

ESSEX HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

Annual Review 2024 - 2025



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Human
Rights
Centre



University of Essex



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Welcome from our Director



Welcome to our Annual Review! This year has been one of strategic transformation and renewed ambition. We are delighted to share our news. We are proud of our diverse community of students, staff, fellows and alumni and all we have achieved this year but remain very conscious of the dire state of human rights here in the UK and around the world. So we remain committed, invested and focused on the tasks ahead.

I am grateful to our core team, and to our entire community of members, fellows, students, and partners who make the HRC's work possible. Together, we will continue to push boundaries, challenge the status quo, and work toward a world where human rights are truly universal.

We are always looking to expand our engagements, our partnerships and our membership. If you have ideas of how we can collaborate and would like to get in touch, we would be delighted to hear from you. You can reach us at: humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk.

Professor Carla Ferstman, Director
Essex Human Rights Centre
September 2025

Current Core Team:

Professor Carla Ferstman - Director
Dr Antonio Coco - Deputy Director (Education)
Dr Patricia Palacios Zuloaga - Deputy Director (Research)
Dr Claiton Fyock (Director of the Human Rights Centre clinic) AU
Dr Sabina Garahan (Director of the Human Rights Centre clinic) SP/SU
Dr Elif Mendos Kuşkonmaz - Visibility and Communications Officer

**Thank you to Dr Katya Al Khateeb who recently finished a five year term at the HRC, and to Dr Olayinka Lewis and Dr Tuba Turan who also served on the core team this year.

HRC Members

Our Human Rights Centre continues to boast over 130 academic members spanning 11 departments across the University, creating an unparalleled interdisciplinary community. This diversity remains our greatest strength, bringing together expertise from law, government, sociology, health and social care, business, computer science, philosophy, and beyond.

Visiting Fellows

We are honoured to host distinguished Visiting Fellows who contribute invaluable expertise to our community. This year we welcomed: **Sumaiya**

Islam (Executive Fellow) - a seasoned practitioner and thought leader with over two decades of experience at the intersection of human rights, development, racial and gender justice, philanthropy and politics; **Camila Almeida Porfiro** (Visiting Fellow) from Brazil who completed her visit in March 2025, contributing valuable perspectives on executive decrees, constitutionalism and human rights protections

They join: John Akker; Damon Barrett; Daniela Baro; Federico Borello; Iain Byrne; Basak Çali; Sam Dubberley; Charles Garraway; Sanae Fujita; Elizabeth Griffin; Ai Kihara-Hunt; Richard Lines; Steven Malby; Mervat Rishmawi; Rebecca Schleifer; Claire Simmons; Alberto Vasquez Encalada, as our amazing cohort of fellows and visitors.

Advisory Board

Our Advisory Board provides crucial interdisciplinary guidance. Current members include Dr Caroline Bald (Health and Social Care), Professor Peter Bloom (Essex Business School), Dr William Carruthers (Art history and heritage), Dr Koldo Casla (Law), Professor Neli Demireva (Sociology), Dr Matthew Gillett (Law), Professor Paul Hunt (Law), Professor Wayne Martin (Philosophy), Professor Sabine Michalowski (Law), Colin Samson (Sociology), Camila Vergara (Essex Business School), and Nikos Vogiatzis (Law).



Our vision

Our vision is to contribute significantly and impactfully to shaping a world which values tolerance, mutual respect and the dignity of all - every person and every group, without discrimination, irrespective of who they are, where they live, and what opinions or beliefs they hold.

To achieve this vision, we:

- foster the academic space needed for breakthrough thinking and produce ground-breaking and transformational research, knowledge and technical expertise on pressing human rights challenges;
- initiate world-class and accessible educational programmes and learning opportunities to imbue the next generation of scholars, human rights advocates and change-makers with practical skills and knowledge; and
- foster impactful partnerships with practitioners from grassroots advocates to global policy-leaders.

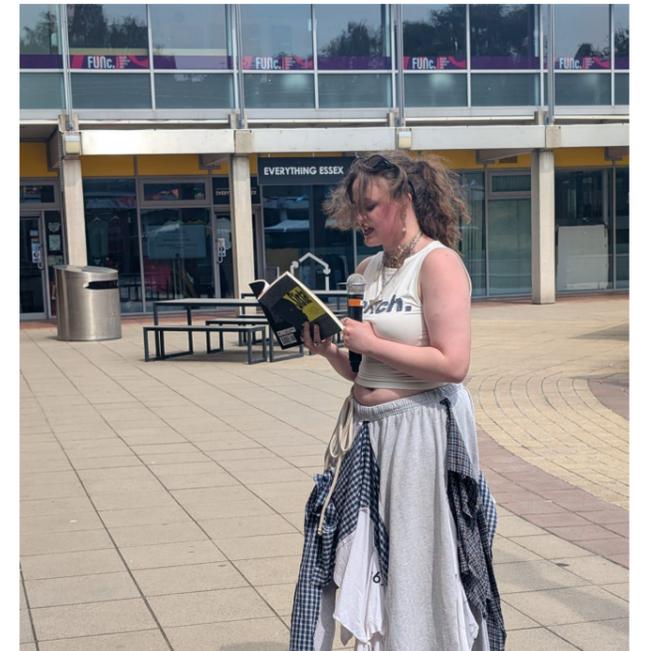
Strategic Priorities

We adopted a new strategic plan this year. It identifies four transformational research themes that are guiding our work:

Human rights for all: Research aimed at identifying, theorising, and developing strategies to combat double standards that result in certain individuals and groups' human rights being impeded or denied and with unequal access to justice to redress those imbalances. The research considers how to overcome barriers to justice fostered by positional hierarchies, discrimination, marginalisation, and other vulnerabilities. It also interrogates the inherent weaknesses and limitations of human rights frameworks to address power differentials and their colonial implications.

Future-proofing human rights: This area of research addresses new challenges in technology (including AI, big data, and cyberspace), climate change and environmental protection, and the evolving rights of nature.

Interrogating under-regulated spaces: This is research which focuses on the zones of exception in human rights regulation and accountability. It considers the growing tendencies for States and non-state actors to operate extraterritorially where governance and oversight structures are weakest, and the tendency of certain States to outsource



human rights obligations to private actors or third States particularly in the areas of migration control and administrative detention. This thematic focus also considers the challenges to address the growing influence of multinational corporations, non-state armed groups and organised crime networks and their impact on human rights protections.

Promoting people-centred approaches: This is research aimed at interrogating the changing spectrum of human rights activism. It will also interrogate shifting notions of solidarity and the right to express solidarity in respect of migrants, victims of human rights abuses and conflict-related crimes and other excluded or marginalised persons and groups through the lenses of media freedom, freedom of expression, assembly and association, academic freedom and the obligation to protect and promote civil society space.

Building Community and Impact

Central to our strategic ambition is fostering the HRC as a community of practice that is greater than the sum of its parts. We aspire to be not only an internal interdisciplinary community at Essex, but also the place where human rights practitioners worldwide—including our 3,000+ alumni—come for respite, invigoration, and support.

Come learn with us

The 2024–25 academic year has been a time of exceptional growth and innovation within the Essex Human Rights Centre. We've continued to build upon our reputation for delivering cutting-edge, interdisciplinary human rights education, while empowering the next generation of scholars, advocates, and leaders in the field.

Academic Programmes

Undergraduate Programmes: Our human rights-focused undergraduate degrees, such as LLB Law with Human Rights, BA History with Human Rights, and BA Sociology with Human Rights, demonstrate the broad relevance of human rights education across multiple disciplines, helping students develop the critical thinking and analytical skills needed to engage with complex global issues.

Postgraduate Programmes: The MA in Theory and Practice of Human Rights remains a flagship programme, offering masters students a unique, interdisciplinary blend of theory, policy, and fieldwork. Our diverse range of LLM programmes, including International Human Rights Law; International Humanitarian Law; Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; International Human Rights and Economic Law, and International Criminal Law are thriving. These offerings attract students from around the world who seek to merge academic rigour with practical, real-world human rights application.

Doctoral Affiliates Network: A Hub for Emerging Scholars

Our Doctoral Affiliates Network has grown to encompass over 50 PhD students working on groundbreaking human rights research across multiple departments. This year, Dr Patricia Palacios Zuloaga launched the highly anticipated PhD seminar series, creating a dynamic space for students to share their research in a relaxed, collaborative setting. Students presented on a variety of important topics, including "The Global Justice Implications of Digital Mass Surveillance," "Pathologisation of Trans People in Law," and "Sovereignty and the Modern State as Opposing Concepts to Human Rights." Other sessions included "Human Rights and the Climate Crisis: A Legal Perspective," "Decolonising Human Rights Research: A Methodological Approach," and "The Role of Business in Human Rights: From CSR to Corporate Accountability." The series has become a vital space for doctoral affiliates to exchange ideas, challenge existing narratives, and receive constructive feedback, making it an essential part of our collaborative doctoral community. If you would like to join the Network, please get in touch on humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk.

Marcelle Shehwaro (pictured), Essex MA alumna and Syrian human rights defender and democracy campaigner, received an **honorary Doctorate** in recognition of her human rights advocacy.



Experiential Learning Excellence



Human Rights Centre Clinic

This year, the Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic Annual Conference, On the Frontlines of Global Justice, took place on 3 June 2025. The event showcased the outstanding work of our students and global partners, providing an opportunity to hear firsthand about their impactful experiences on the frontlines of human rights advocacy. This year's Clinic cohort presented their key research findings in fields ranging from climate justice and labour rights of domestic workers to reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Students also shared their experiences of engaging with their project partner organisations, including meeting members of Survival International at their London offices as well as officials from the UN Working Group from Arbitrary Detention, UNHCR, the UN Committee against Torture, and the Independent Investigation Mechanism for Myanmar at the UN headquarters in Geneva.

Under the expert direction of Dr Sabina Garahan, the Human Rights Centre Clinic continues to provide invaluable hands-on learning experiences for students while addressing pressing global human rights issues. With seven ambitious projects confirmed for 2025–26, including the launch of the Business and Human Rights Unit (BHRU), the Clinic continues to push boundaries and foster deeper engagement with real-world challenges.



The Digital Verification Unit

The DVU has achieved remarkable success this year, with groundbreaking work with Amnesty International that demonstrates how student training can contribute directly to international accountability mechanisms. Their recent contribution to the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria focused on serious violations such as extrajudicial killings, torture, and sectarian persecution, particularly targeting Syria's Alawite minority. Our projects with Amnesty this year were on the environmental impact of Israel's strikes in Lebanon, and on post-election protest crackdown in Mozambique. The latter investigation has already been published by Amnesty in a report. This September the Essex DVU will be attending its 6th Amnesty Summit.

The Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit

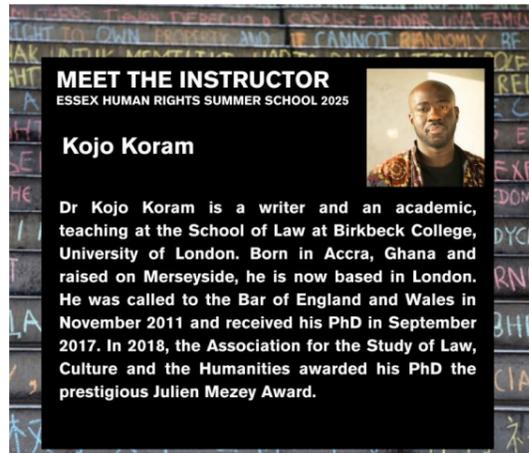
Our Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit has also flourished with students undertaking a transformative visit to Geneva in April 2025 where they presented their thematic research to UN experts and gained invaluable insights into international human rights mechanisms. The unit continues to work on real cases affecting human rights defenders globally, providing students with direct experience of UN procedures whilst contributing meaningfully to efforts to secure the release of those arbitrarily detained. This combination of real-world impact and educational excellence exemplifies the Centre's commitment to experiential learning that benefits both students and the broader human rights community.

Short courses and summer school

The Centre offers a diverse range of [short courses](#) and a [summer school](#) that provide in-depth knowledge and practical skills for professionals, academics, and students interested in human rights.

Human Rights Summer school

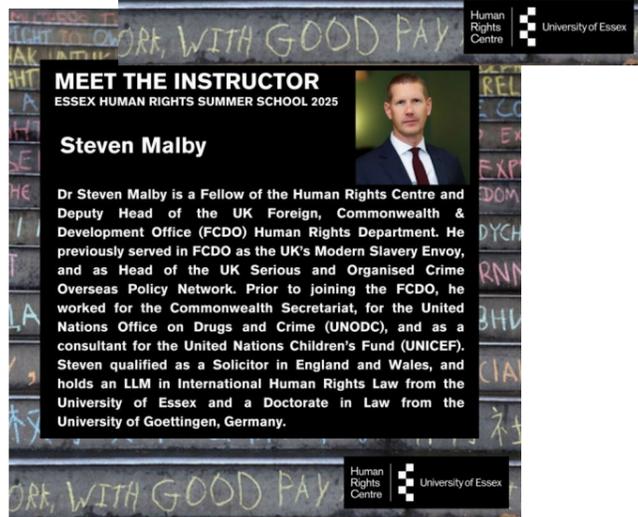
Our Summer School is a popular, interdisciplinary programme taught by renowned academics and practitioners, offering a unique opportunity to learn from experts and engage with key human rights issues in a flexible online format.



MEET THE INSTRUCTOR
ESSEX HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMER SCHOOL 2025

Kojo Koram

Dr Kojo Koram is a writer and an academic, teaching at the School of Law at Birkbeck College, University of London. Born in Accra, Ghana and raised on Merseyside, he is now based in London. He was called to the Bar of England and Wales in November 2011 and received his PhD in September 2017. In 2018, the Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities awarded his PhD the prestigious Julien Mezey Award.



MEET THE INSTRUCTOR
ESSEX HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMER SCHOOL 2025

Steven Malby

Dr Steven Malby is a Fellow of the Human Rights Centre and Deputy Head of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Human Rights Department. He previously served in FCDO as the UK's Modern Slavery Envoy, and as Head of the UK Serious and Organised Crime Overseas Policy Network. Prior to joining the FCDO, he worked for the Commonwealth Secretariat, for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and as a consultant for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Steven qualified as a Solicitor in England and Wales, and holds an LLM in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex and a Doctorate in Law from the University of Goettingen, Germany.

Short courses

In addition, we offer several **short courses** designed to deepen expertise in specific human rights fields:

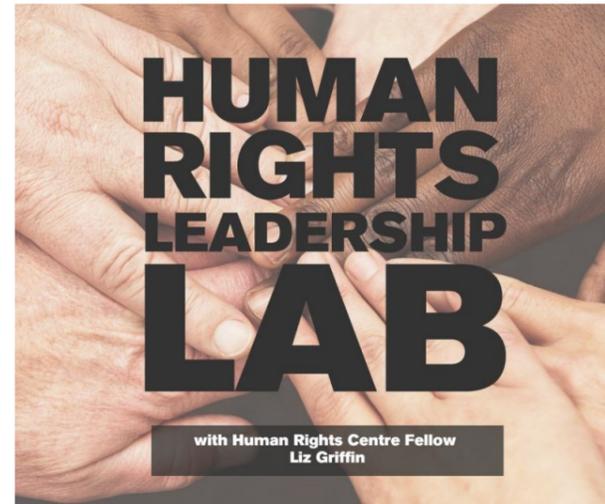
Law and Technology - 'Human Rights in the Digital Age':

This is a 2-week online course with 9 seminars. The course explores the intersection of

human rights and technology, covering topics like data privacy, surveillance, and the impact of digital advancements on human rights protections. These educational opportunities provide a comprehensive learning experience for those looking to enhance their knowledge and skills in human rights.

Human Rights Leadership Lab:

This online course consists of 6 sessions (4 hours each) and provides a reflective learning space to develop leadership skills, focusing on building presence and increasing impact in the human rights sector.



International Law in Armed Conflict:

This 4-day in-person course is aimed at human rights practitioners and professionals from civil society, government and international organizations. This course equips participants with the legal foundations needed to navigate the complexities of armed conflict.



Do you have specific training needs? Get in touch !

The Essex Human Rights Centre also works with NGOs, international agencies and governments to provide bespoke training solutions. We are very open to exploring possibilities. Please contact us at humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk to explore options.

Some of our events this year

The 2024-25 academic year has been a remarkable one for global engagement, marked by a series of thought-provoking events that have brought together scholars, practitioners, and activists from around the world. These events have sparked critical conversations and strengthened our collective commitment to advancing human rights on the global stage.

Human Rights Speaker Series

Our **Human Rights Speaker Series** continued to be a cornerstone of our programming throughout the year, providing a platform for world-renowned experts to share their insights on contemporary human rights challenges. From environmental justice to corporate accountability, the series explored a wide range of issues that are shaping the future of human rights.

Our programme started with an introductory event co-hosted by Essex Transitional Justice Network [Human Rights Speaker Series: Environmental Rights, Crimes and Peacebuilding in Transitional Justice Contexts](#) that hosted our in-house expertise. Some of the highlights include: [Children's Rights in Conflict Zones](#) with Daniela Baro; [UN Special Procedures: A Critical Analysis](#)



with Professor Andrea Liese, [Calibrating Colonial Crimes: Reparations and Unjust Enrichment](#) with Joshua Castellino, [Rights and Resistance Street Art: Graffiti and the Law](#) with Dr Susan Hansen and Dr Enrico Bonadio, [Gender-Based Violence and Reproductive Rights in Trump's Second Term](#) with Dr Michele Stephens and Dr Patricia Palacios Zuloaga; [Choosing the Governed](#) with Professor Jules Lepoutre; [Dismantling International Solidarity: Thwarting Humanitarianism and Shrinking Civil Society Space](#) with Professor Carla Ferstman, Nieves Molina Clemente, Judith Bueno de Mesquit, William Carruthers, and Güley Bor; and [Opportunities to Implement Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Global South: A Judicial Perspective from Nepal](#) with Justice Hari Prasad Phuyal of Nepal's Supreme Court.



University of Essex HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

Human Rights Speaker Series

Rights & Resistance Street Art: Graffiti and the Law

Date: Wednesday 4 December 2024
Time: 12:00 - 13:30
Venue: Room 5S.4.19, also on Zoom.

With speakers Dr Susan Hansen and Dr Enrico Bonadio

Chaired by Dr Katya Alkhateeb

Human Rights Week 2024: Celebrating advocacy and action

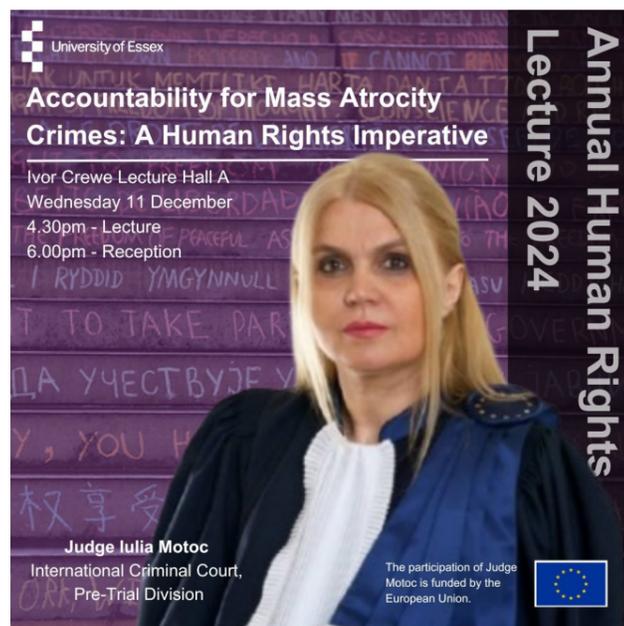
Human Rights Week 2024 was a week to remember! From December 4-10, we celebrated our commitment to human rights with a series of impactful events that brought together the Essex community and beyond.

The week featured a variety of activities designed to inspire action and reflection, including:

Annual Human Rights Lecture: The eighth Annual Lecture of the HRC titled Accountability for Mass Atrocity Crimes: A Human Rights Imperative featured **Judge Iulia Motoc** from the International Criminal Court's Pre-Trial Division, in conversation with **Dr Matthew Gillett**, Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and introduced by **Professor Carla Ferstman**, Director of the Human Rights Centre. Judge Motoc, a former European Court of Human Rights Judge (2013-2023) and UN Special Rapporteur for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, brought extensive experience from complex cases involving genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, including high-profile interstate cases such as Ukraine and the Netherlands v Russia. The lecture addressed pressing questions about ensuring accountability for mass atrocity crimes in an increasingly polarized world, examining the role of international courts and the challenges of delivering justice for victims of the gravest international crimes.

Chalking of the Steps: On Human Rights Day, our tradition continued, as students and staff inscribed articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights across the campus steps in multiple languages. This simple yet powerful act symbolized both the universality and vulnerability of human rights.

Human Rights Timeline at the Campus Squares: Participants took a journey through the history of human rights, reflecting on the milestones that have shaped the movement from 1948 to today.



Poetry and Fiction Readings on Human Rights: This literary event beautifully illustrated how human rights resonate through every form of expression, from art to activism.



Employability Events

We also held several events with alumni to guide students about next steps in developing their careers. For example, we held the Human Rights Careers: Human Rights Centre Employability Panel with **Federico Borello** (Human Rights Watch) **Rossella De Falco** (**Just Fair UK**) and **Roisin Mangan** (The Children's Society).

Conferences at Essex

The 17th Human Rights in Asia Conference **Beyond Borders: Displacement in the Context of Conflict and Climate Crisis in Asia (8 March 2025)**, brought together academics, activists, and students to discuss **displacement** in the context of conflict and the climate crisis in Asia. The conference explored how marginalized communities, including women, children, Indigenous peoples, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, are disproportionately affected by forced displacement. Featured speakers included **Ryan Mitra**, **Zainab Lokhandwala**, **Margaretha Quina**, and **John Paul Jose**, who shared their expertise on migration, climate justice, and environmental law. This student-led event facilitated critical discussions on human rights protections and provided recommendations for addressing the growing challenges of displacement in Asia.

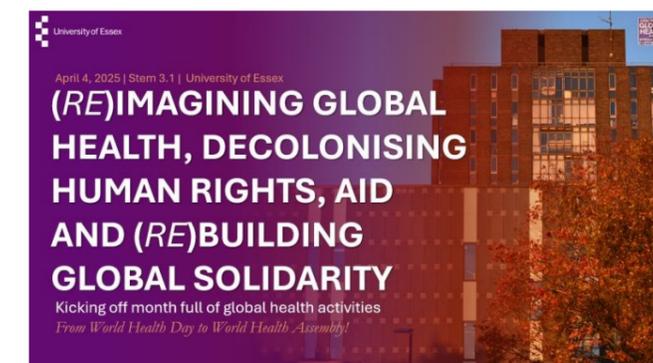
To commemorate this landmark conference series, the Centre published a report Seventeen Year of Dialogue and Counting documenting the evolution and impact of all 17 conferences since the initiative's inception in 2009. The report traces how the conference has addressed Asia's changing human rights landscape, from foundational discussions on democracy and regional protection mechanisms to urgent contemporary concerns about displacement, corporate accountability, and climate justice.

Reporting Conflict: Ethics, Voices and Truths (May 2025): In collaboration with the LIFTs department at Essex the HRC co-organised an international full day workshop bringing together



award-winning journalists and human rights experts, from Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and beyond, to explore the ethics, challenges, and responsibilities of reporting from conflict zones.

(Re)imagining Global Health, Decolonising Human Rights & (Re)Building Solidarity



The HRC was delighted to collaborate on this pathbreaking conference with the Centre for Global Health and Intersectional Equity Research CGHIER, the Centre for Global South Studies and progressive alliances/ movements. Sessions included a big picture kick-off discussion about human rights & colonialism- charting the historical and contemporary context of human rights, and its health impacts; a second session on the impact of current political developments on global health, cooperation, local organising for health justice and vulnerable populations followed by a provocative Decolonising practice dialogue – “Catalysing Change from Ground zero: New paradigms for Meaningful Change.”

Roundtable on Decolonising Human Rights

We were very glad to co-host, together with the Global South Studies Centre and the [Centre for Global Health and Intersectional Equity Research \(CGHIER\)](#), a Roundtable on Decolonising Human Rights. Thanks to Professors Sandya Hewamanne, Anuj Kapilashrami and Paul Hunt for bringing us all together and to all the fabulous contributors.



security of the person. The event brought together leading experts from Essex Law School and the Human Rights Centre to address the increasing use of detention as a form of social control across various contexts. Matthew Gillett opened the workshop by contextualizing contemporary detention practices within broader human rights frameworks. The workshop featured three key presentations: Professor Carla Ferstman, Human Rights Centre Director and author of *Conceptualising Arbitrary Detention: Power, Punishment and Control*, explored arbitrary detention as a mechanism of social control; Sabina Garahan, Lecturer at Essex Law School and Director of the HRC Clinic, examined the increasing arbitrariness of immigration detention, drawing from her work *Detention and the Right to Liberty: Addressing Gaps in Protection at the European Court of Human Rights*; and Matthew Gillett concluded with reflections on recent cases from the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Book Launches and Discussions

The Human Rights Centre, in collaboration with the Centre for Global Health and Intersectional Equity Research (CGHIER), recently hosted the launch of [Advancing Health Rights and Tackling Inequalities: Interrogating Community Development and Participatory Praxis](#) by Anuj Kapilashrami, Neil Quinn, and Abhijit Das (Bristol University Press). Held on Tuesday, 27 May at the University of Essex and streamed online, the event featured three dynamic panel discussions exploring rights-based and community-driven approaches to health equity. Many thanks to all who joined us for this timely and thought-provoking conversation.



The Weaponisation of Detention: Responding to Present-Day Challenges workshop took place on Mar 25. This workshop critically examined present-day challenges associated with arbitrary detention and related violations of the right to liberty and

Film Screenings and Cultural Events

Our film programme has continued to use cinema as a powerful medium for human rights education:

[Stealing a Nation](#) in collaboration with [Professor Colin Samson](#) from [Department of Sociology](#), examining the forced relocation of Chagossian inhabitants.

The Essex Transitional Justice Network (ETJN) screened **“Quo Vadis, Aida?”** by Bosnian filmmaker Jasmila Žbanić. It also screened **Argentina 1985**, together with the the Latin American Society and the Department of Government, and **“Granito: How to Nail a Dictator”** about investigations into the genocide of the Maya people in Guatemala, co-organised with the Latin American Society [See more on the ETJN at p18 below].

[Beyond the Lies](#) documentary on Iranian protesters and the Iran Atrocities Tribunal, followed by a panel discussion with Hamid Sabi (co-counsel of the Aban Tribunal), Shadi Sadr (co-organiser of the Aban Tribunal), and Elham Saudi, member of the panel of judges of the Tribunal, chaired by Carla Ferstman.



Celebrating Refugee Week

As part of Refugee Week June 2025, the Essex Human Rights Centre, Centre for Migration Studies, and Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Literary Studies collaborated to host a [solidarity reading event](#) celebrating the contributions, creativity, and resilience of refugees and migrants. The outdoor gathering featured excerpts from poetry and fiction exploring themes of displacement, journey, and belonging, offering participants an opportunity to engage with refugee and migrant experiences through literature.

Holocaust Memorial Week: A Week of Remembrance

Each year, the University of Essex marks [Holocaust Memorial Week](#) with a series of events to honour the victims of the Holocaust and other genocides. From January 27 to January 31, 2025, the University hosted a variety of events, including screenings, talks, and memorial services, to reflect on the atrocities committed against Jewish people and other targeted groups during the Nazi regime. Our director, Professor Carla Ferstman, wrote a [blog](#) to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. In her reflection, she emphasizes the importance of remembering past atrocities to combat hatred and intolerance in all its forms, calling on each of us to take active steps to prevent history from repeating itself. Her blog highlights this year's Holocaust Memorial Day theme, “For a Better Future,” urging us to work

together for peace and a world free from discrimination and violence.

The Human Rights PhD Circle is an initiative supported by the Human Rights Centres at the London School of Economics, the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights at the University of Oslo, the University of Antwerp, the University of Cambridge (CGHR), and the University of Essex. It offers an annual opportunity for PhD students from the five partner institutions to present their research and exchange ideas. The Circle is dedicated to fostering and advancing interdisciplinary doctoral research across a wide array of human rights topics.

This year's annual [conference](#) was hosted by Cambridge, featuring 17 PhD researchers who delivered excellent presentations covering diverse human rights topics spanning legal, political, philosophical, and sociological perspectives. The event fostered rich discussions of individual projects, with participants benefiting from the expertise of faculty members from all partner institutions, demonstrating the breadth and sophistication of doctoral research across the network

Research and policy engagement in practice

The Essex Armed Conflict and Crisis Hub

The *Armed Conflict and Crisis Hub* is led by Professor Noam Lubell. Members of the Hub coming from different schools and departments provide high-quality research, support, consultancy and training for practitioners and stakeholders around the world working on humanitarian concerns in armed conflict and crises.

This year it initiated the Contemporary Conflicts and International Law Series, which examined current conflicts through rigorous legal and interdisciplinary lenses. The series featured expert-led sessions on [Syria](#) (led by Dr Katya Al Khateeb and Franziska Fluhr, exploring post-Assad transitional justice challenges and accountability prospects), [Ukraine](#) (featuring Dr Sophie Duroy and Dr Matthew Gillett, chaired by Franziska Fluhr, focusing on intelligence relationships and atrocity crime investigations), [Sudan and South Sudan](#) (with Professor Carla Ferstman, Lina Marwan Abdulrahim, and Dr Ebba Lekvall, examining sexual and gender-based crimes and business responsibilities in conflict zones), [Israel-Palestine](#) (led by Professor Noam Lubell, Dr Tara Van Ho and Dr Antonio Coco, analysing the role of international courts in ongoing conflicts), and [Ethiopia](#) (with Dr Nathanael Tilahun and Professor Geoff Gilbert, exploring conflict-related

displacement and sanctions). The sessions brought together students, academics, and practitioners to engage with developments as they unfolded, demonstrating how international law operates in various conflict situations.

Key research activities and initiatives with practitioners to ensure that the research we do at Essex has broader impacts beyond the University. For example, Dr Katya Al Khateeb leads a project on transitional justice processes in Syria; Professor Geoff Gilbert co-authored a practical toolkit on 'International Protection Principles for People Displaced Across Borders in the Context of Climate Change and Disasters'; and Dr Matthew Gillett's work on ecocide has helped shape the International Criminal Court's approach to prosecuting attacks on the natural environment. Conflict Hub members have also been involved in the training of militaries and members of civil society, for example through Essex' International Law in Armed Conflict short course. They also recently secured a bid to provide training for UK Army Legal Services.

The Hub also continues to make progress on the international and interdisciplinary research project [Cumulative Civilian Harm in War](#), led by Professor Noam Lubell with Dr Nihad Aboud and Franziska Fluhr as researchers. The project seeks to address legal blind spots in protecting civilians during armed conflict by developing a framework to assess the cumulative impact of military operations over time. The research team has hosted workshops in London and in Washington, DC, bringing together diverse perspectives of individuals who participate in or have expert knowledge about wartime decision-making, including civilian and military policymakers and lawyers as well as civil society and human rights advocates.

Essex Autonomy Project (EAP)

The *Autonomy Project* is led by Professor Wayne Martin and is a research and public policy initiative based in the School of Philosophical, Historical and Interdisciplinary Studies. Using resources from philosophy, it delves into legal, ethical, and existential complexities of front-line work in medicine, psychiatry, social work, and the law, with particular emphasis on decision-making capacity and human rights. Currently it works on topics such as human rights in care homes, the application of

the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in care practice and the ethical and legal issues around cardiopulmonary resuscitation and do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Will-Recognition for Persons with Disabilities in Japan and Peru: Art 12 of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) calls on states parties to recognise that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with other in all aspects of life. One obstacle to such recognition has been that persons with certain cognitive, intellectual or psycho-social disabilities have not been recognised as having a will, and so are not recognised as able to exercise their will by (inter alia) entering into contracts, giving or withholding consent, or making their own decisions regarding place-of-residence. The Essex Autonomy Project is working with international partners to study recent developments towards more inclusive legal recognition of the will of persons living with disabilities.

In Japan, the Autonomy Project worked with *Supported Decision-Making Japan*, a leading NGO, and with colleagues at the University of Tsukuba and Kanazawa University, to study the policy response to the atrocity at Tsukui Lily Garden, a residential care facility in Kanagawa Prefecture

where 19 persons with disabilities were murdered in 2006. Professor Wayne Martin and HRC fellow Dr Sanae Fujita visited Tsukui Lily Garden and met with staff who helped design new staff training, and a new approach for recognising the will of persons with profound communication disabilities. In Peru, the Autonomy Project worked with colleagues at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, met with members of the Peruvian Supreme Court, made site visits to the new "protective homes" introduced as an alternative to psychiatric hospitals under the 2019 reform of legal provisions regarding mental health, and worked with public notaries to explore the opportunities and obstacles created by the reform of the Civil Code of Peru, which eliminates most forms of Guardianship on the grounds of disabilities. Professor Martin gave an invited address to CONADIS, the Peruvian National Council on Disabilities.

Photo: Left-to-Right: Satoshi Kobayashi, Sanae Fujita and Wayne Martin visit the memorial to the 2006 Sagami-hara Stabbings at Tsukui Yamayui En, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan. November, 2024.



Essex Business and Human Rights Project

The *Essex Business and Human Rights*, led by Dr Anil Yilmaz Vastardis, is a multi-disciplinary research initiative incorporating a range of legal specialisms which is part of a global community of researchers and professionals that respond to human rights and environmental concerns in development projects, fosters international economic law in conflict-affected areas and situations of transitional justice, promotes multinational corporate accountability and seeks to address a plethora of related business and human rights concerns.

The project continued its high visibility at the 13th UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in November 2024, with Dr Yilmaz leading a session on exploring business and human rights education with Caroline Lichuma from FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg. Dr Yilmaz also participated in a Bonavero Institute [roundtable](#) in January 2025 on business and human rights litigation, presenting an upcoming chapter in the *Cambridge Handbook on Business and Human Rights Litigation*.

Looking ahead, the Essex Business and Human Rights project is co-organizing a major Business and Human Rights [Conference](#) in Winnipeg, Canada in November 2025.

With the support of the Open Society Foundations, the business and human rights project engaged in work on Ukraine focused on the responsibilities of business actors. Additionally, Dr Yilmaz supports early-career professionals through a [mentorship programme](#) for Ukrainian business and human rights practitioners and recently published an [analysis](#) on investment treaties' relationship to just transition goals, featured in *Investment Treaty News*.

International Centre on Drug Policy and Human Rights



The *International Centre on Drug Policy and Human Rights* led by Julie Hannah is dedicated to developing and promoting innovative and high quality legal and human rights research and teaching on issues related to drug laws, policy, and enforcement. The Centre's work supports policy development which reconciles the international narcotics control conventions with international human rights law.

In March 2025, at a summit in Pakistan, Julie Hannah met with government ministers, judges, and civil servants to discuss how integrating human rights into the country's drug policies is crucial for achieving fairer outcomes. This reform comes after Pakistan's landmark decision to abolish the death penalty for drug-related offences. The *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy*, a product of collaboration between the University of Essex and the United Nations, is central to this reform. The Guidelines provide a human rights-based framework for drug policy and are now being implemented globally, including in the Philippines, Colombia, and Brazil. Julie Hannah's visit included training judicial officials on how to implement the Guidelines, further demonstrating the practical impact of these international standards. Following her visit, a judge in Pakistan used the Guidelines to free a vulnerable mother from pre-trial detention, highlighting the immediate influence of these

human rights principles in legal decision-making. This marks a significant step forward in Pakistan's drug policy reform and strengthens the momentum of human rights advocacy in the region.

Freedom of Religion or Belief and Equality Unit

This unit is led by Professor Ahmed Shaheed, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, and current adviser on hate speech to the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and a member of the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief convened by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Countering Islamophobia: Building on the foundational work of the Religion and Equality Unit—particularly during Professor Ahmed Shaheed's tenure as UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (2016–2022)—this multi-year project (2023–2026) focuses on

countering Islamophobia through a human rights-centred and intersectional approach. While prioritising anti-Muslim hatred, the project also supports broader efforts to tackle all forms of hate, including antisemitism.

A key output of the project is the **Empower Talk! Standing Against Hate and Embracing Human Rights Framework and Multistakeholder Platform (TFMP)**—a comprehensive, inclusive blueprint for confronting hatred in all its forms. The TFMP was developed through the **Human Rights 30 Forum**, co-hosted by the University of Essex and the Albanian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in Tirana (January 2025). The Forum brought together over 120 participants from 35 countries, including government ministers, UN officials, civil society actors, faith leaders, and academic experts. The TFMP has since been adopted and cited by international bodies and will be formally presented at high-level meetings at the United Nations in Geneva and New York in June and July 2025.



Essex Transitional Justice Network (ETJN)

The [Essex Transitional Justice Network](#) (ETJN) is led by Professor Sabine Michalowski and Dr Ebba Lekvall. The ETJN is a unique community of academics at Essex working on transitional justice from different disciplines. It aims to address hard questions in theory and practice related to the challenges faced by societies undergoing fundamental socio-political change, notably the transition from a repressive to a democratic regime, or from conflict to peace, and trying to reckon with the legacies of mass atrocities.

The ETJN has been active across several key initiatives this year, commemorating significant anniversaries and launching new research projects. This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, where Bosnian Serb forces killed over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys in July 1995 - the first recognised genocide in Europe since the Holocaust. The Network, with the Human Rights Centre and Department of Government, commemorated this through [two events](#): a screening of “Quo Vadis, Aida?” by Bosnian filmmaker Jasmila Žbanić, and a panel discussion on “Reflections on the Srebrenica Genocide.” Additionally, the Network co-hosted two film screenings followed by panel discussion: a screening of Argentina 1985, together with the the Latin American Society and the Department of Government, and a [screening](#) of “Granito: How to Nail a Dictator” about investigations into the genocide of the Maya people in Guatemala, co-organised with the Latin American Society.

Professor Michalowski continued her work with Colombian organisation Dejusticia - *Centro de estudios de derecho, justicia y Sociedad* to support for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in Colombia. The Network also launched the “Syria in Transition” research project, co-directed by Dr Katya Alkhateeb and Dr Roua Al-Taweel, in collaboration with the Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University and the Syrian Academics and Researchers Network in the UK (SARN). This interdisciplinary project examines pathways to transitional justice in Syria, producing academic outputs and digital verification reports on human rights violations in post-Assad Syria.



REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

Join us for two Commemorative events to mark the 30th Anniversary.

Film screening: Quo Vadis, Aida?	Panel event: Reflections on the Srebrenica genocide
Tuesday 11 March 2025, 4-6pm.	Wednesday 12 March 2025, 12-2pm.

ETJN GOVERNMENT Human Rights Centre University of Essex

Initiative on health, economic justice and the environment

The University of Essex has a strong focus on economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR), with a specific LLM in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and associated alumni who have gone on to careers in human rights advocacy, research, and international organizations. Current research focuses include the right to health (including initiatives led by Jude Bueno de Mesquita, Julie Hannah and Emeritus Professor Paul Hunt in conjunction with the Centre for Global Health & Intersectional Equity Research, the School of Health and Social Care and others); poverty and housing rights (Dr Koldo Casla); and the right to a healthy environment, including the rights of nature and the rights of animals (with initiatives by Dr Marina Lostal, among others).

Reimagining Food Systems for Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Social Justice is a new project led by partners in Canada, with the Essex component run by Judith Bueno de Mesquita and Professor Karen Hulme. The project is advancing a mitigation and adaptation strategy to reduce harmful emissions from food production and use Indigenous knowledge to enhance food security for vulnerable populations. In 2021, Ms Bueno de Mesquita received a joint award for best international research impact for her project on realising the right to health.

Dr Marina Lostal Who is a recipient of a 2025 APEX Award, is embarking on new research initiative: *Navigating riverine war reparations: the case of the Cauca River.*

Human Rights Local

Launched in 2020, [Human Rights Local](#) is focused on making human rights locally relevant in the UK. Dr Koldo Casla, project lead of [Human Rights Local](#), submitted evidence to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for their inquiry into the state of socio-economic rights in the UK. The Committee subsequently raise some of these concerns with the UK Government as part of its concluding observations. Dr Casla and Lyle Barker also made submissions on the situation in the UK to the European Committee on Social Rights: [Deflation of Rights Amidst the Cost-of-Living Crisis in England: Submission to the European Committee of Social Rights](#)

Human Rights and Technology

The HRC hosted the ESRC funded *Human Rights, Big Data and Technology Project* (HRBDT), a £5 million multidisciplinary project led by Professor Lorna McGregor with partners worldwide, which considered the challenges and opportunities presented by big data and associated technology from a human rights perspective.

The project explored the challenges and opportunities that big data and AI are bringing to human rights, including whether fundamental human rights concepts and approaches need to be adapted in the era of technological advancement and big data, and developed good practice guidelines, regulatory responses and solutions for the human rights sector to improve both enjoyment and protection in the digital age.

Through Professor McGregor’s work and also the work of others such as Professor Lorna Woods OBE, Professor Audrey Guinchard, Dr Giulia Gentile, and Dr Alexandros Antoniou, the HRC continues to be at the forefront of research on issues concerning human and technology, including issues such as freedom of expression and online safety.

In 2024, Professor Woods OBE won the award for Best Research Impact in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities for her work on online safety. In May 2025, a new Parliamentary Women and Equalities Committee report which calls for the possession of non-consensual intimate images (NCII) to be made illegal builds extensively on Professor Woods’ research on online safety and cites her throughout.



SHORT COURSE

LAW AND TECHNOLOGY
Humans Rights in the Digital Age

Our blog site

From academic freedom to transitional justice in Syria and digital investigations, the HRC blog has featured a wide range of thought-provoking contributions this year.

Professor Carla Ferstman reflected on the vital role of universities in defending [Academic Freedom: A Stocktaking](#) (May 2025), and on [Sanctions against a UN Special Rapporteur](#) (July 2025). On domestic policy, Dr Koldo Casla examined systemic child separation failings in [The UK Government Admits Failure in the Handling of the Separation of Children from Families in Poverty](#) (February 2025).

Dr Katya Alkhateeb offered reflections from a powerful interdisciplinary workshop in [Perspectives on Transitional Justice in Syria: Voices from Academia, Civil Society, and the Arts](#) (February 2025).



PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN SYRIA: VOICES FROM ACADEMIA, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND THE ARTS

By Dr Katya Alkhateeb, Essex Law School and Human Rights Centre



In January, Essex HRC members Judith Bueno de Mesquita, Dr Koldo Casla, Dr Claiton Fyock and Dr Marina Lostal contributed expert input to CESCR on sustainability and rights in [Legal Analysis from Essex HRC for the UN About the Environmental Dimension of Sustainable Development](#) (January 2025). As part of our Spotlight series, [Professor Joshua Castellino in the Spotlight](#) (February 2025) highlighted the important work of the Executive Director of Minority Rights Group International on global minority rights and justice. And, Iain Byrne marked a landmark legal win in [ECOWAS Court Strikes Down Colonial Vagrancy Laws](#) (November 2024).

The Digital Verification Unit members explored how digital tools are reshaping evidence gathering in [Social Media as Evidence: Documenting Human Rights Abuses in Post-Assad Syria](#) (May 2025) by Julie Tatin, Julie Decrand-Lardière, Isabelle Ménard, Célia Encinas Cavielles, and Dewi de Weerd. The Unit also wrote

about [How Open-Source Investigation Training Drives Real-World Impact](#) (March 2025) by Julie Decrand-Lardière and Clarissa Chan highlighted the achievements of the Essex Digital Verification Unit.



Several of the Human Rights Centre clinic protect teams also posted about their work. Mars Denyer, Preslie Fox, Nicholas Mykytyn, and Clara Torchet-Dit-Renard posted about [Domestic Workers' Rights in the Caribbean under ILO Convention 189](#) (August 2025) and Daniella Aning, Ekaterina Luzina, Louise Kazek, Zunaid Saiyed posted about [Environmental Rights for a Just Energy Transition in Kenya](#) (July 2025).



Explore the full collection of blog posts and more at hrcsessex.wordpress.com.

Media Engagement and Public Commentary

HRC members actively contributed to public discourse through diverse media and commentary platforms.

Dr Katya Alkhateeb and Professor Faten Ghosn published two articles in *The Conversation*: "[Syria faces renewed sectarian violence as government fails to deliver inclusivity](#)" and "[Syria: doubts increase over new regime's commitment to women's rights and inclusivity](#)."

Dr William Carruthers explored development funding and museum policy in his articles for *Apollo Magazine* and *The Conversation*, including "[USAID and the Abolition of Heritage Development Funding](#)" and "[UK Museums and the Return of Human Remains](#)."

Dr Sophie Duroy published "[The Killing of Hassan Nasrallah and How the West Legitimised its Use of Assassination](#)" in *The Conversation*, and was quoted in the *Christian Science Monitor* on international responses to India-Canada diplomatic tensions.

Dr Koldo Casla co-authored several pieces including '[The UK Government Admits Failure in the Handling of the Separation of Children from Families in Poverty](#)' and '[From the University of Essex to the United Nations](#)'. He also contributed to *Open Global Rights* with a blog on '[Stable, consistent, and safe](#)

[access to adequate energy: The case of Cañada Real in Madrid](#)', and featured in Basque Public Radio across three segments discussing British politics, migration, and human rights developments.

Professors Ferstman and Ghosn jointly authored a piece for Times Higher Education: '[Academics must challenge selective empathy fuelled by social media](#).' Professor Ferstman also co-authored an open letter on the University website, with Professor Klaus McDonald-Maier: '[Open Letter: Deep concern about the arbitrary detention of University of Essex Graduate Enrique Márquez in Venezuela](#)'.

Professor Nicolas Forsans launched the influential Substack newsletter "[Sin Filtro](#)" providing regular insights into Latin American human rights developments. His extensive contributions to *The Conversation* include articles such as "[Seven countries in Latin America where human rights are taking the biggest hit – no thanks to Trump](#)."



Publications, Appointments, and Achievements

Recent Publications and Reports

- Beresford, Peter. *The Antidote: A Route to Ending Populist Right-Wing Politics Through Participatory Human Rights* (Policy Press, 2025)
- Bueno de Mesquita, Judith and Fyock, Claiton and Lostal, Marina, *The Compatibility between Sustainable Development and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (2025).
- Casla, Koldo, and Marion Sandner, "Solidarity as Foundation for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights," *Human Rights Law Review* (2024)
- Chaudhuri, Shohini. *Crisis Cinema in the Middle East: Creativity and Constraint in Iran and the Arab World* (Bloomsbury, 2024 paperback edition)
- Duffy, Aoife. (2024). Applying critical pedagogies to human rights education. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 29(2), 382–406.
- Duroy, Sophie. *The Regulation of Intelligence Activities under International Law* (Edward Elgar, 2023) – Winner of the 2024 King's Centre for the Study of Intelligence Polly Corrigan Book Prize
- Fagan, Andrew, 'The Subject of Human Rights: From the Unencumbered Self to the Relational Self'. *Nordic Journal of Human Rights*. (2024) 42 (2), 215-233
- Ferstman, Carla, and Franziska Fluhr, *Independent Review of the Adjudication of Claims Pertaining to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by the United Nations Internal Justice System (UN Dispute Tribunal and UN Appeals Tribunal)* (2024)
- Garahan, Sabina. *Detention and the Right to Liberty Addressing Gaps in Protection at the European Court of Human Rights*. Routledge (2025).
- Gillett, Matthew. 'Ecocide, environmental harm and framework integration at the international criminal court', *The International Journal of Human Rights*. 29 (6), 1009-1045 (2025).
- Gillett, Matthew. *Lex Ad Astra: Non-State Actor Accountability for Space Pollution* (Brill, 2025)
- Küçük, Esin, and Elif Kuşkonmaz. 'Solidarity at the intersection of data sharing and data protection: A normative analysis,' *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law*, 31(6), 728–747

- Lekvall, Ebba. 'The Danish 'Coil Campaign' in Greenland: Indigenous Genocide Through Forced Birth Control?', *Nordic J Intl Law*, 1-43 (2025).

- Lekvall, Ebba. 'Repairing 'Historical' Wrongs: The Church of Sweden's Approach to Redressing Colonial Abuses against the Sami,' *Netherlands Yearbook of Intl Law* (2025)

- Lloyd, Moya. 'Enacting Vulnerability as Resistance' in Elliot C Mason and Valentina Moro (eds) *Judith Butler and Marxism: The Radical Feminism of Performativity, Vulnerability, and Care* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2025).

Lostal, Marina. (2024). One-dimensional law: a critique of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 29(5), 816–841

- Michalowski, Sabine. 'Approaches to criminal responsibility of economic actors in transitional justice processes: lessons from Colombia.' *Columbia human rights law review*, 55 (2). pp. 444-508 (2024).

- Shaheed, Ahmed, and Jennifer Tridgell, "Learning from Reflection and Looking to the Future: Two Years on from the UN Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Indigenous Peoples," *Journal of the Council for Research on Religion* (2025)

- Yilmaz, Anil. 'A Just and Equitable Transition in the Shadow of Investment Treaties' in *Investment Treaty News* (Jan 27 2025)

- Zuo, Zhenbin. 'Automated Law Enforcement: An assessment of China's Social Credit System using interview evidence from Shanghai,' *Journal of Cross-disciplinary Research in Computational Law* (2024)

Appointments

Several HRC members received prestigious international appointments this year.

- Judith Bueno de Mesquita joined the Steering Group of the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations, contributing to the advancement of intergenerational justice.
- Professor Carla Ferstman is a Member of the Council of Europe Conference on INGOs Expert Council on NGO Law
- Professor Karen Hulme is Chair of the IUCN Specialist Group on Environmental Security and Conflict Law.
- Professor Geoff Gilbert was appointed Senior Adviser on Protection Policy and Legal Advice (PPLA) to the Division of International Protection (DIP) of UNHCR.
- Dr Matthew Gillett was named the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights in Detention, leading a global initiative focused on liberty and Indigenous communities.
- Dr Marina Lostal is a Member of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law
- Professor Ahmed Shaheed is an adviser on 'hate speech' to the United Nations Office on

Genocide Prevention and is a member of the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief convened by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Highlights: New Research Grants

- British Academy ODA Challenge Grant: Dr Anil Yilmaz Vastardis for "Equity and the Global Climate Finance Architecture"
- Open Society Foundation: for Professor Ahmed Shaheed's "Countering Islamophobia" project
- Royal Academy of Engineering: APEX Awards given for innovative, curiosity-driven, interdisciplinary research projects, for Dr Marina Lostal, *Navigating riverine war reparations: the case of the Cauca River*
- Economic and Social Research Council: Dr Judith Bueno de Mesquita and Professor Karen Hulme, *Reimagining Food Systems for Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, and Social Justice*

Academic Collaborations and Editorial Projects

- Dr Nikos Vogiatzis maintains a partnership with the Academy for European Human Rights Protection at the University of Cologne through a Senior Humboldt Fellowship. This includes co-organising a 2024 [workshop](#) for early career researchers, plans for a follow-up in 2026, and facilitating a visiting scholar's stay from Cologne to Essex.
- Dr Anil Yilmaz Vastardis is co-organising the inaugural Canadian Forum for Business and Human Rights in November 2025, expanding HRC's global presence in corporate accountability debates. She is also working with institutions across South Africa, Belgium, and Indonesia on a British Academy-funded project exploring just energy transitions and equity in global climate finance.
- Professor Shohini Chaudhuri is guest-editing a special issue of *Studies in World Cinema* on "Indigenous Cinemas from South Asia," in collaboration with Dr Swapna Gopinath. The issue, due in

2026, highlights the intersections of cinema, agency, and representation.

- Professor Karen Hulme is fostering academic exchange and policy dialogue through her leadership of the IUCN Specialist Group on Environmental Security and Conflict Law, most recently chairing a high-level session at the IUCN Congress in Rabat.



Lectures: some highlights

- **Dr Sophie Duroy** gave her prize-winning talk at the KCL Centre for the Study of Intelligence, in celebration of her winning the 2024 Polly Corrigan Book Prize.



insights into the intersections of surveillance, automation, and rights, is available to view online.

- **Professor Ahmed Shaheed** gave the keynote address at the Human Rights 30 Forum in Tirana (Jan 2025), where he launched the Tirana Framework before delegates from 35 countries;
- Dr Matthew Gillett gave a presentation on [Eccocide at Ain Shams University](#) in Cairo (May 2025).
- **Professor Nicolas Forsans** spoke at the 13th UN Forum on Business and Human Rights (Nov 2024), at the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights (Jan 2025), and at a climate finance roundtable at The Shard, London (Mar 2025).

The year also saw strong HRC representation at the 2025 Oslo Freedom Forum. **Dr Matthew Gillett** featured in the session "[Engaging UN Bodies to Free Prisoners of Conscience](#)" and led a practical workshop on submitting cases to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. **Dr Katya Alkhateeb** took part in the panel "[After Dictatorship: Will Syrians Embrace a Free, Democratic, and Prosperous Future?](#)", sharing reflections from her work on transitional justice in post-Assad Syria.

- **Professor Shohini Chaudhuri** delivered an invited lecture at Université Paris Cité on *Soundscapes of Historical Violence*, joined a panel on *Celebrating Iranian Resistance* hosted by Index on Censorship in London, and hosted a [screening](#) and discussion of *Official Secrets* with director Gavin Hood and journalist Martin Bright at Essex (Jan 2025).
- **Professor Moya Lloyd** presented her paper *Claiming Grievability and/as Democratic Politics* at the PSA Annual [Conference](#) (April 2025), with a follow-up presentation planned for APSA in Vancouver. She also co-presented *Gilded Scars* at the University of Helsinki's [Centre for the Sociology of Democracy](#) (May 2025).
- **Dr Marina Lostal and Professor Joel Colón Ríos** presented on the comparative diagnosis of the implementation of the rights of nature, at the International Congress on the Rights of Nature in the Mediterranean (June 2025).
- **Dr Nikos Vogiatzis** contributed to the University of Grenoble's [workshop](#) on the Council of Europe's 75th anniversary and will give the closing lecture at Koç University's conference on international organisations as imperial designs (July 2025).
- **Dr Zhenbin Zuo** [presented](#) his empirical research on China's Social Credit System at the University of Oxford and the University of Hong Kong. His HKU talk, which offered unique



Remembering Professor Françoise Hampson

With profound sadness, we remember [Professor Françoise Hampson](#), a towering figure at the Human Rights Centre who passed away during this academic year. Her extraordinary contributions to human rights scholarship and practice continue to inspire our work.

Professor Hampson joined Essex in 1983, developing teaching and research on international humanitarian law. Her father's World War II experience and witnessing conflict in Northern Ireland sparked her lifelong commitment to protecting human rights during armed conflict.

Her scholarship at the intersection of international humanitarian law and human rights had real-world impact. She represented hundreds of applicants before the European Court of Human Rights and was named **Human Rights Lawyer of the Year in 1998 by Liberty** alongside late colleague Professor Kevin Boyle for their groundbreaking work on Turkish Kurdish cases.

Professor Hampson served as UK-nominated expert on the **UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights (1998-2007)** and as a member of the **UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (2017-2021)**. She worked with leading organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross and delivered legal training to military forces worldwide.

Her unique ability to translate theory into practice made her one of the most influential figures in international humanitarian law, respected across NGOs, governments, and militaries alike. She taught on our LLM and MA programmes and supervised generations of doctoral researchers, taking students on eye-opening intellectual journeys that trained them to become effective advocates.

Beyond her professional achievements, Françoise was a close friend to many colleagues. All who knew her were inspired by her integrity, passion, courage, and warmth. Her legacy endures in the laws she helped strengthen, the practitioners she inspired, and the standards of excellence she set in pursuing accountability for human rights violations.

She is irreplaceable and will be sorely missed by the entire Essex Human Rights Centre community.

Engage with us!

Website: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/centres-and-institutes/human-rights>

Blog site: <https://hrcessex.wordpress.com/>

Email: humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk

Please join our community:

* For Academics and Researchers

If you're an academic or researcher at Essex interested in becoming a member of the HRC, please email us at: humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk

* For Essex PhD Students

To join our doctoral affiliates network, email us at: humanrightscentre@essex.ac.uk

* For Students from all Departments at Essex

We invite students from across all departments of the University of Essex to join and participate in our activities. The interdisciplinary nature of human rights provides unique opportunities for students from various academic backgrounds to contribute and learn.

Ways to stay Informed

Follow our blog and social media channels to stay updated on our latest research, events, and opportunities in the field of human rights:



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The steps at the Colchester campus after our Chalking of the Steps.