

CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
& HUMANITARIAN LAW

2024 - 2025 ACADEMIC YEAR REPORT





On September 4, 2024, the Center hosted its first Welcome Event, marking its significant and successful relaunch. The event drew an impressive turnout, with the room nearly at full capacity highlighting the strong interest among students in human rights and humanitarian law.

The event offered attendees a comprehensive overview of the Center's upcoming activities, including a calendar filled with impactful discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities. Participants also explored practical ways to gain hands-on experience through internships, advocacy projects, and pro bono work. Additionally, the event highlighted the groundbreaking research and initiatives of WCL professors addressing critical human rights issues and provided guidance on how students could engage with the Center through internships, fellowships, special projects, and leadership opportunities. The enthusiastic attendance served as a catalyst for the Center to strategically plan and implement subsequent events, which continued to achieve similar levels of success and engagement.

EVENTS

The Center organized a series of dynamic activities during the academic year, successfully engaging a diverse audience. While the primary objective was to attract JD students with an interest in human rights, the events also garnered significant participation from LLM students, reflecting their broad appeal and relevance.

The Center expanded its digital presence by launching a LinkedIn account and creating a new Instagram account. Additionally, the Center actively updated its Facebook and Twitter pages with information about events and initiatives. To enhance visibility, event flyers were shared across all social media platforms, including Engage, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and notice board on Campus.

Some events, including *Metaverse: A New Challenge of Human Rights* and *Neurotechnologies on Human Rights* and *Why Neurodata is the New Frontier in Data Protection*, were recorded and uploaded to the Center's YouTube channel to extend their reach.

Environment and Human Rights

- Panel discussion of the historic Environmental Human Rights Decision: *La Oroya v. Peru*.
- Panel discussion of the impact of Advisory Opinions of International Tribunals about obligations of the States in respect of climate change.
- Panel discussion on Human Rights and Ecocide: Recognizing environmental destruction as a crime and its implications for advocacy.

Technology and Human Rights

- Fair Chips: Analyzing human rights challenges in the semiconductor industry and its supply chain.
- Impact of Neurotechnologies on Human Rights: Investigating the ethical and legal issues posed by advancements in neurotechnology.
- Paint Your Target: Examining how remote weapons have transformed international humanitarian law.
- Exploring Human Rights in the Metaverse: Discussing the challenges and opportunities of digital spaces for human rights advocacy.

Women's Rights

- Women, Torture and the Law: International Human Rights Responses - an initiative of the Kovler Project Against Torture.
- Women's rights in the face of democratic erosion. Co-hosted with the Program on Gender, Theory, Law & Practice.

Coffee and Human Rights Series

- Coffee and Human Rights Series consist in informal conversations where leading human rights experts shared their insights and experiences in the field over coffee.

Other Events

- Statelessness from Gender Lens.
- Beyond the Barbed Wire: Documentary screening and expert panel discussion on statelessness.
- Book Launch: *Misinformation, Disinformation, and Democracy*. A panel discussion of the problems that disinformation and misinformation present for democracy and democratic self-government.
- Courts Under Pressure: Defending Human Rights and the Rule of Law.



RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence

The Center launched a groundbreaking student research which will contribute to a thematic study of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Bernard Duhaime. The results of this study will be part of the Special Rapporteur areas of interest to be addressed during his tenure.

Women's Active, Free, and Meaningful Participation in Development: A Focus on Decision-Making

The Center again launched an impactful student research project titled Women's Active, Free, and Meaningful Participation in Development: A Focus on Decision-Making, led by Liliana Valiña from the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (RtD).

The research project aims to analyze the challenges, opportunities, and best practices related to women's active, free, and meaningful participation in development, with a focus on decision-making processes examine the effects of inequality, discrimination, and gender gaps on the realization of the right to development for all, evaluate how current policies and practices, including those shaped by international cooperation, impact women's inclusion, leadership, and decision-making roles in development processes.

As part of their work, students will identify successful initiatives, policies, and cooperative projects that have empowered women and enhanced their meaningful participation in development. They will also assess the broader impact of these changes on key indicators related to the right to development and decision-making. The project's findings will contribute to a comprehensive report, which is set to be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in 2025.

The 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

The Center introduced an additional research initiative offering students the opportunity to work alongside with a UN Human Rights Expert. This project focuses on the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, an essential international framework aimed at preventing and reducing statelessness worldwide.

Students involved in the project conducted research on the application and enforcement of the 1961 Convention, particularly in regions where statelessness remains a significant issue, explore the intersection of human rights law and the reduction of statelessness, identifying best practices and strategies for strengthening the Convention's implementation.

This initiative allows students to gain direct experience with global human rights advocacy while contributing to critical efforts to address statelessness, a pressing challenge that impacts millions of people worldwide. Through this collaboration, the Center continues to provide meaningful opportunities for students to engage in real-world human rights issues and support the work of leading experts in the field.

Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa

The Center recruited students to participate in a project which will contribute to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices at the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/Committee), an Organ of the African Union established to monitor the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC/Charter).

The preliminary scope of research includes:

- Analyze case law from two selected countries in each of the five regions (North, West, Central, East and South) to reflect diverse legal and cultural realities depending on availability and accessibility of information;
- Research constitutional provisions and statutory laws to thoroughly understand case law/judicial decisions that respond to issues of child marriage and FGM; and
- Align findings with existing regional and international efforts such as joint General Comments of the ACERWC and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on FGM and Child Marriage, and AU campaigns and initiatives.

STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

In August 2024, the Center welcomed its newest members to the Student Advisory Board. These individuals were carefully selected through an interview process based on their demonstrated commitment to advancing the Center's mission of promoting human rights and humanitarian law. As key representatives of the student body, the advisory board members play a critical role in shaping the Center's initiatives, providing valuable insights, and fostering student engagement.

Their responsibilities include advising the Center's leadership on student perspectives, assisting with events and discussions on pressing human rights issues, and facilitating connections between students, faculty, and practitioners. They also contribute to research projects, assist in outreach efforts, and advocate for policies that strengthen the Center's impact on campus and beyond. Through their work, they ensure that student voices are actively involved in the Center's efforts to advance human rights and humanitarian law.

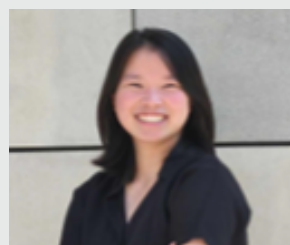
The Inducted members include:



Erick Lajara JD '25
Student Advisory Board Chair



Katie McGee JD '26



Rachel Bamberger JD '26



Lindsey Stumpp JD '26



Oscar Cheng JD '26

DEAN'S FELLOWS & VISITING SCHOLARS

In Spring 2024, the Center appointed Gloria Baidoo, a master's candidate in International Affairs Policy and Analysis – human rights as her thematic competence at American University, as the Dean's Fellow to manage its administrative and social media operations. Gloria's expertise and dedication are integral to supporting the Center's initiatives and ensuring the smooth execution of its programs. Additionally, Brenna Collette, a JD candidate in American University Washington College of Law was appointed as Dean's Fellow in the fall 2024, a role focused on providing support to the Center's mission and promoting research opportunities for students. Finally, Carlos Federico Gaitan Hairabedián, a JSD candidate in AUWCL was appointed Dean's Fellow in the Spring 2025 to contribute with the Center in future work on prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities. All the appointments reflect the Center's commitment to engaging dedicated students who contribute to its impactful work.

Furthermore, the International Visiting Scholars Program at American University Washington College of Law welcomes visitors from across the world. This program is designed to provide scholars, judges, lawyers, and government officials with an opportunity to engage in research and scholarship. During the Academic year the Center hosted two Visiting Scholars Rubina Bhatti and Lucia Chiban Zamar.

HUMAN RIGHTS BRIEF

The Center's student publication, the Human Rights Brief (HRB) remains a vital platform for student scholarship and advocacy, amplifying important voices and engaging with a global audience on the most pressing human rights issues of our time.

During 2024, the issues tackled a wide range of critical topics such as capital punishment, transitional justice, sustainability, and women's issues, offering insightful analyses and highlighting pressing human rights challenges. Notably, Issue 2 featured an article by the Center's Director, Professor Eduardo Bertoni, titled *The Limits of a Peace Agreement: An Analysis of the Havana Agreements*, which provided an in-depth exploration of the limitations of peace agreements in the context of transitional justice.

As the HRB looks ahead to Volume 28, the publication is being led by Editors-in-Chief Amal Rass (JD '25) and Katie Charlebois (JD '25), who continue to build on the legacy of this student-driven journal.

Beyond its written publications, the HRB also maintained its podcast series, Human Rights Unscripted, which delved into diverse and compelling human rights topics. Episodes covered country-specific issues, modern-day slavery, and indigenous rights, and featured numerous human rights experts who shared their insights and experiences.



30 YEARS PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGH TEACHING, SCHOLARSHIP, AND SERVICE

AUWCL established the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law in 1990 as part of its long-standing commitment to international human rights and the rule of law. Today, our faculty and staff include scholars, practitioners, and activists with decades of experience in human rights and international humanitarian law. The Center's program staff and faculty co-directors engage in cutting-edge research, create scholarship, organize events, develop trainings, and implement a host of projects focused on cultivating the next generation of human rights advocates and improving the rights of vulnerable and marginalized populations around the world.

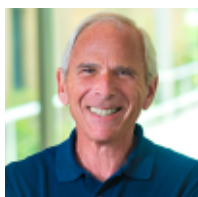
Director



EDUARDO BERTONI

Director of the Center for Human Rights
and Humanitarian Law

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ROBERT GOLDMAN

Professor of Law and Louis C.
James Scholar and a Faculty
Director of the War Crimes
Research Office



CLAUDIO GROSSMAN

Professor of Law, Dean Emeritus, and
the Raymond Geraldson Scholar for
International and Humanitarian Law



DAVID HUNTER

Professor of Law, Co-Director,
Program on Environmental and
Energy Law



JUAN MÉNDEZ

Professor of Human Rights Law and
a Faculty Director of the Anti-Torture
Initiative



DIANE ORENTLICHER

Professor of International Law



ANITA SINHA

Professor of Law, Director of the
International Human Rights Law Clinic
(IHRLC), Director of the Program on
Gender, Theory, Law & Practice



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