



University of Essex



Human Rights Centre Clinic Report 2025/26

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Foreword from the Clinic Director

This year, students at the [Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic](#) provided hope and inspiration in the face of continuing global anti-rights movements. Working across seven projects, students produced reports for [specialist commissions](#), presented research to [UN expert groups](#), and [helped leading NGOs](#) tackle the some of the most pressing threats to civil society. This practical experience was complemented by students' participation in the [HU902 Human Rights Clinic](#) module, with specially designed expert sessions on digital verification, interviewing victims of human rights violations, and strategic litigation, among others.

The Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit ([ADRU](#)) continued to go from strength to strength, once again granting students the opportunity to present their work to [UN experts](#). Building on this success, the Clinic marked its commitment to excellence in experiential learning with the introduction of a new multi-year project – the Business and Human Rights Unit ([BHRU](#)). Partnering with Rights and Accountability in Development ([RAID](#)) and supervised by leading business and human rights experts, the BHRU allows students to contribute to the advancement of human rights and environmental protection in the context of business operations across the globe. The 2026-27 academic year will see the continuation of the partnership with RAID, as well as a new partner for the BHRU – the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNCHR](#)) – for a project analysing business impacts on refugee rights.

October 2026 will also see the launch of our third multi-year project – the Right to Housing Unit ([RHU](#)), supervised by Essex Law School academic and newly appointed [UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing](#), [Dr Koldo Casla](#). The range of multi-year projects within the Clinic reflects the key focus on experiential learning at Essex Law School and our commitment to providing meaningful skills-based opportunities for our students.

In June 2026, Clinic students had the opportunity to share their key research findings at this year's Annual Conference – [On the Frontlines of Global Justice](#). This was a highlight of the academic year, and to all those in attendance, it was clear that the Clinic's aims of delivering impactful research and training the next generation of human rights advocates are being met. In sharing the findings of their projects, students reflected on the challenges inherent in human rights work, as well as on how the Clinic has strengthened the skills needed to overcome these challenges. We were honoured to welcome representatives of partner organisations, including from Amnesty International and Index on Censorship, who outlined the benefits both to organisations and to students of engaging in meaningful human rights research through Clinic projects.

A distinguished panel of [Clinic alumni](#), who have gone on to successful roles in NGOs, academia, and government, helped to illustrate the transferable skills and lifelong experiences gained through Clinic projects. Alumni emphasised the crucial role that the Clinic played in launching their careers in human

rights, policy, and law – [to quote](#) Zeynep Baysar ([LLM International Human Rights Law](#), 2024), the Clinic is “*the starting point of opportunities*”. Zeynep, Research Officer for the Countering Islamophobia project at the Essex Human Rights Centre, continues to apply the collaborative approach taught within the Clinic in her current role, leading to significant human rights contributions including organising the HR30 Inaugural Conference Against Hate, which resulted in the [Tirana Framework for Confronting Intolerance](#). Genta Suzuki ([MA Theory and Practice of Human Rights](#), 2024) noted that “the Clinic taught me how to turn research into policy solutions” – experience that he finds invaluable in his role within the Gender Equality Bureau, Government of Japan.



Dr Sabina Garahan and Dr Claiton Fyock with members of this year's Clinic cohort, alumni, and representatives of partner organisations

In reflecting on key alumni achievements, witnessing the work of our current students, and looking forward to new and exciting projects in 2026-27, the Clinic and its partners create much-needed hope and optimism in tackling the human rights challenges before us. I am grateful to the whole Clinic community for all that you do, and for granting this optimism in abundance.

Dr Sabina Garahan

Director, Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic

Testimonials from partner organisations

“It has been a real pleasure working with the team. The students took on a complex and emerging area of research and approached it with impressive rigour, curiosity and professionalism. Their report not only provided a thorough analysis of the legal and policy landscape surrounding the online glamourisation of gun and gun-adjacent violence, but also generated practical recommendations that will directly inform our advocacy and research.

Importantly, I barely had to edit a word. This was a joy.

What stood out most was the students' ability to engage critically with an evolving issue, connect legal frameworks to real-world gun harms, and produce work of a standard that is genuinely useful to practitioners. The report will make a valuable contribution to AOAV's work and to wider discussions on gun violence prevention and public health.” – Dr Iain Overton, Executive Director, [Action on Armed Violence](#) and Co-Commissioner on the [Lancet Commission on Gun Violence and Health](#)

“Supervising the students of the Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit has been a highlight of the year; particularly as they represented Essex Law School with such professionalism and commitment to human rights. I look forward to following their developing careers over the coming years.” – Dr Matthew Gillett, Senior Lecturer at Essex Law School and Chair-Rapporteur of the [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#)

Highlights from 2025-26



Dr Dinushika Dissanayake, Deputy Regional Director for Europe, [Amnesty International](#), speaking at the 2026 Human Rights Centre Clinic Annual Conference

Members of the Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit [visit UN headquarters](#) in Geneva, March 2026



Clinic alumni at the 2026 HRC Clinic Annual Conference. L-R: Zuzanna Wojciak, AI Research and Program Coordinator, [WITNESS](#); Siân Posy, PhD Candidate, Sustainable Transitions, [Essex Law School/Human Rights Centre](#); Paddy Lawrance, Advisor, Human Rights Advocacy, [Frontline AIDS](#)

Resisting Foreign Agent Laws and the Shrinking of Civic Space



Partner: [Amnesty International](https://www.amnesty.org/)

Team: Bolorsaikhan Badamsambuu, Anne Goh, Rebecca Ngoka

Amnesty International is an international non-governmental human rights organisation and a movement of over 10 million members, activists, and supporters in more than 150 countries and territories. Amnesty International's mission is to advocate for global compliance with international human rights law, the development of human rights norms, and the effective enjoyment of human rights by all persons. The Civic Space Fellowship Programme at Amnesty International was introduced with the aim of supporting local human rights defenders, academics, and human rights practitioners with lived experience to work intensively on collecting innovative grassroots strategies for tackling authoritarianism and defending civic space in their region.

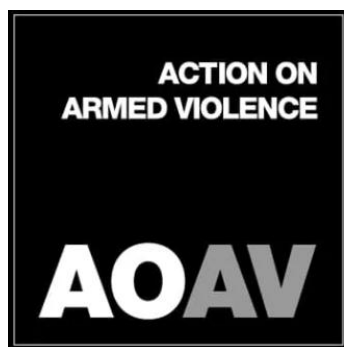
In collaboration with the Civic Space Fellowship Programme, this project examined the use of foreign agent laws – a widespread authoritarian practice which threatens the sustenance of impactful human rights work. By designating critics of the government as “foreign agents”, such laws restrict the operation of civil society organisations, threatening the ability of individuals and groups globally to voice dissent and challenge autocracy. The Clinic team comprehensively mapped foreign agent laws and legislative proposals across fifteen jurisdictions in Europe and Central Asia. This was accompanied by expert interviews, shedding light on the perspective of individuals with direct experience of foreign agent legislation and its impact on civil society. The project aimed to shed light both on the roots of foreign agent laws and their recent and rapid spread across Europe and Central Asia. This involved analysing the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and Russia's 2012 Law on Foreign Agents – two pieces of legislation seen to have spurred the introduction of foreign agent laws in other jurisdictions. The team explored the background and implementation of these laws, noting similarities and differences between them and evaluating the extent to which equivalent laws in Europe and Central Asia have been inspired by or deviated from these models.

The research identifies regional patterns, examines the relationship between foreign agent legislation and civic space, and explores whether the adoption of such laws is linked with broader trends of State control over civil society. The report ultimately finds that foreign agent laws form part of a broader authoritarian playbook that seeks to stifle dissent and shut down local accountability mechanisms before they can challenge power. In addition to mapping this increasingly repressive landscape, the Clinic team therefore identified legal and non-legal strategies developed by civil society. While various strategies have emerged, ranging from alternative funding models and strategic litigation to public campaigns, their effectiveness is often limited in restrictive environments. Where the possibility of legal challenge remains open, some organisations have brought cases domestically as well as before regional human rights courts such as the European Court of Human Rights. While litigation has rarely led to the repeal of foreign agent laws (often due to political interference in domestic courts), it continues to keep the question of their legality alive and establishes precedents that future challenges can draw on. The research also found that some organisations are moving away from legal strategies altogether, instead using media and art forms to connect with audiences and spread a human rights message. For example, the team heard from organisations that use interactive workshops to build connections with communities and other organisations. In this way, community initiatives based around education, research, and advocacy could be a real stepping stone towards making genuine policy change.

The Clinic report therefore evaluates both the legal and non-legal strategies available to challenge foreign agent laws and ultimately translates those findings into good practice and recommendations for civil society organisations, donors, governments, and the wider international community. In outlining key recommendations and analysing the strategies already in place, the research will help Amnesty International to build a campaign on resistance strategies to fight restrictions on civic space.

This project was supervised by [Dr Claiton Fyock](#) and Dr Elif Kuşkonmaz.

Tackling Online and Influencer Glamourisation of Gun Violence: a UK and European Perspective



THE LANCET

Partner: Action on Armed Violence ([AOAV](#)) and the [Lancet Commission on Gun Violence and Health](#)

Team: Kana Kondo, Christine McCormick, Nicola Souter, Ellie Taylor

In 2024, the Lancet established a new Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health to tackle the escalating global crisis of gun violence. The Commission has been set up to develop evidence-based solutions for reducing gun-related deaths and injuries, ultimately improving public health and safety on a global scale. The Commission consists of an interdisciplinary group of international experts from several disciplines and fields, such as public health, economics, law, medicine, history, and political science, as well as voices from civil society and non-governmental sectors. This project was set up in collaboration with [Dr Iain Overton](#), Co-Chair of the Lancet Commission on Global Gun Violence and Health, and Executive Director of Action on Armed Violence.

The manifestation of gun violence in the UK and the EU differs widely from jurisdictions such as the US due to stricter firearms regulations and lower rates of gun ownership. However, the increasing influence of digital platforms, online communities, and influencers has created new pathways through which the use of firearms and related harmful ideologies are glamourised. Against this background, the Clinic report evaluates the effectiveness of existing regulatory frameworks in the UK and EU in tackling the spread of violent and extremist ideologies online, particularly among vulnerable audiences. This includes online communities that promote aggressive behaviours, misogyny, and domestic violence (“the manosphere”), as well as far-right ideology. The Clinic report finds that while current legislation provides significant oversight on formal advertising and illegal content, regulatory gaps remain where influencers promote harmful narratives through seemingly non-commercial content. The research highlights the role of recommendation algorithms, online subcultures, and micro-influencers in amplifying violent norms which can shape attitudes towards weapons.

Drawing on evidence from the UK and EU as well as comparative international examples, the report argues that existing regulatory approaches fail to capture the wider influence of digital creators in glorifying online gun and gun-adjacent violence. Legislative frameworks such as the UK's Online Safety Act and the EU's Digital Services Act leave a regulatory gap which is filled by online subcultures with extremist social (misogynist) and political views that promote violence. As a result, ideological and lifestyle-based influencer content which glamourises gun-adjacent violence falls through the regulatory net, allowing harmful norms to spread as "authentic" personal opinion. In response, the report outlines the following key recommendations:

1. Redefining "influencer" – to effectively address the normalisation of gun-adjacent violence in digital spaces, there must be a transformative shift in the regulatory understanding of what constitutes an "influencer". Current frameworks frequently fail because they rely on a purely economic model, viewing influencers only through the lens of transactional marketing. A robust human rights-based approach requires acknowledging an influencer's ability to shape social attitudes and behaviours.
2. Implementation of a mandatory "Responsible Influencer Certificate", including mandatory training modules that cover the public health impacts of gun and gun-adjacent glamourisation, and oversight managed through a co-regulatory partnership between national media regulators (such as Ofcom) and industry self-regulatory bodies.
3. Commitment to improving accountability of online platforms, including a requirement for engineering departments and trust and safety Units in online platforms to work together to ensure that online safety is prioritised and that permanent and prompt action is taken to remove harmful and illegal content within the timeframes stipulated in statutory codes of conduct.
4. Additional public health interventions, including implementation of digital literacy training designed for vulnerable groups, and collaboration between communications companies and specialist NGOs in the development of online curricula for school children.
5. Addressing gaps in evidence – further interdisciplinary research is needed to explore the link between exposure to firearms and violence-related content and real-world behavioural outcomes in the UK and EU.

The report's findings will be fed into the Lancet Commission's recommendations in order to address the harmful effects of targeted marketing, deceptive messaging, and insufficient scrutiny over commercial tactics in firearm promotion.

This project was supervised by [Dr Alexandros Antoniou](#).

Recovering the Indigenous City: the Right to Adequate Housing and Lands of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico City



Partners: [Adequate Housing Clinic](#) (Universidad Iberoamericana) and [Indigenous Peoples' Rights Clinic](#) (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM))

Team: Alexandria Cannon, Eliza Hernandez Mora, Linda Nwude

The Adequate Housing Clinic is the first housing rights Clinic in Mexico, set up by the Universidad Iberoamericana and the Latin American Office of the Habitat International Coalition. The Housing Clinic aims to deepen knowledge and understanding of adequate housing and the problems that hinder its realisation through student training, innovative research, and legal aid for vulnerable people in Mexico City. The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Clinic is part of UNAM's Legal Research Institute. Composed of an Indigenous Council and an Operational Team, the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Clinic works on the advancement of the role of law and rights in efforts undertaken by Indigenous peoples to protect their cultures and territories. Both partner Clinics have been working with groups and communities in Mexico City that face rights violations, and through this identified a lack of research on the rights of Indigenous communities to access housing and land. This project was set up to fill this research gap and to provide Indigenous communities in Mexico City with a systemic analysis of the legal framework, potential obstacles, and legal opportunities to defend their rights.

The Clinic team therefore focused on the following research question – how can national and international legal frameworks, supported by international comparative experiences, inform effective strategies for defending the housing, land, and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples in Mexico City? In exploring the answer, students focused on three key areas – first, the relationship between poverty and urban Indigenous communities; second, community land trust and land restitution; and third, projects to support housing for Indigenous women. In identifying relevant initiatives in these areas, the team assessed whether these could be effectively replicated to address the housing challenges in Mexico City, and noted setbacks that could hinder their realisation in practice.

First, the Clinic team pinpointed initiatives that were able to address a lack of affordable and culturally adequate housing, while gaining wider reach through lobbying and education. Some potential limitations to replicating this in Mexico City are the need for large-scale investment to fund these projects, as well as the need for sustained engagement from people who face greater difficulties in accessing services. These initiatives are the most impactful when they are community-led, making them more adept at understanding and responding to the needs of people in their community.

Second, the research report finds that community land trusts (CLTs) have emerged as a means of strengthening Indigenous housing rights. CLTs remove land from speculative real-estate markets and place it instead under community stewardship, ensuring long-term affordability and community control. In implementing CLTs, Mexican Indigenous communities may struggle with a lack of regulatory flexibility that would allow for alternative forms of property regulation. A lack of will from stakeholders to implement projects and a lack of coordination between the public and private sector are further potential obstacles. The Clinic team thus recommends that communities work with authorities to use existing legal frameworks in a flexible and inclusive way, reaching an agreement that reflects the capacities, obligations, and goals of both the authorities and affected communities.

Third, in identifying projects focused on Indigenous women, the team noted initiatives on litigation and advocacy, housing and capacity building, and women's shelters. In order to ensure that such projects can be successfully replicated in Mexico City, the research finds that it is crucial to identify and empower the women in need of support. Challenges may arise since Indigenous women often move frequently, limiting their ability to access relevant services. In this respect, the provision of social and legal aid to enable access to emergency as well as long-term housing is key. Collaboration with Indigenous women's groups, feminist groups, and governments can help meet these goals.

Ultimately, the report recommends collaborative efforts with other stakeholders in all areas of focus. Housing initiatives are more likely to be adopted and implemented when Indigenous communities work jointly with authorities, private sector organisations, or other groups – such as feminist groups, advocates for disability rights, and human rights defenders – who share common goals. The report will support further advocacy and litigation by both the Housing and Indigenous Peoples' Rights Clinics.

This project was supervised by [Dr Koldo Casla](#).

Investigating the Weaponisation of Travel Bans



Partner: [Index on Censorship](#)

Team: Alexandra Panait, Kulsoom Rizvi, Adil Zawahir

Index on Censorship is a non-profit organisation that campaigns for and defends freedom of expression worldwide. It publishes work by censored writers and artists, promotes debate, and monitors threats to free speech. Since 1972, [Index on Censorship](#) has been reporting on free expression violations around the world, publishing banned writing, and shining a light on vital free expression issues through original and challenging commentary and analysis by some of the most influential voices in literature and journalism. Index advocates for changes in law and policy to ensure governments and businesses respect the fundamental right to free speech and fights censorship in journalism, the arts, and campaigning by supporting those affected and drawing attention to the challenges they face.

In pursuit of these aims, the Clinic project sought to draw attention to an underreported practice – the rise of travel bans as a tool of censorship. States across the world are increasingly weaponising travel bans, not just to keep critics from leaving their countries, but to stop them from entering. This isolates dissidents, breaks solidarity across borders, and undermines global norms around mobility and human rights. It also leads to self-censorship, as people begin to consider the risks of making critical speech in the context of their travel plans. The Clinic project was supervised by [Martin Bright](#), renowned journalist, Editor-at-Large of Index on Censorship, and Senior Lecturer at the University of Essex.

The team's research covered country case studies from across political contexts, moving from authoritarian settings where travel bans function as explicit tools of repression, to hybrid systems which combine elements of democracy with authoritarian control, and finally to democratic contexts where such restrictions sit uneasily with the stated right to free speech. Analysing the use of travel bans across all three categories of state, the Clinic report finds that, worryingly, the suppression of dissenting voices across borders is a global crisis not limited to authoritarian states. Importantly, conducting interviews with affected individuals allowed the Clinic team to explore the harsh lived reality of travel bans and their impact on individuals and their families as well as on wider communities – notably, the chilling effect on free speech. This analysis allowed the team to identify six key trends, present across all types of political context:

1. Travel bans cluster around politically sensitive moments, especially when dissent challenges ruling parties.
2. Travel bans are often arbitrary and issued with little to no explanation.
3. Travel bans rarely operate alone – they are layered with other modes of control.
4. Travel bans may seem minor, but the impact is deeply disruptive, punitive, and chilling.
5. Justifications rely on broad security and misinformation narratives.
6. Travel bans are often unnecessary or too broad to justify under international human rights law (and sometimes domestic law too).

As the report shows, authoritarian regimes and backsliding democracies appear to be increasingly weaponising travel restrictions to stifle dissent, creating a chilling effect on civil society that moves far beyond physical confinement alone. To counter this trend and protect free expression, the Clinic team urges States to: align domestic laws with international human rights standards; dismantle opaque administrative traps; end the weaponisation of citizenship and identity documents; cease secondary and collective punishments; audit domestic border policies in democratic nations; provide restorative justice and facilitate safe returns for exiled voices; and protect the rights of accused people and uphold the right to a fair trial. The international community is meanwhile urged to: provide secure legal status to exiled dissidents; strengthen diplomatic pressure; increase scrutiny through international human rights bodies; resist transnational repression tactic; and sustain and support civil society operating in exile; and create relevant research and advocacy partnerships between academia, civic society and state institutions. Enacting the final recommendation, the Clinic report will continue to play a key role in Index on Censorship's advocacy in this area, bringing accountability and scrutiny to an underreported practice raising significant human rights concerns.

This project was supervised by [Martin Bright](#).

Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit



Partner: [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#)

Team: Rosie Sparkes, Ayane Odagawa, Kubra Ozdemir, Eliza Hernandez Mora, Carolina Padrao, Shanika Rajanathan, Jessica Simmonds, Karla Tumulak

In 2025-26, the Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit (ADRU) continued to run as multi-year stand-alone project under the auspices of the Human Rights Centre Clinic. The ADRU is supervised by Dr Matthew Gillett, Senior Lecturer at Essex Law School and Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Based on written applications, which included a motivational statement, and online interviews, a cohort of eight students was selected out of a competitive pool of applicants. The selected students brought a diverse range of experience and linguistic ability to the team, including from Colombia, Philippines, Japan, Spain, Portugal, the USA, and the UK. Most students were enrolled on the [LLM International Human Rights Law](#) or the [MA Theory and Practice of Human Rights](#).

Over the course of the academic year, the ADRU collaborated with Dr Gillett and other UN experts to redress cases of alleged arbitrary detention. The team received specialised training on key legal and human rights concepts related to protections against arbitrary detention. This equipped team members for their effective work on real cases. They learned how to review and analyse submitted complaints of arbitrary detention, assessed government responses concerning allegations of human rights violations, and researched novel issues regarding detention-related human rights violations. The casework covered a range of regions and issues, ranging from detention without lawful basis, to detention as a form of reprisal for the exercise of human rights, and fair trial breaches.

Students also conducted thematic research, which was organised under two overarching topics. The first examined the disproportionate detention of Indigenous peoples. Across multiple jurisdictions, Indigenous communities are overrepresented in detention facilities due to the legacies of structural discrimination, historical dispossession, and legal systems that frequently fail to recognise their social realities. The students researched how Indigenous communities could be detained due to exercising human rights such as freedom of expression or assembly, the implications of business and human rights matters in their detention, and how alternatives to detention could be beneficial for Indigenous communities. The second topic explored arbitrary detention in the context of drug policy. Policy frameworks continue to treat dependence and vulnerability as criminal issues rather than public health concerns. The students focused on how drug courts potentially violate fundamental rights, the danger of the death penalty for drug related crimes, how migrants are disproportionately affected by these policies, and the drug war in the Philippines.

Throughout the year, students received relevant training from Dr Gillett on:

- the law concerning arbitrary detention and the five categories under which it is assessed by the UN Working Group;
- legal drafting for human rights litigation purposes;
- planning and conducting missions and country visits.

The ADRU sessions were typically held on a weekly basis. Alongside discussions on casework and thematic research, guest speakers provided insights on both international law and careers. These included Nema Milanina, former ICC Prosecutor, Victims Counsel, and Adviser to the US Ambassador for War Crimes at large (speaking on international law careers), Jessi Gilchrist of King's College London, (on vicarious trauma), Marie Nougier of the International Drug Policy Consortium, and Fergus Mackay of Indigenous Peoples' Rights International.

Importantly, to provide contextual understanding and opportunities to meet with professionals and experts on human rights, the ADRU organised a [field trip](#) to Geneva, with the support of Dr Claiton Fyock (Deputy Director of the Human Rights Centre Clinic). This took place from 26-27 March 2026, coinciding with the 105th session of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. During the trip, the students met with expert members of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, as well as professional human rights officers, staff from the UN High Commission for Refugees, a drug policy expert from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Independent Investigation Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM). Meeting with the Working Group allowed students to present key findings of their thematic research to experts in the field, engage in meaningful discussions, and ask questions regarding professional work in the UN and human rights field.

This project was supervised by [Dr Matthew Gillett](#).

Business and Human Rights Unit



Partner: [RAID \(Rights and Accountability in Development\)](#)

The Business and Human Rights Unit (BHRU) is a specialised unit that launched within the Human Rights Centre Clinic in the 2025-26 academic year. It marks a collaboration between the Essex Business and Human Rights Project ([EBHR](#)) and the Clinic. The BHRU builds on two decades of business and human rights scholarship and education expertise at Essex Law School/Human Rights Centre. BHRU participants work with academic supervisors and partner organisations to conduct research and develop outputs that support the advancement of human rights and environmental protection in the context of business operations across the globe. Students work on a range of projects, including conducting investigative research on corporate statements or reporting and carrying out background research on potential court claims for remediation of corporate harms. Working within the BHRU allows students to develop skills in identifying possible legal pathways to holding corporations accountable and understanding the practical challenges involved in cross-border business and human rights violations.

In 2025-26, the BHRU partnered with RAID (Rights and Accountability in Development). RAID is a UK-based NGO that investigates and exposes corporate wrongdoing, environmental harm, and human rights abuses. One of RAID's core areas of focus is the global shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy. While this transition is essential to addressing the climate crisis, it is increasingly marred by a troubling race to extract critical minerals – such as cobalt and copper – used in electric vehicle (EV) batteries and other clean technologies. Their work is at the forefront of exposing how this “green” economy is being powered by harmful practices that disproportionately affect communities in resource-rich countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In the DRC's copper and cobalt belt, industrial mining is often associated with severe environmental pollution, unsafe working conditions, and systemic human rights abuses, all within a context of weak regulation and limited accountability. Pollution caused by cobalt and copper mining has severely impacted the lives of local communities, violating their rights to clean water and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It has also affected their livelihoods through harmful

impacts on crops and fishing. This harm is felt acutely by women due to their roles in the community, and also by children because of their stage of development.

BHRU participants worked with a collaborative team of activist lawyers and legal researchers at RAID to build research and strategies that focus on just transition, human rights, and critical minerals. Through extensive desk research, the BHRU assisted in building an evidence base of the public commitments made by key mining operators on human rights, labour standards, environmental management systems, and grievance and remedy mechanisms. This acted as a point of comparison with data gathered through fieldwork conducted by RAID and its partner organisations which has identified extensive environmental, health, and human rights harms in DRC's cobalt and copper mining region. Students also compared commitments made by multinational corporations in mining sectors in other jurisdictions, in order to assess whether corporations took advantage of a more lax enforcement regime in the DRC. The Clinic's collaboration with RAID on this vital area of work will continue in the 2026-27 academic year.

This project was supervised by: [Dr Anil Yilmaz](#), [Dr Jessica Lawrence](#) and [Dr Justin Jos Poonjatt](#).