



The Association of Human Rights Institutes (AHRI) calls for the submission of proposals for papers to be presented at the AHRI Human Rights Conference to be held in Copenhagen on 29-30 September 2014.

“Human Rights under Pressure: Exploring norms, institutions and policies”

Over the past 20 years the human rights agenda has advanced at a pace few could have imagined. Political, economic, social, and legal developments have each helped bolster protection and secure accountability for human rights abuses. Across thematic areas, both state and non-state actors have increasingly referenced human rights and the ‘rule of law’, and human rights have come to feature more prominently in international relations and public discourse. We have witnessed the emergence of new norms and institutions to advance human rights protection, and several existing adjudicatory and supervisory mechanisms have been expanded and strengthened. Human rights scholarship has developed in significant ways, crafting stronger links across disciplines and methodologies.

Amidst these developments, however, the human rights project has been marred by a sense of impending crisis. Wide-scale human rights violations have remained high in many parts of the world. Even in traditional frontrunner countries, human rights norms have caved to politics on thorny issues such as immigration, the fight against terrorism, minority protection, and economic policy. The reach of human rights has also been challenged by new policies and shifting patterns of governance in our current age of globalisation. Growing inequality at the domestic and international levels, extrajudicial killings, digital mass surveillance, private military contractors and global law enforcement each challenge the traditional picture of state sovereignty and each raise hard questions as to the scope and division of human rights obligations.

At the institutional level, human rights have also come under pressure. Strong criticism has been raised against various international human rights bodies for being inefficient, politicised or both with governments having actively sought to reign in interpretative and adjudicatory power, while other international organisations often just turn a blind eye to them.

While these narratives seem to point in different directions and are usually treated as separate phenomena, this conference aims to explore the interplay in a world where human rights are equally celebrated and contested.

It invites scholars from across academic disciplines and thematic areas to reflect critically on the current dynamics in the field of human rights and to explore the various methodological and theoretical challenges in international human rights research today. Papers and panels exploring any of the above mentioned themes are welcome. Preference will be given to strong proposals that fall within one of the following five tracks, under which several panels will be organised:

1. International Institutions and their Discontents: This track invites critical engagement with the work of international institutions and their impact on human rights. This may include traditional human rights bodies and courts, regional and international organisations and forums as well as other institutions, formal or informal, that have relevance for human rights. Submissions might address institutional architecture, reform, or normative developments through their legal or political bodies.

2. Development and Human Rights: This track explores the relationship between development and human rights to lay bare both synergies and contestations, papers may for example focus on the role of new actors in developing countries, the role of human rights in humanitarian conflicts, human rights and international investments, and human rights and corporate social responsibility.

3. The European Union and Human Rights: The EU has pledged to include human rights as a silver thread running through all its policies. This track will seek to survey various EU policies to assess whether the EU is delivering on its pledge in terms of coherence, consistency, effectiveness and legitimacy.

4. Human Rights and the "Other": This track addresses the theoretical and practical responses to the clashes between cultural and constitutional pluralism and their consequences for the human rights protection of those perceived as "Other", based on their ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or foreignness etc.

5. Methods and Theories of Human Rights: This track invites papers to explore methodological issues in human rights research and interpretation. It examines theoretical developments in human rights scholarship and the cross-fertilisation of approaches and concepts across disciplines. Multi-disciplinary papers are particularly welcome.

Practical Information

The 2014 AHRI conference is co-hosted by the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Faculty of Law, University of Copenhagen, and will take place on 29-30 September 2014 at the University of Copenhagen.

The conference is open to both AHRI and non-AHRI members and aims to bring together both junior and senior academics to present the most recent human rights research in the humanities, law, social sciences and other disciplines.

Travel and accommodation costs are expected to be covered by the participants themselves. Individual bursaries may be available for particular panels upon request. A registration fee of 70 EUR will cover amenities and lunches during both days of the conference.

Submission of Abstracts and Panel Proposals

Interested participants should submit:

1. title of paper,
2. an indication of the track to which the paper belongs,
3. an abstract of no more than 500 words,
4. author name, affiliation and biographical details,
5. contact details.

Papers can be presented on any topic related to human rights and should be unpublished. Interdisciplinary projects and jointly authored papers are welcomed. Proposals for entire panels (up to four papers) are equally welcome, indicating the title, abstract and author of each paper as well as proposed chairs and discussants.

Deadline for submission

Deadline for submission of abstracts and panel proposals is 1 May 2014. Submissions should be sent to ekni@humanrights.dk. All abstracts will be reviewed by the AHRI Programme Committee and selections announced by 1 June 2014. Formal registration for the conference will be possible from 1 June.

Contact information

- For practical questions about the conference please contact Eva Krogsgård Nielsen, ekni@humanrights.dk.
- For questions relating to AHRI, including admission of new members, please contact Eva Maria Lassen, eva@humanrights.dk.
- For questions related to the submission of papers and the overall conference programme, please contact Steven L. B. Jensen, sje@humanrights.dk.

Members of the AHRI Conference Programme Committee

Margot Salomon (coordinator of Track 1); Morten Broberg (coordinator of Track 2); Jan Wouters (coordinator of Track 3); Aleksandra Gliszczynska-Grabias (coordinator of Track 4); and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (coordinator of Track 5).

On behalf of the AHRI Conference Programme Committee,

Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, *AHRI Executive Chairman*

The Association of Human Rights Institutes (AHRI) is comprised of 49 academic institutes with a mandate to advance research, education and discussion in the field of human rights.