

# BCHR NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Network for Business, Conflict and Human Rights

## WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Call for submissions;

Events, workshops, and courses;

New Library Resources;

News on the United States, Hong Kong, Cambodia, and more.



The BCHR Network is pleased to present the BCHR Update Newsletter, which provides a host of insights into the work of the network and its members.

## ABOUT THE BCHR NETWORK:

- Click [here](#) to learn more about the BCHR Network.
- Click [here](#) for a complete list of the BCHR Network members.

The main purpose of this newsletter is to

- a) share information about the work of the network and its members to a wider audience; and
- b) to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between the network members themselves and with other interested parties.

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# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### *Ecological Justice and the Right to Health*

**Deadline:** March 31, 2021

It is now widely acknowledged that health risks are situated amid changing climates and environmental degradation, with extreme temperatures and weather patterns, poor air and water quality, and food insecurity contributing to violence and diseases of epidemic and pandemic proportions. Ongoing threats to social and cultural rights aggravate pre-existing health disparities particularly for Indigenous populations, people of color, ethnic minorities, and people living with disabilities. Citizens, grassroots organizations, activists, and scholars are working toward holistic and creative solutions that acknowledge the relationship between ecological justice, rights, and social determinants of health.

However, the peer-reviewed literature has thus far seldom addressed the interconnectedness of these issues, particularly in ways that consider the relationships among legal, economic, and political frameworks and health. Original research contributions are particularly lacking in the aforementioned areas.

This special section aims to explore the conceptual and practical connections between ecological justice and the right to health. Of particular interest are papers that go beyond locating and describing problems in identifying leverage points for changes that could enhance the rights, health, and wellbeing of the most vulnerable stakeholders.

Papers on this topic could address human rights aspects of these issues, find [here](#) more information about them.

Full papers have a maximum word length of 7,000 words, including references. We also invite Perspective Essays of up to 3000 words, including references, on this topic.

Submit manuscripts to editors at [hhrsubmissions@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:hhrsubmissions@hsph.harvard.edu).

Contact information for the organization: Questions can be submitted to [williams@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:williams@hsph.harvard.edu), [hfr@phoenixzonesinitiative.org](mailto:hfr@phoenixzonesinitiative.org) or [hferdowsian@salud.unm.edu](mailto:hferdowsian@salud.unm.edu).

## ***Health Rights and the Urgency of the Climate Crisis***

**Deadline:** March 31, 2021

What can we learn from the response to the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 threat that we can use in responding to climate change? How can we ensure that the trillions of dollars spent on reactivating economies around the globe will decarbonize it as well? What norms and standards do we apply in formulating short-term and long-term responses to the impending climate crisis? Human rights, including the right to health, offers a legitimate, cohesive and effective legal and ethical framework for action on climate change. This special section explores the meaning and application of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to climate change. It invites health rights scholars and practitioners to address an HRBA to climate justice under the four subtopics:

1. Indivisibility, interdependency and interrelatedness of human rights: Crises, whether COVID-19 or climate change, demonstrate the impossibility of addressing human rights via vertical single-issue responses. Fulfilling people's economic and social rights, especially the right to health, is dependent upon the freedom to move, freedom to participate in decision making, and access to information, food, water and sanitation. Crises require holistic human rights responses.
2. Vertical and horizontal inequalities: Crises emphasize vertical and horizontal inequalities in each society. Those most disadvantaged have the least resources to draw upon when impacted by a large scale emergency. The financial crisis of 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 have demonstrated these unequal impacts on health rights across populations.
3. Transparency, participation, and accountability: In times of crisis, people need leaders they can trust. They need to know their voices are heard, that decisions are made and conveyed openly, and that there is a process of holding leaders to account for those decisions. People who are the most marginalized and vulnerable to health rights violations, Indigenous people, those with disabilities, children, women, those living remotely, must all be included in responses so they are not left even more unequal.
4. Economic and social rights: Crises impact differently on the rights to health care, decent work, education, housing, water, sanitation, family life, culture and science. COVID-19 has challenged the enjoyment of all of these rights and responses to these challenges have varied tremendously across countries and local communities. Climate change will similarly impact all human rights and consideration of health rights requires deep consideration of how to ensure the protection of all rights.

Questions can be submitted to [williams@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:williams@hsph.harvard.edu) or [Gillian.MacNaughton@umb.edu](mailto:Gillian.MacNaughton@umb.edu). Submit manuscripts to editors at [hhrsubmissions@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:hhrsubmissions@hsph.harvard.edu)

For more information click [here](#).

***ICFAI's Book on Emerging Issues in Environmental Law***

**Deadline:** April 15, 2021

The Centre for Environmental Law, Policy Education & Development (CELPED) a research Centre on Environmental Law at The ICFAI University, ICFAI Law School invites professionals, faculty members, researchers and students of law to contribute research articles to be considered for publication in a proposed book, to be published under the aegis of the University. Any original scholarly work providing multi-disciplinary discussions on the environment and following the general theme outlined hereunder shall be considered for publication as part of the Book by the Editorial Board.

ICFAI Law School, The ICFAI University, Dehradun is inviting for chapters for its book on 'Guide to Issues & Challenges in Environment and Related Laws: A Handbook'.

The Proposed book through its contentious theme-based topics, will attempt to build on the needs and explore the complex and unique interplay between the Environmental Law and Climate Change, Advocacy, Biodiversity, Wildlife Management, Ecological & Sustainable Development, Human Rights, Trade Law and Urban Development aiming to establish dialogue and forward solutions on major environmental issues and challenges from a National and International Perspective.

Title of the Book: *'Guide to Issues & Challenges in Environment and Related Laws: A Handbook'*.

Themes:

1. Climate Change and Climate Justice
2. Environmental Advocacy
3. Biodiversity Laws in India
4. Wildlife Management and Conflict
5. Advent of Ecological Development
6. Environment and Sustainable Development
7. Constitution of India and Environmental Jurisprudence
8. Environment and Human Rights
9. Environment and Trade Laws
10. Environment and Urban Development
11. Ozone Depletion and Related Laws
12. Sustainable Development Goals
13. Laws Related to Air
14. Laws Related to Water
15. Laws Related to Land

[Submission guidelines](#) and more information [here](#).

## EVENTS, WORKSHOPS AND COURSES

### FRONTIER MINERALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: MOVING FROM CONFLICT TO PEACEBUILDING? (A ROAD TO GENEVA EVENT)

**Date:** March 31, 2021

**Hosted by:** University of Delaware, Minerals, Materials and Society Program and Joseph R. Biden Jr. School of Public Policy and the Environmental Peacebuilding Association

Due to multiple time zone constraints for speakers, the symposium has been divided into two parts. This will allow for maximum attendance worldwide. We hope you can attend both segments but fully understand if only one is possible due to time zone constraints.

Part 1: Oceanic Frontiers: environmental governance and public-private partnerships in deep sea mining (**register here**)

Part 2: Space Frontiers: recrafting diplomacy for extractive industries beyond Earth (**register here**)

For more information click **here**.

### POLITICAL RISK OUTLOOK 2021: SUPPLY CHAINS FACE HEIGHTENED POLITICAL RISKS IN 2021, LEARN HOW TO HANDLE THEM

**Date:** March 25, 2021, 2:30 pm GMT

**Hosted by:** Verisk Maplecroft

In the wake of a tumultuous 2020, and with President Biden already reshaping US policy on multiple fronts, the global business landscape is in a state of flux. Geopolitical tensions stemming from strategic rivalries, Beijing's bid to reorient global value chains in China's favour, and the opportunities and consequences of the energy transition will have a major impact on the international business environment and economies still struggling with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this webinar the analysts will dig into these key topics, exploring their drivers and discussing potential implications and strategies for global business' with multinational footprints, supply chains and investments. The webinar will cover issues such as whether geopolitical tensions are poised to disrupt global supply chains, how the energy transition could undermine political stability in key investment markets and why China is diversifying its supply chains and trade partners for its own benefit.

Register **here**

## NEW LIBRARY RESOURCES

### **EFFECTIVENESS OF SECTION 54 OF THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT – EVIDENCE AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

**Published:** February, 2021

**Source:** Modern Slavery & Human Rights

The report analyses section 54 of the UK Modern Slavery Act (2015) and seeks to answer how effective it is in holding UK businesses accountable for modern slavery in their supply chains. The researchers find that (i) there is only limited compliance with the letter of the law, (ii) that despite the Modern Slavery Act statements have increased in length and sophistication, this did not necessarily translate into increased action or provide further insight into the company's modern slavery supply chain risks and preventive steps and (iii) that it is difficult for civil society organisations to evaluate the extent to which modern slavery has reduced due to a lack of verifiable and evidence backed-information. The report concludes with recommendations for stakeholders to increase effectiveness of section 54.

[Learn More](#)

### **POLICY REPORT: ENHANCING CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED SETTINGS**

**Published:** February 18, 2021

**Source:** Conflict and Environment Observatory

Corporations contribute to environmental harm in conflict-affected areas in numerous ways, including through the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and the circulation of arms, enabling wildlife crime and poaching. The activities of corporations can also undermine the environmental security of communities, in turn posing threats to human security, and triggering local disputes that impede peacebuilding.

This report reconceptualises environmental protection during and after conflicts as a key component for the field of Security and Rule of Law. In doing so, it re-examines the roles and functions of key stakeholders, in order to improve conduct and so minimise and address harm to people and ecosystems. Through a comparative exercise, this report further enhances the understanding of the intersecting rules that should govern the environmental conduct of states and corporations in fragile and conflict-affected settings, as well as clarify the obligations of those actors during the phase of transition.

[Learn More](#)

## NEW LIBRARY RESOURCES

### **EJATLAS - GLOBAL ATLAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

**Source:** Environmental Justice Atlas

The Environmental Justice Atlas documents and catalogues social conflict around environmental issues.

Across the world communities are struggling to defend their land, air, water, forests and their livelihoods from damaging projects and extractive activities with heavy environmental and social impacts: mining, dams, tree plantations, fracking, gas flaring, incinerators, etc. As resources needed to fuel our economy move through the commodity chain from extraction, processing and disposal, at each stage environmental impacts are externalized onto the most marginalized populations. Often this all takes place far from the eyes of concerned citizens or consumers of the end-products.

[Learn More](#)

### **VOICES FROM TANZANIA. CASE STUDIES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS (VOLUME 2) "LAND RIGHTS & ENVIRONMENT"**

**Published:** January 19, 2021

**Source:** World Economic Forum

*"Voices from Tanzania"* studies are devised as small, field-based scoping studies, executed by Tanzanian civil society organization, which aim to draw attention to pertinent issues on business and human rights in Tanzania. Through their presence and activities, businesses can play an important role in both promoting and harming human rights. While it is the State's duty to protect citizens from corporate harm, businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights. This means that they have to act diligently in order to avoid infringing on human rights.

The second volume of *"Voices from Tanzania"* presents four cases studies that focus on "land rights and environment": Lawyers' Environmental Action Team, HakiArdhi (the Land Rights Research and Resources Institute), Tanzania Women Empowerment in Action & Community Economic Development and Social Transformation.

The studies address two key issues in this regard: (1) how are initiatives to increase land tenure security and land use planning affecting rural communities, and (2) how are conservation efforts impacting land and human rights in villages adjacent to protected areas?

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## NEW LIBRARY RESOURCES

### HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS OF DRUG COMPANIES

**Published:** November 11, 2020

**Source:** Research Gate

This article addresses the human rights obligations of pharmaceutical companies regarding access to vaccines and other drugs developed to prevent and treat COVID-19, and more broadly regarding access to essential medicines. We examine two United Nations guidelines—the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Human Rights Guidelines for Pharmaceutical Companies in relation to Access to Medicines—which assert that pharmaceutical companies have human rights responsibilities to make essential medicines available to patients in the global South, and that member-states are responsible for enforcing these obligations.

We develop a moral theory that justifies such human rights duties based on the idea of a “social contract” that more broadly underpins the idea of corporate social responsibility. We conclude by offering practical advice enabling pharmaceutical companies to balance their human rights duties to the global South with their responsibilities to shareholders and the need to sustainably incentivize drug discovery.

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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### MINE THAT PRODUCED QUEEN'S DIAMOND INVESTIGATES CLAIMS OF ABUSES BY GUARDS

**Published:** March 5, 2021

**Source:** Kate Hodal, The Guardian

A Tanzanian mine that produced a flawless pink diamond for one of the Queen's favourite brooches is investigating claims that security personnel have shot and assaulted illegal miners. New allegations come months after a lawsuit alleging "serious" human rights abuses was filed against Petra Diamonds, the mine's British owner, in the high court in London. The London Stock Exchange-listed company, whose shares dropped 80% last year amid plummeting diamond prices, claims to be an "ethical diamonds" seller.

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### AMAZONIAN GROUPS SUE FRENCH SUPERMARKET CHAIN OVER DEFORESTATION

**Published:** March 4, 2021

**Source:** BBC

French supermarket chain Casino is being sued by indigenous groups from the Amazon, for allegedly selling beef linked to deforestation. The 11 indigenous groups, backed by NGOs in the US and France, are seeking €3.1m (\$3.7m; £2.7m) in damages. In a statement, the groups linked Casino meat to an area of deforestation "five times the size of Paris".

Casino told AFP and Reuters news agencies that it took a "rigorous" approach to its supply chains. The company is being taken to court under a French law enacted in 2017. Under the law, businesses must avoid human rights and environmental violations in their supply chains.

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## PERU'S JUSTICE MINISTER: IT IS POSSIBLE TO WORK IN FAVOR OF INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

**Published:** February 23, 2021

**Source:** Andina

Despite the situation faced by Peru and the rest of the world—to control the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic—there are signs of hope and very clear signs that it is possible to work in favor of an inclusive and sustainable society, Justice and Human Rights Minister Eduardo Vega affirmed on Tuesday.

The high-ranking official referred to the efforts made by the private sector to improve its due diligence mechanisms in the field of human rights, as well as to work with the State, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples and unions, in the preparation of the first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in Peru.

"We are convinced that an action plan, in terms of business and human rights, can contribute to the sustainable development of the country, and the construction of a more egalitarian, more inclusive country in which people can fully exercise our rights," he commented.

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## MEPS BACK PROPOSALS REQUIRING FIRMS TO COMPLY WITH HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

**Published:** March 2, 2021

**Source:** The Parliament Magazine

EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders has committed himself to proposing a binding due diligence law for companies operating in the European internal market in the first half of this year.

Reynders has vowed that the upcoming legislative proposal will be an integral part of the European Green Deal and the European Recovery Plan.

The parliamentary report going to plenary clearly states its support for European rules requiring companies to identify and remedy risks to human rights, health, the environment or good governance arising from their activities throughout their supply chain.

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## COVID-19 VACCINE PRODUCERS HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSIBILITIES

**Published:** February 11, 2021

**Source:** Human Rights Watch

The World Health Organization reported an alarming statistic: by February 5, not a single dose was administered in 130 countries with 2.5 billion people.

Bridging the vaccine gap requires a human rights approach. Governments have the primary responsibility to ensure everyone, everywhere has access to a safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine. But companies have human rights responsibilities too.

Human Rights Watch's new Question-and-Answer document, "*Universal and Equitable Access to Covid-19 Vaccines, Testing, Treatments: Companies' Human Rights Responsibilities*," draws upon the 2011 *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* and the 2008 *UN Human Rights Guidelines for Pharmaceutical Companies* in relation to Access to Medicines to inform pharmaceutical companies' approach to making Covid-19 medical products available and affordable.

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## BLOGS AND OPINIONS

### THE EU NEEDS TO HOLD THE FINANCIAL SECTOR TO ACCOUNT IF IT IS TO END ITS COMPLICITY IN GLOBAL DEFORESTATION

**Published:** February 24, 2021

**Author:** Giulia Bondi

**Source:** Global Witness

With the European Commission due to introduce a legislative proposal to tackle EU-driven deforestation, the EU has a key opportunity to show global leadership by addressing forest destruction and the associated biodiversity loss, climate impacts and human rights harms. But for this law to be effective, it is crucial that it takes on the role of the EU's finance sector, which is bankrolling deforestation.

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### WHY HUMAN RIGHTS DUE DILIGENCE MUST BE A MANDATED CONCERN OF CORPORATE BOARDS

**Published:** March 3, 2021

**Source:** Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

Last year Rio Tinto destroyed a 46,000 year old native cultural site at Juukan Gorge in Western Australia without the free, prior and informed consent of its owners – the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikara peoples. The company's own internal investigation stated the decision was never brought to the board. This example raises fundamental questions about the relationship of board governance and human rights – something a new legislative initiative of the European Commission looks set to address. The European Commission (EC) proposes to make mandatory human rights due diligence (mHRDD) a requirement for companies, the scope of which has yet to be defined. One of the key questions is how much board oversight is needed for effective management of a company's environmental and human rights risks and whether this oversight should be mandated directly in law.

[Learn more](#)

## BLOGS AND OPINIONS

### EU MANDATORY DUE DILIGENCE LEGISLATION: WHAT INVESTORS NEED TO KNOW AND WHY THEY SHOULD CARE

**Published:** February 8, 2021

**Author:** Johannes Blankenbach & Saskia Wilks

**Source:** Investor Alliance for Human Rights

Since its beginning a year ago, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has exposed once more the vulnerabilities in value chains, the precarity of global business operations, and the weakness of voluntary corporate action in addressing these issues.

Organizations like the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre take up hundreds of grassroots allegations of abuse each year. During the COVID-19 crisis, we have seen a spike in allegations as millions of workers and communities around the world feel the consequences of corporate inaction in the face of a global pandemic. Yet there are signs of change.

[Learn More](#)

### HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS CONTINUE TO BE KILLED WITH IMPUNITY

**Published:** March 2, 2021

**Author:** Mary Lawlor

**Source:** Aljazeera

It has been five years since environmental human rights defender Berta Cáceres was murdered in her home in Honduras.

She was one of hundreds of human rights defenders killed that year because of their peaceful work. Hundreds have been killed every year since, but those responsible have rarely been brought to justice. Although some have been convicted of Cáceres's killing, others believed to have been involved are still to be held to account.

It is a familiar and continuing story, in Honduras and across the world, where those responsible for the murder of a human rights defender often enjoy impunity.

This week I am presenting my latest report to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, and it is on the killings of human rights defenders and the threats that often precede them.

[Learn more](#)

## SHARING AND POSTING MATERIALS

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We very much welcome your comments and suggestions for how the BCHR newsletter can better serve the network's needs and interests as well as those of its members.

We kindly invite you to share this newsletter with academics, NGO and practitioners that might be interested in its content.

If you are interested in contributing to future editions of the newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us at [maria.prandi@networkbchr.org](mailto:maria.prandi@networkbchr.org).

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## ABOUT THE NETWORK

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The Network brings together researchers, practitioners and NGO members from various fields with the aim of researching and analysing the role of business in conflict situations reducing the human and people's rights violations and any other negative social and environmental impact as well other adverse consequences. It also looks at the potential role of companies in relation to peace building.

The Network reflects upon the causes, dynamics and consequences of business involvement in armed conflicts and systematic state repression, as well as upon existing or potential responses to such involvements in light of the responsibilities of all concerned actors and ongoing international and local efforts to develop and apply appropriate initiatives and guidelines.

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**Visit:** <http://www.networkbchr.org/>