

International Conference

HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING RELOADED: INCLUSIVENESS, EFFECTIVENESS, AND TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MACHINERY

University of Padova, 19 -20 October 2026



UNIVERSITÀ DI PADOVA
Centro di Ateneo
per i Diritti umani
"Antonio Papisa"

UNIVERSITÀ DI PADOVA
Dipartimento
di Scienze Politiche, Giuridiche
e Studi Internazionali - SPGI

the
covenants at 60

a commitment
to human dignity



CONCEPT NOTE

2026 is a year of important anniversaries for the global human rights community. It marks sixty years from the adoption (and fifty from the entry into force) of the two 1966 International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and 20 years from the adoption of the International Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and on Enforced Disappearances, from the entry into force of the OPCAT and from the establishment of the UN Human Rights Council. Such a wealth of important commemorations, however, is taking place in a framework of continuous and generalised attack on basic human rights in every corner of an increasingly warmongering world as well as on the institutions and norms of multilateralism, on which the global human rights movement has built its legitimisation and support. International law is delegitimised and cast aside by the great powers and their allies, there is a growing state divestment in the UN and the international human rights system, UN organisms are bypassed, and its experts are discredited, even sanctioned. In addition, there is a return of a top down 'primacy' in decision-making at the national level, which is taking the form of a complete neglect of the contribution of civil society, whose space of action has been increasingly shrunk nationally to transnationally over the last decade.

This trend within international political arenas appears to be facilitating a reconfiguration of the composition of civil society actors engaged in agenda-setting and decision-making processes. The presence of actors whose interests seem to diverge from the genuine strengthening of mechanisms of legitimacy and the effective realization of human rights (anti-preneurs) is now more mainstream, exerting discernible influence in certain domains, for example, that of women's rights.

From this standpoint, the referred milestones offer a critical juncture and a much needed stimulus a) to assess whether, how and to what extent the development of human rights law and its international safeguarding and monitoring mechanisms and procedures have materialized into tangible protections for all, particularly vulnerable and marginalised communities, and b) to explore and discuss what ideas and practices could be advanced, at the sub-national, national, transnational and global levels, to make this protection regime more inclusive, effective and transformative. Digging into this framework, this international research conference aims to take stock of the international human rights machinery's evolution and impact, as well as to discuss its possible transformations ahead.

On one side, it will examine the effectiveness of existing monitoring mechanisms that have a bearing on human rights protection, including treaty bodies (especially the ICCPR, ICESCR, CED and CRPD), the Human Rights Council's mechanisms, and the International Criminal Court, whose work is severely impeded by the above outlined trends. It will critically assess the effectiveness of different monitoring procedures, reporting mechanisms, and remedial pathways in a period of the persisting liquidity crisis and attempts at reforming and rationalising the system, which risk further weakening it. A specific focus will be devoted to how and to what extent these mechanisms adequately serve diverse populations, including persons with disabilities, persons who suffered enforced disappearances and torture and other groups facing situations of vulnerability and marginalisation, and to the role and composition of transnational civil society organisations, including formal and informal participation channels.

On the other side, the Conference will explore how current human rights machinery contributions can be further empowered, while being rationalised, to face the shrinking moral and practical investments of many states, especially in the Global North, in their work and authority. It expects to address a number of possible areas of investment including the role and potential of youth and of hybrid social movements on current channels of civil society participations, the added value of transformative human rights education, the contribution of public authorities, including local governments and National Human Rights Institutions, and the potential and risks of new technologies and AI in assessing and monitoring human rights policy performance.

In this way, the conference will not be merely retrospection or commemoration of historical milestones, but a strategic dialogue among scholars, independent experts, international officers, civil society representatives and students on reloading international human rights monitoring for contemporary challenges and future aspirations in a reinvigorated and more inclusive and effective multilateral architecture.

PROGRAMME

Monday, 19th October 2026

9:30-10:00 Archivio Antico, Palazzo del Bo

Opening remarks

Marco Mascia, President of Human Rights Centre “A. Papisca”, Unesco Chair “Human Rights, Democracy and Peace”, University of Padova

Sara Pennicino, Director of the MA Degree in Human Rights and Multi-level Governance, University of Padova

Pietro de Perini, Coordinator of the Conference’s Scientific Committee, Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padova

10:00-12:30 Archivio Antico, Palazzo del Bo

Plenary Session

Chair and short introduction

Gerd Oberleitner, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security, University of Graz

Speakers

Alison Brysk, University of California, Santa Barbara

Dianah Msipa, University of Pretoria (video-conference)

Valentina Carraro, University of Leiden

12:30-14:00 Basilica, Palazzo del Bo
Conference Lunch

14:30-16:00 Human Rights Centre,
Via Beato Pellegrino, 34

Parallel Research Panels, track A

PANEL 1A

New technologies and participation in human rights monitoring - track A

Chairs: **Peter Johansson**, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg; **Damien Short**, Human Rights Consortium, School of Advanced Study, University of London

Speakers

Carrie McAlinden, independent researcher

Locating the human in human rights monitoring: Evidence and authority after Gaza

Clelia Vettori, Human Rights Centre “Antonio Papisca”, University of Padova

Resisting the Brave New World: The Contribution of Open Verification Investigative Work to Human Rights Monitoring in Palestine

Alina Gentimir, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University
Beyond Legitimacy: Institutional Resilience as the New Paradigm for International Criminal Justice

Sara Comba, University of Padova; **Silvia Juliana Vega Santa**, University of Padova

Can OSINT Spatio-Temporal Sequencing Close the Accountability Gap Under the Rome Statute? Lessons and Open Questions from a Law Clinic Experience

Bruno Roque-Younes, University of the Joinville Region – Univille;

Raquel Alvarenga Sena Venera, University of the Joinville Region – Univille

Listening Through Algorithms: Children’s Digital Testimonies and Human Rights Monitoring in Gaza

PANEL 2A

The Contribution of New Social Movements and Youth Activism to Human Rights Monitoring and the 2050 Agenda

Chairs: **Magdalena Ratajczak**, **Marta Ryniejska-Kieldanowicz**, Institute of International Studies, University of Wrocław

Speakers

Francesco Tommasi, Università degli Studi di Milano - UniMi

Violence and (dis)human rights: Toward the right of grievability and nonviolent public-a(c)tions

Albright Alitsi, Lola Crotchet Organization

Feminist Leadership and Youth Activism in Reimagining Human Rights Monitoring

John Duncan, School of Advanced Studies, University of London

From Lemkin to Life-making: Bridging Critical Genocide Studies and Social Reproduction Theory

Katarina Velkov, University of Padova

Youth-led climate litigation and human rights monitoring

Christine D Nanteza, SET Europe; **Vanesa Cugnetto**, SET Europe; **Anna Gruber**, Collective Aid

The Impact of Youth-Led Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy in the European Union: Case studies from Collective Aid and SET Europe

PANEL 3A

Monitoring human rights in difficult times: CSO and community innovations for reporting human rights violations

Chair: **Piergiuseppe Parisi**, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York

Speakers

Ana Carolina Marques Castiglio, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

Co-Constructing Human Rights Monitoring: Civil Society and the Inter-American Human Rights System in Brazil

Ilgar Seyidov, Atilim University; **Asuman Ozgur Keysan**, Atilim University; **Beris Artan Ozoran**, Ankara University

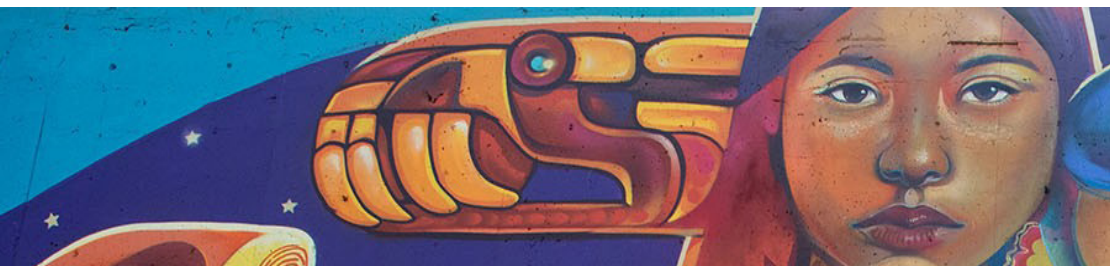
Organizational Capacity as a Condition of Civic Action: Funding, Communication and Rights Advocacy in Turkey

Mahmoud Mwafi, Institute of Arab Research and Studies

Gaza as a Stress Test for International Human Rights Monitoring: Community Knowledge, Documentation, and the Monitoring-Protection Gap

Houjeij Bassema, Architect & Founder/CEO, Arcadia World – Engineering & Design Consultancy

Inclusive Urban Planning as a Tool for Advancing Human Rights: Accessibility, Basic Services and Equal Access to Opportunity



PANEL 4A

Anti-Gender Norm Antipreneurs: Institutional Backlash and the Future of Women's Rights Monitoring

Chair: **Anh Nguyen**, Human Rights Centre
"Antonio Papisca", University of Padova

Speakers

Elina Rancane, University of Latvia

*When 'Gender' Becomes the Problem:
Anti-Gender Mobilisation and the Institutional
Monitoring of Women's Rights in Latvia*

Carlos Eduardo Barzotto, University of
Western Ontario

*Monitoring the Institutionalization of
Exclusionary Parental Rights Rhetoric in
Anti-Gender Brazilian Educational Policies at
the State Level (2015–2025)*

Xinyao Li, Leiden University

*"Agreed Language" in the UN Human Rights
Council: Reframing Women's Rights*

Stacy Ogembo, Technical University of
Darmstadt

*Making Standards Work? Compliance with
CEDAW Committee Recommendations on
Gender-Based Violence in Namibia and
South Africa*

Ghizlane Azendour, Ibn Tofail University

*When Rights Mean Different Things:
Anti-Gender Norm Contestation and Insti-
tutional Mediation in the Universal Periodic
Review*

16:45-18:15 Human Rights Centre,
via Beato Pellegrino, 34

Parallel Research Panels, track B

PANEL 1B

New technologies and participation in human rights monitoring - track B

Chairs: **Peter Johansson**, School of Global
Studies, University of Gothenburg, **Damien
Short**, Human Rights Consortium, School of
Advanced Study, University of London

Speakers

Dana Shdeed, School of Advanced Study,
University of London

*Governing AI for Human Rights Monitoring:
Towards Mission Coherence in AI Adoption
by NGOs*

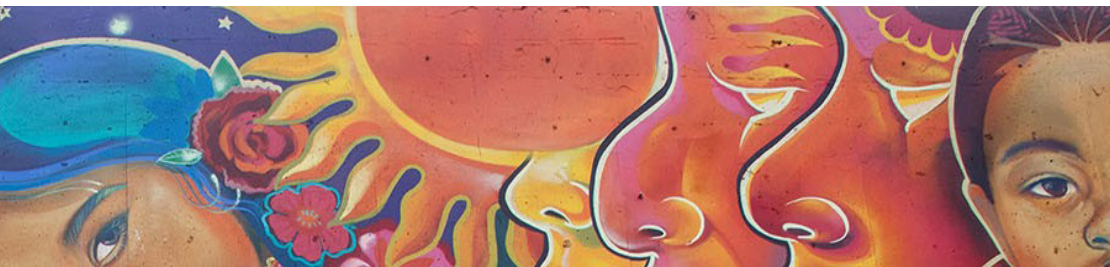
Doug Specht, University of Westminster

*Only What Is Recorded Can Be Rebuilt: algo-
rithmic visibility, participatory counter-map-
ping and the right to be seen in Ukraine*

Abraham Ename Minko, Pan African Univer-
sity Institute of Governance, Humanities and
Social Sciences, University of Yaoundé II

*From Witnesses to Stakeholders: Digital Par-
ticipation, Algorithmic Legitimacy, and the
Future of Community-Led Human Rights Mo-
nitoring in Africa*

Martin Crook, University of the West of England
*New Technologies for Human Rights Monito-
ring: Illuminating or mystifying?*



PANEL 2B

UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies reform in the context of the UN80 process: liquidity or political crisis?

Chair: **Rossella De Falco**, University of Antwerp, Law and Development Research Group

Speakers

Anna Cichecka, University of Wrocław

The African Group's Perspective on the Global Human Rights System in Times of Crisis

Diego Ernesto Sanchez Borjas, Pompeu Fabra University

The legal value of UNTB pronouncements for the interpretation of International Human Rights Treaties at domestic level: An opportunity in the middle of a crisis?

Azar Shahabiamiri, University of Naples Federico II

Gender-sensitive monitoring of the right to adequate food: gaps and opportunities for reform in the UN human rights treaty body system

Katarzyna Widlas-Klimsiak, Poznan Human Rights Centre - Institute of Legal Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences

The CRPD Committee and Mental Health Law: Rethinking Effectiveness of Human Rights Monitoring

Aristi Volou, City Law School, University of London

From Views to Compliance: Rethinking CESC Follow-Up through Spain's Housing Rights Cases

PANEL 3B

Monitoring human rights in difficult times: Indigenous peoples' perspectives on reporting human rights violations

Chair: **Corinne Lennox**, Human Rights Consortium, School of Advanced Study, University of London

Speakers

María Victoria Bravi, National University of Rosario

The Q'eqchi' Mayan language as a human rights monitor: the Jalok U' Collective in the Sepur Zarco case, Guatemala

Valentina Viviani, Unione Internazionale per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile - UNISOS

New technologies and participation in human rights monitoring

The Digital Defense of Wallmapu: Technological tools and participatory activism

Sarah Capes, School of Advanced Study, University of London

Human Rights Unmonitored: Witnessing and Reporting in the Absence of Human Rights Architecture at UNFCCC

Estefany Rocha Monteiro, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights; **Marianne Barreto Fonseca Antunes de Oliveira**, Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro

Provenance and Authority in UN Human Rights Monitoring: Epistemic Traceability and the Institutional Translation of Indigenous Knowledge

Side event

On the afternoon of October 19, self-managed groups of students from the MA Degree Programme in Human Rights and Multi-level Governance (HRG) will hold a booth to promote their activities to participants. The groups include the Student Engagement Team (SET), the Advocacy Hub and the Latin-American Collective.

PANEL 4B

The contribution of National Human Rights Institutions and local action to the UN Human Rights System

Chair: **Gerd Oberleitner**, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security, University of Graz

Speakers

Stefano Montanari, independent researcher
Bridging the Implementation Gap: NHRIs as Normative Intermediaries of Public Accountability

Eve Papastamouli, independent researcher
National Human Rights Institutions as regulators monitoring human rights compliance by business enterprises: The Australian Human Rights Commission as the positive duty regulator

Renato Ongania, University of Bologna
From the Italian Comune to the United Nations: Towards a Framework for Local Minority-Rights Monitoring

Alain-Guy Sipowo, University of Montreal
Regionalised Universal Jurisdiction as an Infrastructure of Resilience for the International Criminal Court: Lessons from the African Union Model Law

Molefhi Phorego, Stellenbosch University
The Role of Human Rights Commissions in Monitoring the Right to Health: Perspectives From Botswana

Side event

An afternoon special activity will allow participants to experience a hands-on introduction to selected articles of the **International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. Participants will engage in a practical exercise aimed at “deconstructing” these articles, illustrating the gap between the formal provisions of a convention and its actual implementation.

21:00 Sala dei Giganti, Piazza Capitaniato, 5

Concert "Cantare l'umano"

In honor of the guests at the International Conference

Musical program

Music by Bowie, Simon, Dylan, Jackson, and others;

Concentus Musicus Patavinus Chamber Choir; Gaudeamus Choir of Concentus Musicus Patavinus; Mortalisatis Choir; Antonio Bortolami, piano; Ignacio Vazzoler, conductor

Tuesday, 20th October 2026

09:30-12:00 Aula Nievo, Palazzo Bo

Closing Plenary Roundtable

Human Rights Monitoring Reloaded – Challenges and Ideas from a Practitioner's Viewpoint

Chairs: **Pietro de Perini**, Coordinator of the Conference's Scientific Committee, Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padova; **Clelia Vettori**, Human Rights Centre 'Antonio Papisca', University of Padova

Speakers

Michael Windfuhr, UN Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and German Institute for Human Rights

Maja Spanu, ARIADNE - European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights (video-conference)

Mohamed Kheir, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - UPR branch

Fabiana Leibl, International Service for Human Rights

Desirée Campagna, PTSClas

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Rossella De Falco, Law & Development Research Group, Faculty of Law, University of Antwerp; **Paola Degani**, Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padova; **Pietro de Perini**, Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies, University of Padova; **Paolo De Stefani**, Human Rights Centre, University of Padova; **Lisa Heschl**, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security, University of Graz; **Peter Johansson**, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg; **Corinne Lennox**, Human Rights Consortium, School of Advanced Studies, University of London; **Marco Mascia**, Human Rights Centre, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, University of Padova; **Anh Nguyen**, Human Rights Centre, University of Padova; **Orla Ní Cheallacháin**, Global Campus of Human Rights; **Gerd Oberleitner**, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security, University of Graz; **Piergiuseppe Parisi**, Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York; **Magdalena Ratajczak**, Institute of International Studies, University of Wrocław, Poland; **Marta Ryniejska-Kieldanowicz**, University of Wrocław, Poland; **Damien Short**, Human Rights Consortium, School of Advanced Studies, University of London.

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Technical Director: **Elvira Pedone**. Staff: **Alessia Barbato**, **Anna Cicala**, **Donatella Daniel**, **Eleonora De Tuoni**, **Sofia Frascchetti**, **Luca Gazzola**, **Isabella Giannini**, **Riccardo Stefani**, **Manuela Viezzoli**.

The International conference is organised by the Human Rights Centre "Antonio Papisca" together with the UNESCO Chair Human Rights Democracy and Peace and with the support of the Department of Political Science, Law and International Studies of the University of Padova.

It benefits from the active collaboration, of the following partner institutes: the Human Rights Consortium at the University of London, the UNESCO Chair in Human Security and Human Rights at the University of Graz, the School of Global Studies at the University of Goteborg, the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York and the Institute of International Studies at the University of Wrocław.

CONFERENCE'S VENUES

The Opening Plenary Session takes place in the Archivio Antico, located in the historic headquarters of the University of Padova at the Palazzo Bo, via 8 febbraio, Padova.

The Closing Plenary Roundtable takes place in Aula Nievo at the Palazzo Bo.

The panels take place at the headquarters of the Human Rights Centre, located in via Beato Pellegrino, 28, Padova.

CONTACTS

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