channels. We look forward to sharing further developments as we continue to build new ideas, partnerships and platforms for dialogue.

# IMPORTANT EVENTS

## War In The Middle East: What Future For The Global Order?
*1 April, 12:30–14:00 | Geneva*

The Graduate Institute will host a lunch briefing examining the legal, political, geopolitical, and nuclear implications of the ongoing war in the Middle East and its impact on the evolving international order.

## Building AI Literacy in Parliaments
*1 April, 15:00–16:00 | Online*

This webinar, part of the IPU's Transforming Parliaments series, will explore how MPs and parliamentary staff can develop AI literacy to support effective oversight, legislation, and implementation.

## tUrn14 Climate Crisis Awareness and Action Week
*20–25 April | Online*

The upcoming tUrn14 Climate Crisis Awareness and Action Week will bring together scholars, practitioners, and activists for an interdisciplinary and intercultural exploration of global climate, ecological, and social challenges.

## Cyber Stability Conference 2026
*4–5 May | Geneva & Online*

The UNIDIR conference will bring together experts from government, industry, academia, and civil society to explore cyber governance in an era of rapid technological change.

## Human Rights and the Environment: HRC62 Activities
*28 May, 10:00–11:00 | Geneva & Online*

Ahead of the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC62), the Geneva Environment Network and partners will hold an information-sharing session to highlight environment-related activities, events, and publications taking place during the Council's session.