



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

School of Global Studies

Human Rights Practice

YOU'RE INVITED

Guest Speaker Series — Fall 2026

Human Rights Practice Program · University of Arizona

The [Human Rights Practice Program](#) is pleased to share our Fall 2026 Guest Speaker Series. This semester we welcome leading practitioners, scholars, and activists — from the United Nations, international NGOs, and grassroots movements — to speak on some of the most pressing issues in international human rights. All sessions are free and open to attend via Zoom. Details below, in chronological order.

Tuesday, September 8, 2026 · 9:00 AM Arizona time

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

Francisco Alfonzo · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/81145237205>

Francisco Alfonzo is a Venezuelan-qualified lawyer with extensive experience in domestic and international human rights advocacy and litigation in Latin America. He holds a Master's in Constitutional Law and an LLM in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex.

Since 2017, he has worked as a UN Human Rights Officer at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), supporting several Special Procedures mandates of the Human Rights Council, including the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

Thursday, September 10, 2026 · 8:00 AM Arizona time

Anti-Apartheid Resistance, Memory & Gender-Based Violence Advocacy

Mudzunga Farisani · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/87868064695>



Mudzunga Farisani was intimately involved in the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa. Her draft memoirs shed new light on the movement by focusing on how a mother and wife held her family together while her husband was imprisoned and tortured. She had to rally international pressure on the South African government while facing extreme threats from the secret police and others.

Mudzunga now devotes much of her work to inclusive education and to addressing gender-based violence in South Africa. She currently serves as Director of the Department of Education, Limpopo Province.

Thursday, September 17, 2026 · 9:00 AM Arizona time

The European Human Rights System

Dr. Anton Burkov · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/84391894342>

Dr. Anton Burkov, LL.M. (Essex), Ph.D. (Cambridge), is the founder, CEO, and chief country-conditions expert witness at the Strategic Litigation Center, where he testifies as an expert witness on Russia in U.S. immigration, asylum, and Convention Against Torture proceedings, on retainer to U.S. law firms including Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld and Morgan, Lewis & Bockius.

For more than two decades, he has litigated human rights cases in Russian courts — including the Supreme and Constitutional Courts — and before the European Court of Human Rights, including cases addressing organ removal without family consent, digital privacy, and freedom from forced labor. He is the recipient of Russia's highest legal honor, the FEMIDA award, and a Fulbright Scholar alumnus of Harvard Law School's Human Rights Program. Through the Strategic Litigation Center's training program, he has trained more than 800 attorneys across Eurasia and has served on the University of Arizona program's International Advisory Board since 2019.

Thursday, September 17, 2026 · 9:00 AM Arizona time

Maasai Self-Determination, Education & Community Development

Resiato Salyan Lembaka & Musa Timan · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/83730716495>



Resiato Salyan Lembaka and Musa Timan are two young Maasai activists who founded the Talent Maasai Development Initiative to provide education, water access, and adult literacy to remote Maasai communities in Tanzania. They have also been active in advocating for Maasai self-determination in the face of increasing government and private-company encroachment onto Maasai lands.

Thursday, September 24, 2026 · 9:00 AM Arizona time

Right to Life and Prohibition of Torture

Luisella Preciado Gomez · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/88533278060>

Luisella Preciado Gomez is a human rights lawyer with over 15 years of experience in the field of human rights. She holds bachelor's degrees in Law and International Relations from the Western Institute of Technology and Higher Education (ITESO), Mexico.

She currently works with the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and the UN Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Before joining OHCHR in 2018, she worked for five years with the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Centre (FrayBa) in Chiapas, Mexico, where she documented human rights violations — including torture in places of deprivation of liberty — and accompanied Indigenous Peoples in the defence of their collective rights, including rights to land, territory, and autonomy.

Thursday, October 1, 2026 · 4:00 PM Arizona time

Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Indigenous Women's Rights

Gena Edwards · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/83298888244>

Gena Edwards is Director of BC Native Women's Association and a representative of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). NWAC has developed the Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA) framework — a rights-based analytical tool grounded in Indigenous women's advocacy and legal traditions.

Drawing on this framework, the session explores how Indigenous perspectives challenge universal conceptions of equality and contribute to more culturally grounded and decolonial approaches to international human rights law.

Thursday, October 1, 2026 · 8:00 PM Arizona time

Trauma, Resilience & the Right to Joy: Rohingya Poetry

Sirajul Islam & Mayyu Hamim · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/81031340428>



Sirajul Islam and Mayyu Hamim are two young Rohingya poets who have been confined to the world's largest refugee camp, in Bangladesh, for nine years. The Rohingya were the victims of a genocide in neighboring Myanmar in 2017 and were forced to cross the border into Bangladesh, where they have languished since. Sirajul and Mayyu taught themselves poetry and have now published several volumes, available through Amazon. They will discuss trauma, resilience, and the right to joy for the Rohingya people.

Tuesday, October 6, 2026 · 1:30 PM Arizona time

Business and Human Rights

Gare Smith · Join via Zoom: <https://arizona.zoom.us/j/83306911843>

Gare Smith is a Partner and Chair of the Global Business & Human Rights practice at Foley Hoag LLP, which he founded to help corporations and governments align their business practices with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Recognized by Chambers Global as "a legendary name in the field" for his pioneering work in Human Rights Impact Assessments, he advises clients in banking, extractive, technology, manufacturing, private equity, and retail sectors on integrating respect for human and labor rights into their management practices and supply chains.

Gare served as Co-Chair of the U.S. State Department's Advisory Committee on Responsible Business Conduct. Earlier in his career, he was appointed by the White House as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, where he helped launch President Clinton's Model Business Principles and served as a U.S. representative to the International Labor Organization, the UN Human Rights Commission, and the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples. He also served as Senior Foreign Policy Advisor and Counsel to Senator Edward M. Kennedy and as Vice President of a major global clothing brand, overseeing worldwide implementation of its code of conduct.

Want to know more?

Explore our program. Learn about the MA and graduate certificates in Human Rights Practice at <https://humanrightsppractice.arizona.edu/>

Never miss an event. Join our mailing list for news of future speakers and events: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfg_pNXgwcOxCfxj3xqocwdjjqmfOUPQhHpWBJFUVIteUPdiw/viewform

Human Rights Practice Program · School of Global Studies · University of Arizona

For more information, contact: elisamarchi@arizona.edu