

Fall 2023



Dear friends and alums,

This year, the International Human Rights Law Clinic celebrates its 25th anniversary. That's a quarter century of standing for justice by standing shoulder to shoulder with victims, survivors, communities, and defenders. That's a quarter of a century training students to be strategic, committed, and ethical advocates.

An anniversary is a powerful opportunity to look back and reflect. One of the first human rights clinics in the country, IHRLC was founded in 1998 with a dual mission of education and service to provide students with human rights training and experience, and to strengthen and promote human rights protections in national, regional, and international fora.

Since then, nearly 400 students have graduated from the program, worked in 20 countries, and in aggregate, logged more than 88,000 hours defending human rights. Behind these numbers are the stories of thousands of transformative connections created across communities and borders.

What we have accomplished in these 25 years in partnership with survivors, communities, and organizations is tremendous. We have secured landmark rulings on behalf of Dominican-born children of Haitian ancestry denied their right to Dominican nationality, the families of the disappeared in Guatemala, and Colombian victims of paramilitary violence. We have successfully pressed for new policies to advance gender parity in international tribunals, identify migrants who perished in the U.S.-Mexico desert, and promote justice for conflict-related sexual violence against men in Uganda.

We have released more than 45 reports and white papers, including pathbreaking studies about the experiences of former Guantánamo detainees, the human rights impacts of unsolved murders in Oakland, and the inequities of vulnerable populations impacted by Hurricane Katrina and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

After 25 years, Laurel is stepping down as co-director in June 2024 to start a new clinic at the school. Part of the clinic since its beginning, Laurel worked alongside founding director Carolyn Patty Blum, and since 2005 with Roxanna. She has brought extraordinary dedication, wisdom, and tenacity to the clinic's mission. Generations of students and faculty have been buoyed by Laurel's leadership and support. Stay tuned for more to come about this exciting development!

We will continue to grow and expand our efforts as we move into the next quarter century, advancing our core mission of service and education. Although the future brings breathtaking challenges, we are committed to finding ways to build power and change systems in pursuit of justice. The clinic is in the process of hiring two clinical supervising attorneys who will help expand and diversify the clinic's docket. We also plan to strengthen our bonds with alums and create more opportunities for our community to connect with our work through events.

These past 25 years have taught us a lot — and many of those lessons came from you, our students, our partners, our colleagues, and our friends. We are deeply grateful for your dedication, support, and generosity, which makes all of what we do possible. Please consider making a [gift to the International Human Rights Law Clinic](#) as part of your year-end giving.

We look forward to connecting with you soon!

Best,

Laurel and Roxanna
Clinic Co-Directors



P.S. More than 300 students enrolled in clinics last year, demonstrating their commitment to social justice and developing the skills to be effective advocates. Please take a look at the [Clinical Program's annual report](#) to learn more about how clinics stand with threatened individuals and communities in pursuit of transformative justice.

Clinic News

Bringing international attention to the use-of-force standard in the United States



Co-Director Roxanna Altholz and clinic students Lorena Ortega-Guerrero '25 (front row, far right) and Maria Watson '25 (front row, far left) traveled to Geneva in October with a delegation of use-of-force victims and advocates from border states to attend the United Nations Human Rights Committee review of the United States. Photo credit: Alliance San Diego

Every year, over one million people are threatened with or subjected to use of force by law enforcement in the United States. Over 250,000 people are injured as a result, and over 1,000 people are killed. This past year, 2022, was the deadliest. In partnership with Alliance San Diego and the Southern Border Communities Coalition, the clinic is helping bring international attention to the United States' failure to bring U.S. law on use of force in line with international standards.

This fall, students helped draft a [shadow report](#) that describes how the U.S. use-of-force standard shields law enforcement from accountability for serious human rights violations, including the 2010 killing of Anastasio Hernandez Rojas. Students also joined Co-Director Roxanna Altholz and a delegation of more than a dozen victims of use of force and advocates from border states in Geneva to attend the United Nations Human Rights Committee review of the United States. While in Geneva, students participated in a [side event](#), presented remarks at a consultation with the U.S. government, and met with U.N. officials and state representatives. At the side event, clinic partners Alliance San Diego and Southern Border Communities Coalition showed a [short video](#) about discrimination, abuse, and impunity at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Documenting negative impacts of counterterrorism architecture on human rights activists for United Nations

As challenges to human rights rise around the world, the clinic continues to strengthen international human rights institutions that play a critical role in addressing urgent human rights challenges. For many years, the clinic has supported the work of U.N. independent human rights experts known as Special Rapporteurs which are appointed by the U.N. Human Rights Council. For the last two years in particular, Co-Director Laurel E. Fletcher and clinic students have provided technical assistance to the [UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism](#). Students provided in-depth legal research and analysis on the human rights

impacts of counterterrorism laws and policies in hot spots around the globe and contributed to the Special Rapporteur's pathbreaking [Global Study on Counter-Terrorism and Civic Space](#), including giving onsite support to a regional civil society consultation.

Arguing for a human rights compliant introduction of digital identification in Kenya



Nicole Waddick '23 (center) was part of a clinic team that traveled to Kenya last spring to help the Haki na Sheria Initiative advocate for including ethnic and religious minorities in digital identification. Photo credit: Laurel E. Fletcher

Kenya is rolling out a digital identification system that places vulnerable communities at greater risk of exclusion, statelessness, and discrimination. In April 2023 a clinic team led by Clinical Supervising Attorney Tayyiba Bajwa traveled to Nairobi, Kenya to meet with the Haki na Sheria Initiative and their partners who are advocating for a human rights compliant introduction of digital identification. Clinic students then co-presented at a webinar convened by Haki na Sheria and Kenya ICT Action Network to announce the release of "[Digital Identity and the Legal Obligation to Conduct a Human Rights Impact Assessment in Kenya.](#)" The white paper, co-authored by the clinic in partnership with civil society organizations in Kenya, argues international human rights law requires Kenya to conduct a human rights impact assessment prior to rolling out digital ID.

Strengthening legal protections for human rights defenders

Attacks on human rights defenders are increasing around the globe as those who advocate for rights protections ranging from anti-discrimination of marginalized communities to indigenous rights and gender equality face hostility from governments and private actors. This spring, Co-Director Laurel E. Fletcher and students supported the [Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders](#) in crafting policy recommendations to States for temporary humanitarian visas for human rights defenders. There is an urgent need to provide defenders a safe way to relocate rapidly to a third country when they face increased risk due to their activism. The clinic's research helped inform the Special Rapporteur's advocacy with States on these issues.

Investigating police in schools in the United Kingdom

In October, a clinic team supervised by Clinical Supervising Attorney Tayyiba Bajwa

attended the [Youth Justice Legal Centre Summit](#) in London to present their investigation of police in schools in the United Kingdom. Clinic students conducted comparative and international research to map the legal basis for police in schools in the U.K., learn from effective campaigns in the United States that removed police from schools, and assess whether the presence of police in schools violates international protection of the best interests of the child, the right to education, and prohibition against discrimination. The clinic's work will inform the work of legal, campaigning, and organizing movements in the U.K. that seek to leverage human rights arguments to get police out of schools.

Co-directors host Borderlines podcast series on human rights practice



Last spring, Co-Directors Laurel E. Fletcher and Roxanna Altholz served as guest hosts for a [four-part series of special episodes](#) of the [Miller Institute's Borderlines podcast](#) featuring leading advocates who visited their Human Rights Practice Workshop course. The episodes tackle [corporate accountability](#), [defending water protectors and Indigenous rights](#), [gender parity in international representation](#), and [U.N. mechanisms and anti-Black racism](#).

Advocating for Vietnamese activists unlawfully imprisoned for exercising freedom of expression

On April 28, 2023, a clinic team supervised by Co-Director Laurel E. Fletcher [filed a petition with U.N. Special Procedures](#) on behalf of family members of four imprisoned human rights activists in Vietnam, a country under one-party rule with a history of repressing dissent. International pressure is the only option for the activists to gain relief. An independent journalist and leaders of human rights groups are among the four, all targeted with criminal sanctions for criticizing the government. These independent experts can open an official inquiry about individual cases to the government. The petition urges the U.N. experts to request release of the activists.

Clinic student wins award for clinical work



Anthony Ghaly '23 won the 2023 [Clinical Legal Education Association Outstanding Clinical Student Award](#) for his impressive work in the clinic, where he drafted a legal argument for a women-led Mexican human rights group under state surveillance and filed a United Nations human rights petition about Vietnam's repression of journalists and human rights activists.

Clinic Events

November 17 The clinic hosted a lunchtime discussion with former senior Senate foreign policy adviser Tim Rieser. During his 40-year career on Capitol Hill, Rieser built a track record of success in critical foreign policy issues such as environmental conservation, human rights, and global health.

November 8 The clinic hosted attorneys with Youth Justice Legal Centre, a London-based non-governmental organization that supports youth justice practitioners by sharing knowledge, convening expertise, and circulating innovation to present at Berkeley Law. They discussed strategic approaches to advancing children’s rights through representation and advocacy that centers a child-initiated and shared decision-making framework.



November 2-4 The clinic co-hosted with Berkeley Law’s Criminal Law and Justice Center and Prosecutors Alliance the first annual conference on “Enhancing Prosecution Strategies for Illegal Use of Force Cases.” Over three days, prosecutors, experts, and academics from across the country came together to learn how to effectively evaluate and prosecute criminal charges against police

officers for on-duty, civilian police killings. Keynote speakers included California Attorney General Rob Bonta and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison (pictured above left with Prosecutors Alliance Executive Director Cristine Soto DeBerry, center, and Director of Policy and Training Arcelia Hurtado). *Photo credit: Michaela Vatcheva*

November 2 The clinic co-hosted a conversation with Zuri Balmakund Santiago, Assistant Attorney General for the state of Minnesota, and a member of the Derek Chauvin prosecution team.



October 26 The clinic co-hosted a conversation with Mercy Mutemi, a Kenyan lawyer leading the charge on holding Big Tech accountable for rights violations in Kenya and Ethiopia. Recently named on the TIME100 Next 2023 List, she is leading the charge on three separate lawsuits against Meta. *Photo credit: Alex A.G. Shapiro*

October 16 The clinic co-hosted a side event at the United Nations’ headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Co-director Roxanna Altholz discussed how United States law on use of force promotes discrimination, abuse, and impunity at the U.S.-Mexico border.



October 10 The clinic hosted a screening of “Water for Life,” a 90-minute documentary featuring the stories of Indigenous activists Alberto Curamil, Francisco Pineda, and Berta Cáceres in Central and South America and their fight to stop multinational corporations from polluting their waters and destroying their agricultural way of life. The

clinic investigated Cáceres’ murder and helped identify the company executives and employees, state officials, and hitmen responsible. The screening was followed by a Q&A with Will Parrinello, director, Francisco Pineda, founder and president of the Environmental Committee of Cabañas, and Bertha Zuniga Cáceres (pictured), Cáceres’ daughter and general coordinator of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras or COPINH. *Photo credit: Brittany Hosea-Small*

September 14 The clinic hosted the digital rights program officer of the Haki na Sheria Initiative, a clinic client dedicated to working on issues of statelessness and exclusion in

Kenya. The officer offered practical guidance to students about how to support their advocacy work, including by applying to a summer internship with the organization.



August 22 The clinic hosted an intimate evening with Sara Curruchich, an acclaimed Guatemalan folksinger-songwriter of Mayan Kaqchikel descent. Coinciding with the news that anti-corruption crusader Bernardo Arévalo had just won the runoff election for Guatemala's presidency, the intimate event of about 50 people, including many members of the Guatemalan

diaspora, was intense and moving. *Photo credit: Ava Freeman*

April 26 The clinic co-hosted with the Center for Race & Gender, Political Conflict and Accountability in South Asia a panel discussion with Saman Zia-Zarifi, executive director of Physicians for Human Rights, human rights expert Christine Chung, Angana P. Chatterji, Center for Race & Gender, and Leti Volpp of Berkeley Law. The panel explored the heightening of political conflict and the use of law by nationalist and far-right cultures and movements in South Asia, and discussed the need for accountability to political conflict in South Asia.

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