



## Call for Papers – The 2016 AHRI Human Rights Research Conference

The Association of Human Rights Institutes (AHRI) calls for the submission of proposals for papers to be presented at the general **AHRI Human Rights Research Conference** to be held at the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) in Utrecht, the Netherlands, on **2-3 September 2016**:

### *50 Years of the Two UN Human Rights Covenants: Legacies and Prospects*

2016 will mark a half century since the adoption of the two foundational human rights treaties, the ICCPR and ICESCR. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the two Covenants is the starting point for the general and broader 2016 AHRI Human Rights Research Conference.

The division between two categories of human rights made in 1966 still leaves its mark on the ways in which human rights are institutionalised and implemented both nationally and internationally today. Many attempts have been made to restore and maintain the indivisibility of all human rights, as has been shown by later, more specialised and regional treaties and practices. In today's complex arena of international and regional human rights institutions, victims of violations have used civil-political rights institutions to pursue ESC-rights claims and the other way around. In parallel, the increase in human rights instruments since 1966 has rightly been accompanied by a call to shift the emphasis from norms to implementation. Thus, it is highly topical to study and discuss how the two types of rights have become increasingly intertwined since their separation in the Covenants and how many actors have pushed for their integral realisation. In addressing these issues, it is also relevant to complement legal scholarship with insights from the many other disciplines that have focused on human rights in the past decades.

The coming of age of the two key UN human rights Covenants also brings the question of their continued viability to the fore. Are the Covenants still equipped, both normatively and in their enforcement mechanisms, to address the human rights challenges of both today and tomorrow? The belief in progress of the 1960s with promises of permanent economic growth has faded. This sheds a new light on normative starting points such as the progressive

realisation of rights. The economic crisis, austerity measures and the rise of powerful new economic players beyond the state force us to rethink the meaning and effects of human rights.

The scope of human rights protection has been broadened enormously over the last half century, covering an increasing number of rights and specific groups. However, the protection against the actions and inaction of groups beyond the state, ranging from armed groups to civil society organisations, has not kept pace. New protection mechanisms may be required to meet these challenges and existing players, such as the European Union or specific human rights courts or committees, may need to reconsider their working methods. The self-evidence of the state as the core player in the international order has also been challenged in other respects, e.g. by the trans-border effects of migration, conflict, and environmental change.

All of these developments require us not just to look back but also to look into the future. For the human rights research community, this not only entails tackling new themes and issues, but also reconceptualising existing norms and concepts and increasingly exploring collaboration across disciplines.

As the largest inter-disciplinary and general research conference on human rights, the 2016 AHRI Conference welcomes both individual papers and panels exploring any of the above mentioned themes. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the two Covenants is the leading theme, but proposals do not need to be limited to that, as the AHRI research conference aims to be a general platform for discussing new human rights research. Preference will be given to strong proposals falling within one of the following six tracks, under which several panels will be organised:

- **1. Indivisibility and Interactions of Norms and Regimes**

This track invites submissions which look into the interactions between different sets of rights and between different human rights protection regimes. How do the two sets of rights represented by the two UN Covenants, civil-political and socio-economic, interact? How do regional regimes affect global human rights institutions and vice versa? And how does cross-fertilization across regions and between states in the area of human rights work in practice?

- **2. Citizenship, Migrants and Refugees**

This track juxtaposes the insiders and outsiders of human rights protection as one of the fiercest battlegrounds. How do differences in treatment between citizens and refugees and migrants play out in practice? Which normative underpinnings frame these policies and to what extent can they be challenged? Do we need to re-define the concepts of citizenship and refugees and rethink rights related to freedom of movement and territoriality? Are existing treaties up for revision or are entirely new frameworks necessary?

- **3. Non-state Actors and Human Rights**

This track welcomes contributions related to influential actors and institutions beyond the state. Whereas the two UN Covenants focused traditionally on the role of the state, one may question whether they are still useful tools to address the human rights behaviour, both positive and negative, of non state actors such as armed groups, businesses and civil society organisations.

- **4. The European Union and Human Rights**

This track, organized in cooperation with the EU FRAME Project, explores how the European Union, both as a global player and in its internal policies geared towards its Member States, respects and protects human rights. To what extent does coherence exist between these internal and external policies? How does the EU deal with the two sets of rights represented by the UN Covenants?

- **5. The Global Economy and Human Rights**

This track welcomes submissions related to the effects of global inequality, of the economic crisis and austerity measures, and the role of international financial and economic institutions and their impact on human rights protection. Does the idea of progressive realization of rights, as reflected in ICESCR, still make sense? And do we need to imbue our research with new concepts and methodologies to deal with the linkages between the economy and human rights protection?

- **6. New Avenues in Human Rights Research**

This track invites exploration into new themes and methodologies of human rights research. Which issues reflect new human rights challenges for the present and what are the future prospects of current human rights norms, as e.g. laid down in the two Covenants? Do we need to re-think existing human rights historiographies? Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary papers are particularly welcome.

## **Practical Information**

The 2016 AHRI conference is hosted by the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) of Utrecht University, and will take place on 2-3 September 2016. The conference coincides with SIM's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which will be celebrated in the evening of 1 September. The conference is open to both AHRI and non-AHRI members and aims to bring together both junior and senior academics to present innovative human rights research in the law, the humanities, the 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 by email one unified document including: 1) title of paper, 2) a clear indication of the track to which the paper belongs, 3) an abstract of no more than 500 words, 4) author name, affiliation and short 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 (with the proviso that only one person will be allowed to present).

Proposals for entire panels are equally welcome, indicating the title, abstract and author of each paper. Note: a panel consists of 3 speakers and 1 proposed discussant may be indicated. Alternatively, panels of four speakers (*without* a discussant, so as to allow sufficient time for discussion) might be considered. To ensure diversity in all respects, panels which are a mix of male-female and consist of researchers from different research institutions will be given precedence.

Researchers at all career stages, from PhD students to full professors, are invited to submit.

## Deadline for submission

The deadline for submission of abstracts and panel proposals is **25 March 2016**. Submissions should be sent to [AHRI@uu.nl](mailto:AHRI@uu.nl).

All abstracts will be reviewed by the AHRI Programme Committee and selections announced by early May 2016. Formal registration for the conference will be possible from mid-May onwards.

For practical questions about the conference and for questions related to the submission of papers and the overall conference programme, please contact us at [AHRI@uu.nl](mailto:AHRI@uu.nl). For questions relating to AHRI, including admission of new member institutions, please contact Eva Maria Lassen, [eva@humanrights.dk](mailto:eva@humanrights.dk).

## The AHRI Conference Programme Committee

Antoine Buyse (SIM Utrecht, Conference Chair), Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (AHRI Executive Chairman), Katharine Fortin, Jan Wouters, Katarzyna Sękowska-Kozłowska, Elena Katselli, Sejal Parmar and Karen Busby

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