



International Human
Rights Program

Annual Report 2025



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Table of Contents



ABOUT US	3
MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR	5
RESEARCH ASSOCIATE PROGRAM	10
CLINIC	11
SUMMER FELLOWSHIPS	18
WORKING GROUPS	21
RIGHTS REVIEW	25
EVENTS	26
OUR TEAM	33
MEDIA AND PUBLICITY	34

About Us

Established in 1987, the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) at the University of Toronto Henry N. R. Jackman Faculty of Law (Jackman Law) serves as a centre for international human rights work, through which experienced lawyers, Faculty, and law students engage in meaningful social change.

The IHRP bridges the fields of academia and advocacy within the realm of international human rights. The program works alongside domestic and international social movements to advance the legal protection of international human rights, while training the next generation of human rights lawyers. Specifically, the IHRP provides legal services to individuals, communities, NGOs, and law firms to protect and promote international human rights before Canadian courts, regional and UN treaty bodies, and foreign courts and international tribunals, through its educational offerings to students.

Founded 38 years ago by Professor Emerita Rebecca Cook, our Program continues to scale its impact with the ongoing support of generous donors.



International Human Rights Clinic

Our International Human Rights Clinic course, the first of its kind in Canada and the cornerstone of the IHRP, offers students hands-on litigation and advocacy experience in partnership with other universities, organizations, firms, and local communities to promote international human rights in the areas of corporate accountability, climate justice, and Indigenous rights.

Learn more about our program at:
jackmanlaw.utoronto.ca/international-human-rights-program

Our Mission

1

Train the next generation of movement lawyers in Canada to promote and protect international human rights through litigation, advocacy, research, and education.

2

Drawing upon our unique position within Canada, our work aims to foster and promote Canada's adherence to its own international human rights commitments both domestically and across the globe.

3

Pursue meaningful change in the areas of corporate accountability, climate justice, and Indigenous rights.



IHRP Staff and Students at Annual Clubs Fair (2025)

Message from our Director

As I reflect on the IHRP's work, I am inspired by how far we have come since having relaunched the program in 2022. Having refocused our work in the areas of corporate accountability, climate justice, and Indigenous rights at the time, I could not have anticipated the subsequent demand from communities for Canadian actor accountability. As a result, this fall we took on an unprecedented and ambitious advocacy agenda, both in the number and scope of projects.

Clinic students were exposed to a diverse range of mechanisms to hold Canada and its actors accountable. We filed submissions before several UN bodies, released two major investigative reports, including one at the UN COP30 summit in Brazil, worked on two interventions before Canadian courts, and made oral submissions in Geneva and New York to challenge Canada's actions abroad. Students also engaged in field work in Brazil, Geneva, and Northern Ontario, reflecting the global reach of our program as well as our commitment to movement lawyering.

This year, we were also able to support 13 student fellowships, from South Africa to Switzerland, through which students engaged directly with international human rights law and gained valuable practical experience in direct client services, research, advocacy, and education all around the globe.

All in all, through our Clinic projects, Fellowships, student-led Working Groups, Rights Review publication, and a wide range of events and partnerships, we have made great strides in advancing our mission of strengthening Canada's adherence to its international human rights commitments in our three focus areas.

This year's achievements would not have been possible without the generous contributions of our donors. Your generous support empowers our students to tackle pressing human rights issues and make meaningful contributions to the promotion of human rights on a global stage. We hope you stay engaged and continue supporting the IHRP's mission in the year ahead!



SUPPORT US



tinyurl.com/2fadmckc

Please help us support the next generation of human rights advocates!

Sandra Wisner

Director

International Human Rights Program

Jackman Faculty of Law

University of Toronto



Mapping Projects

Our projects extend far beyond Canadian soil to reach communities impacted by Canadian actors across the globe. Drawing upon its unique position within Canada, the IHRP Clinic takes on projects with a Canadian link — ones seeking to hold Canada accountable to international human rights law for its harms and/or those caused by private actors it is meant to regulate, both inside and outside our borders.

The above map captures a snapshot of where we are making a difference, though it does not fully capture the breadth of our work. Some projects remain in development to be announced at a future date, while others are part of broader research initiatives with far-reaching implications in Canada and globally.

TIMELINE 2025

February 27

Event: Canadian Mining - Who Profits?

We hosted Kichwa leader Zenaida Yasacama from Ecuador, who was joined by Jackman Law Professor David Schneiderman and environmental activist Natalie Greene, to discuss free trade agreements and corporate power.

February 28

Event: 6th International Rights of Nature Tribunal

Together with partners we brought together Indigenous leaders, legal experts, and frontline defenders to testify on the environmental and human rights impacts of Canadian mining.

March

United Nations Advocacy in Geneva

Clinic students successfully advocated in a joint statement calling out the impacts of Canadian arms exports on the rights of persons with disabilities in Gaza.

March 3

Panel at the 2025 Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada

IHRP Clinic student, Sara Maqsood, participated in a panel to discuss the impact of mining on First Nation communities in northern Ontario's Ring of Fire.

TIMELINE 2025

March 19

Event - Building a Career in Human Rights

We hosted a conversation with IHRP alumna Diane Goodman, who shared her remarkable journey to becoming a leading figure at the UNHCR and offered invaluable insights to our students on building a career in international human rights.

March 25

Event - A conversation with Dr. Maximilienne Ngo Mbe of Cameroon

The IHRP's CAP Working Group hosted Dr. Ngo Mbe, a leading human rights advocate, who spoke about the risks faced by human rights defenders in Cameroon.

April

Advocacy at UNPFII in New York

Clinic students supported partners at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in New York to challenge a Canadian-owned transnational oil pipeline threatening the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the US.

June

Fieldwork in Alabama

IHRP In-House Fellows travelled to Alabama with IHRP Staff to carry out investigative work for the preparation of a report documenting alleged links between US prison labour and Canadian imports.

September 25

IHRP Report Launch: U.S. Prison Labour in Canadian Supply Chains

We launched the report **“Exports & Exploitation: US Prison Labour Hidden in Canadian Supply Chains”**, documenting the alleged links between US prison labour and the Canadian economy. The event included special guests and prison reform advocates, Terrance Winn and Ronald McKeithen.

October 16

Event: Palestine, International Law, and Canada: A Lecture by Raz Segal

We co-hosted a lecture with Dr. Raz Segal, Associate Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University, who delivered an informative lecture on the international laws and mechanisms that address and punish genocide.

November 14

IHRP Report Launch at COP30 Brazil

In collaboration with university legal clinics in the U.S. and Brazil, we unveiled our report **“Resistance: Mura Struggle Against Canadian Potash Mining in Brazil’s Amazon”** alongside Mura community members at COP30 in Brazil.

December 1

UNWG - Submission

We submitted a joint report to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights on the challenges faced by Indigenous Mura communities in Brazil to their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in connection with a Canadian company’s mining operation.

Research Associate Program

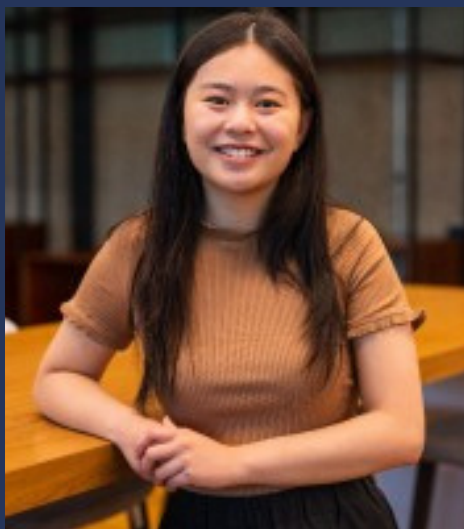
Our donor-supported Research Associate Program is crucial to the IHRP's objectives. It significantly enhances our capacity to launch impactful new projects and generate community impact, while enhancing the value we deliver to students in terms of mentorship and training.

Through workshops, trainings, and individualized guidance, the IHRP Research Associate helps students develop critical skills in research, writing, and investigation.

IHRP Research Associate since 2023, Nabila Khan is an accomplished Canadian lawyer with a wealth of experience in research, advocacy, and litigation across a wide range of human rights issues. She is a source of inspiration for our students and a vital member of the IHRP team.



Nabila Khan, Research Associate
International Human Rights Program
(IHRP)



Having the opportunity to learn from and work alongside Research Associate, Nabila Khan, has been key in making my IHRP experience so impactful. While working on the IHRP's project regarding Corporate Accountability for Indigenous Rights in Amazonas, Brazil, Nabila's guidance and support was crucial in navigating trust-building with local communities and cross-cultural interviewing. More broadly, Nabila's invaluable mentorship has helped me envision what a career in international human rights can look like and pathways to achieving it. I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to be part of the IHRP Clinic. It was truly the highlight of my law school career.

- Shelah Kwok, Clinic Student 2024-2025

Clinic

From UN advocacy in Geneva and New York to visiting rural Indigenous communities in Brazil, our students' work made an impact on the global stage.

This year, our Clinic students tackled some of the most urgent human rights challenges affecting the global community, undertaking projects aimed at addressing the role of Canada and Canadian corporations in human rights harms. Students had the opportunity to apply interdisciplinary advocacy strategies to engage in written and oral advocacy, litigation, research, and investigation.

In 2025, we focused on six core projects:

- Protecting Indigenous Rights in the Brazilian Amazon;
- Challenging Canadian Corporate Complicity in Human Rights Violations in Gaza;
- Assessing the Human Rights Impacts of Mining Development on First Nations in Ontario (Ring of Fire);
- Seeking Leave to Intervene in *Alderville et al v Ontario and Canada* at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice re Bill 5 and Bill C-5;
- Challenging the Canadian Import of Goods Made Using Forced/Prison Labour in the U.S.; and
- Accountability of a Canadian Company Operating within an Armed Conflict in Southeast Asia.

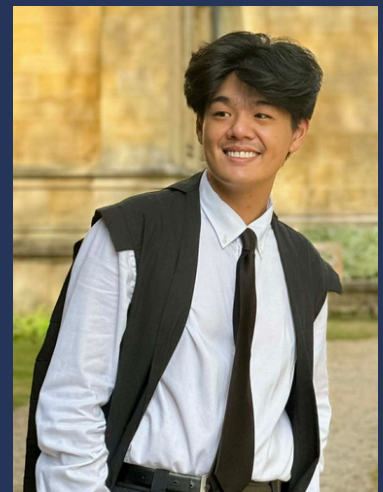
This year we had a total of 19 Clinic students, with some enrolled in the spring Clinic Practicum, and others in the fall Clinic Course. Our students often share how their Clinic experience was the highlight of their time in law school.

Thanks to philanthropic support that fully funds our Research Associate Program, we continued to expand the scope of our projects this year. Our Research Associate vitally advances our work, while inspiring and mentoring the next generation of human rights lawyers.

My time with the IHRP Clinic has fundamentally shaped my understanding of what a career in law can look like. It has been an irreplaceable opportunity to gain practical experience in a field of law that once felt out of reach and to work directly alongside affected communities from around the world.

The IHRP is a one-of-kind institution at U of T law and I am endlessly grateful for the lessons I have learned through my experiences working alongside my peers and mentors.

- Jeffrey Ma, IHRP Clinic Student 2025-2026



Protecting Indigenous Rights in the Brazilian Amazon

Our Clinic students are collaborating with U.S. and Brazilian partners, Cardozo Law Institute in Holocaust and Human Rights (CLIHHR), the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul Graduate Program in Law (PPGD/UFRGS), and the Observatory of Socio-Environmental Law and Human Rights in the Amazon of the Federal University of Amazonas (ODSDH/UFAM) to investigate the environmental and human rights effects of Canadian mining in the Brazilian Amazon. We are developing a multi-pronged strategy to promote corporate accountability for harms and advocate for the rights of the Mura Indigenous people.

In March, IHRP Clinic students (2024-2025) Shelah Kwok and Anastasia Castro travelled with the IHRP team to the Brazilian Amazon to meet with Mura Indigenous communities impacted by the Autazes Potash Project of Brazil Potash, a Canadian-owned mining company. The team met with local communities and visited affected areas to examine the environmental and human rights implications of mining in one of the world's most critical carbon sinks.



Clinic students and staff from the IHRP and partner organizations meeting with members of a Mura community in Amazonas, Brazil.

The interviews carried out by the Clinic students were the basis of the report co-authored by the IHRP and unveiled at the UN COP30 summit in Brazil in November. The report, [Resistance: The Mura Struggle Against Canadian Potash Mining in Brazil's Amazon](#), investigates the Autazes Potash Project and the opposition and resistance to the project by Mura Indigenous communities. The report documents potential human rights and environmental violations under both Brazilian and international law and warns of the mining project's potentially irreversible risks to Mura peoples and to the Amazon basin in Brazil.

In December, the report was followed by a submission to the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights, a special procedure of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), on the challenges faced by Indigenous Mura communities in Brazil to their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in connection to the mining project. The report and submission were authored together with our Brazilian and American partners at CLIHHR, PPGD/UFRGS, and ODS DH/UFAM.

In 2026, students will be travelling to Brazil with IHRP staff to continue working alongside Mura communities advocating for the respect and protection of their human rights from corporate harm.

Scan to read the report *"Resistance: The Mura Struggle Against Canadian Potash Mining in Brazil's Amazon"*:



Challenging Canadian Corporate Complicity in Human Rights Violations in Gaza

In March, IHRP students joined global advocates in Geneva to make submissions before the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD Committee) for the committee's review of Canada under the disability rights convention. The IHRP made a joint submission endorsed by over 70 organizations calling out the impacts of Canadian arms exports on the rights of persons with disabilities in Gaza.



IHRP Clinic Student, Rapaella Ayina, addresses the UN Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), as IHRP Research Associate, Nabila Khan, looks on.

In its concluding observations, the CRPD Committee echoed the concerns raised by the IHRP regarding Canadian arms transfers — direct and indirect — that contribute to grave rights violations against people with disabilities in conflict-affected areas. Citing evidence of destroyed hospitals, blocked evacuations, and widespread violence on the disability community caused by Israel’s assault, the CRPD Committee condemned Canada’s failure to monitor arms re-exported to Israel via the U.S. and pressed officials for answers.

Clinic students have continued this important work over the Fall, and they will be travelling to Geneva in March 2026 to advocate for the rights of Palestinians in Gaza at the 145th Session of the UN Human Rights Committee for its review of Canada under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Scan to view the report *“Disability Rights in Crisis: Arms Exports and Canada’s Human Rights Obligations in Gaza”*:



Challenging the Canadian Import of Goods Made Using Forced/Prison Labour in the U.S.

IHRP Clinic students are continuing work on advocating for the rights of incarcerated workers and against the import of goods involving forced/prison labour from the U.S. This year, students are working on developing strategies to strengthen the enforcement of the government's import ban of such goods. More developments will be announced in the new year.

This project follows an investigation conducted by IHRP in-house fellows over the summer, which culminated in the launch of the IHRP's report in the fall, [Exports & Exploitation: U.S. Prison Labour Hidden in Canadian Supply Chains](#). The report investigates how goods produced using U.S. prison labour are potentially entering Canadian supply chains despite a national ban on goods involving forced/prison labour.

Scan to view the report "*Exports & Exploitation: U.S. Prison Labour Hidden in Canadian Supply Chains*":



Assessing the Human Rights Impacts of Mining Development on First Nations in Ontario's Ring of Fire

The Ring of Fire is a region that covers about 5,000 square kilometers in Northern Ontario and potentially contains so-called critical minerals, such as chromite, copper, cobalt, platinum, and nickel minerals. These minerals can be used for low and zero-emission vehicles. Described by politicians as Canada's "next oil sands", the region is approximately 500km northeast of Thunder Bay in the heart of Treaty 9 territory.

Students from the IHRP Clinic, in collaboration with the Anishnawbe Business Professionals Association (ABPA) and the Investor Protection Clinic (IPC) at Jackman Law, are examining the human rights impacts of potential mining operations in the Ring of Fire region on First Nations communities in the Treaty 9 territory. The project focuses on company and government consultation practices and the implications of mining-related development on both procedural and substantive Indigenous rights under international law, within the broader context of a just transition.

As part of this project, Clinic students are working on preparing a comprehensive report on the human rights impacts of mining in the Ring of Fire region to support the advocacy and educational efforts of the ABPA. As part of their research, students have been conducting interviews with leaders and community members of affected First Nations communities and representatives from mining companies operating in the region.

In March, IHRP Clinic student (2024-2025) Sara Maqsood participated in a panel hosted by the ABPA at the 2025 Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Convention to discuss preliminary findings from the project.



Sara Maqsood (second from left) addressing the audience at the PDAC Convention in March 2025.

Clinic students are expanding this project, through work on an **intervention** in *Alderville First Nation et al. v. Ontario and Canada* at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The proposed intervention seeks to highlight the application of international human rights standards with respect to Indigenous rights and climate justice in the context of Bill 5 and Bill C-5. More announcements will be made about this work in 2026.

Accountability of a Canadian Company Operating within an Armed Conflict in Southeast Asia

For this new project, IHRP Clinic students are working with EarthRights International to examine the conduct of a Canadian company operating within an armed conflict in Southeast Asia. Students are conducting a review of existing and potential environmental and human rights impacts connected to the company's activities and are working with the community to seek prevention of and accountability for human rights harms. Stay tuned for more announcements about this work in the coming semester.

The IHRP Clinic is an incredibly meaningful and memorable way to learn about international human rights law beyond a traditional classroom setting. It's given me a chance to work closely with experienced human rights lawyers, build advocacy strategies with partner organizations and communities on the ground, and witness the real-life impacts of our collective work. I am truly grateful to have worked with such a dedicated team and developed skills that will support me throughout my legal career.

- Julia Alvi, IHRP Clinic Student 2025-2026



Summer Fellowships

Thirteen students participated in the IHRP's fellowship program for summer 2025, made possible by our generous donors. These fellows worked in-house at the IHRP or set up their own external fellowships at a host organization, allowing them to engage in meaningful international human rights work around the globe. These invaluable and hands-on experiences included research, litigation, advocacy, and activism, often at the grassroots level.

2025 Student-initiated Fellows

- Zoë Barrett-Wood (JD 2027) - *Earth Law Centre (Durango, Colorado, USA)*
- Rachel Brouwer (JD 2027) - *Legal Resources Centre (Johannesburg, South Africa)*
- Michael Guo (JD 2027) - *Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic (CSALC) (Toronto, Canada)*
- Maryam Helmy (JD 2027) - *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (Geneva, Switzerland)*
- Cassie Heward (JD/MGA 2027) - *Global Justice Lab (Toronto, Canada)*
- Tourang Movahedi (JD 2027) - *International Bar Association's Legal Policy and Research Unit (London, England)*
- Yasmin Rajwani (JD/MGA 2027) - *International Development Law Organization (The Hague, Netherlands)*
- Emily Walker (JD 2026) - *Canada-US Border Rights Clinic (Remote)*
- Anonymous Student and Organization

2025 IHRP In-house Fellows

- Julia Alvi (JD 2027)
- Lola Bigioni (JD 2027)
- Iryn McMechan (JD 2027)
- Alysha Mohamed (JD/MA 2027)

OVER 36 YEARS IN THE FIELD

Since 1988, the IHRP has facilitated over 500 fellowships for U of T Law students in 70 different countries, providing them the opportunity to spend their summer working on international human rights law issues around the world.

Our fellowships are made possible through our donors, who directly support our students. Learn more about the impact of their generosity below.

Summer Fellows Spotlight

(Student-initiated)



Emily Walker

JD 2026

Host Organization:

Canada-U.S. Border Rights Clinic

Virtual legal clinic providing pro bono services to people seeking safety at the Canada-U.S. land border.

"Through the IHRP, I spent my summer supporting asylum seekers at the Canada-US Border Rights Clinic, where I saw firsthand the gap between Canada's human rights commitments and the realities at its borders. Helping clients understand their rights and navigate complex legal processes was both challenging and profoundly meaningful. I'm grateful to the IHRP for an experience that strengthened my resolve to pursue a career in rights based advocacy."

- Emily Walker, IHRP Fellow 2025



Yasmin Rajwani

JD/MGA 2027

Host Organization:

International Development Law Organization

Intergovernmental organization working to promote the rule of law to advance peace and sustainable development.

"In my work, I had the opportunity to be exposed to various facets of international human rights and humanitarian law as well as refugee law in action, directly engaging with several core human rights mechanisms. I gained valuable legal research and analytical skills and reaffirmed my interest in working in the international protection space, all while enjoying beautiful Switzerland."

- Yasmin Rajwani, IHRP Fellow 2025

Summer Fellows Spotlight

(IHRP In-house)

The IHRP In-House Fellowships offer students an opportunity to work and support the IHRP's projects directly. Through this work, students are exposed to a variety of complex legal issues and projects through which they develop their advocacy and legal research and writing skills. This year, students travelled to Alabama with IHRP Staff to carry out investigative work for the preparation of a report documenting alleged links between US prison labour and Canadian imports. In 2025 we had four In-House Fellows:

Julia Alvi

JD 2027

Lola Bigioni

JD 2027

Iryn McMechan

JD 2027

Alysha Mohamed

JD/MA 2027



IHRP in-house summer fellows in Birmingham, Alabama.
L-R: Julia Alvi, Lola Bigioni, Iryn McMechan, and Alysha Mohamed

"My summer experience with the IHRP taught me so much about the interplay between international and domestic law, and how international law can be used to advocate for just outcomes both in Canada and abroad. I had the chance to learn about human rights topics from Indigenous land rights to prison labour, and the different legal strategies we can use to create positive change, including litigation and persuasive advocacy. My experience over the summer helped me to solidify my passion for working in the human rights field—I am so grateful to the IHRP team for the amazing summer I had!"

- Iryn McMechan, IHRP In-house Fellow 2025

Working Groups

Our student-led Working Groups enhance knowledge exchange between students, academics, civil society, and the private sector on current, emerging, or contentious international human rights issues. Student work ranges from conducting open-source investigations to updating important human rights databases, under the guidance of our dedicated project partners.

This year, students led the following working groups:



WHRR

Women's Human Rights Resources

Partner: [Bora Laskin Library](#)
Student Leaders:
Alexandra Broun and Joy Cudjoe

CAP

Cameroon Atrocities Project

Partner: [University of Toronto; Rotman](#)
Student Leaders: Bruce Yao and Allison Zhao

GJA

Gender Justice in Afghanistan

Partner: [Ghizal Haress](#)
Student Leaders: Veronica Axenova and Cassie Heward

Women's Human Rights Resources (WHRR)

Created in 1995, the WHRR database is housed in the [Bora Laskin Law Library](#) and is used by academics and human rights defenders across the globe to access annotations for key UN documents and leading scholarly articles on a range of topics relating to women's rights. This year, our students covered resources on climate justice, race and gender, social and economic rights, and violence against women. Maintained by our students for 30 years now, the WHRR database receives thousands of hits per month from around the globe.



Credit: Creative Commons

Cameroon Atrocities Project (CAP)

In 2025, our students continued to contribute to the [Cameroon Anglophone Crisis Database of Atrocities](#), which seeks to securely store and verify digital evidence of war crimes and human rights abuses perpetrated during the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, ongoing since 2016.

Amid violent clashes between Cameroon's security forces and armed separatist groups, the civilian population has been subject to human rights violations and abuses, including kidnappings, lockdowns, and massacres.

Our students use open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods to investigate incidents and verify photo and video evidence anonymously submitted to the Database. They then compile their findings into a report, which may be used as evidence in future legal proceedings. Since its creation in 2019, the Database has recorded over 800 incidents, securely storing over 2000 pieces of digital evidence.

Incidents investigated by the Database and its researchers form part of efforts for justice, both domestically in Cameroon and internationally. CAP student volunteers get to work alongside rights-advocacy organizations such as the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa ([2021 Press Release](#)), Berkeley's Human Rights Center Investigations Lab at the University of California, Bellingcat ([2021 article](#)), Human Rights Watch ([2022 article](#)), and Amnesty International. For additional media reports see: [Forbes](#) (2020), Radio France Internationale ([RFI](#), 2020), Deutsche Welle ([DW](#), 2019), [Mimi Mefo Info](#) (2025).

In March 2025, CAP hosted Dr. Maximilienne Ngo Mbe, Executive Director of Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC), and a leading human rights advocate in Central Africa. Dr. Ngo Mbe spoke powerfully about the risks faced by defenders in Cameroon, where conflict, impunity, and the ongoing Anglophone Crisis continue to threaten basic freedoms. Despite threats to her life, she remains a steadfast voice for justice and accountability.



Dr. Maximilienne Ngo Mbe presenting at IHRP event (March 2025).

Gender Justice in Afghanistan (GJA)

This Working Group is producing research on the situation of systemic gender oppression in Afghanistan, highlighting both the role of Canada and the international community in enabling the Taliban's human rights abuses since 2021. Students are also exploring the role that Canada should play in addressing the situation, in line with its international human rights commitments.

Working with Adjunct Professor Ghizal Haress (Afghanistan's first presidential Ombudsperson) since 2023, students have been working on a report to document violations of women's rights and provide policy recommendations to Canada. In 2024, students presented their preliminary research and recommendations to Canada's Special Representative to Afghanistan, David Sproule.

In 2025, students continued to build on this foundation, re-focusing the report to respond to the announcement made by Canada, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands on September 25, 2024, on plans to hold the Taliban accountable for systemic violations against women under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Their report, focused on the Taliban's violations of women's rights under CEDAW, will be published in March of 2026. Students have also begun conducting interviews with Afghan women, which will be compiled into case studies of women's rights violations in Afghanistan and used to amplify the voices of the affected women in a second report to be published in the future.

"The Gender Justice in Afghanistan working group has greatly impacted my law school experience. As a co-leader of GJA for two years and a member since 2023, I have deepened my knowledge of international legal mechanisms for holding countries accountable for extraterritorial obligations and learned about the systemic discrimination Afghan women and girls face. Working with GJA has enhanced my leadership and management skills while also expanding my research and writing on international human rights law, which are valuable skills I will take forward with me in my legal career."

- Cassie Heward, IHRP GJA Working Group Co-Leader 2025 - 2026

Rights Review



Rights Review is our independent student-led publication that offers a platform for the U of T law student community to publish on pressing international human rights issues that matter most to them.

We publish articles on [our website](#), and in print in the law school's student newspaper, [Ultra Vires](#).

This year, our students contributed to four issues:

- [Volume 18 Issue 2 \(January\)](#).
- [Volume 18 Issue 3 \(March\)](#).
- [Volume 19 Issue 1 \(October\)](#).
- [Volume 19 Issue 2 \(November\)](#).

These publications feature pieces on international human rights, IHRP alumni, Working Group project updates, reflections from our summer fellows, and more!

2025-2026 Rights Review Editorial Board

Co-Editors-in-Chief: Rachel Brouwer (2L) and Mackenzie Birbrager (2L)

Senior Editors: Jeffrey Ma (3L) and Joy Cudjoe (2L)

Junior Editors: Jackie Tan (2L) and Sanaea Suntok (1L)

Events

This year, we held 16 events in collaboration with partners such as Hearing Palestine, Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN), the Environmental Law Club (ELC) at U of T Law, and the International Rights of Nature Tribunal.

From thought-provoking panel discussions to the gathering of IHRP alumni, it was a year filled with meaningful engagement with our students, faculty, and the wider IHRP community. See below for a summary of events and key highlights from this year.



2025 EVENTS RECAP

Winter/Spring

- Israel's Assault on the UN
- Canadian Mining – Who Profits?
- Local Communities, Foreign Investors, and the Canada-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement
- 6th International Rights of Nature Tribunal, 2nd Session: “The Post-Extractivism Non-Mining Era”
- The Great Lakes Symposium
- Visit to Exhibit - Auschwitz: Not Long Ago, Not Far Away
- Canada’s Inaction on Climate Change: A Conversation with Barbara Jackman ‘76
- Building a Career in International Human Rights, with U of T Law Grad Diane Goodman
- A Conversation with Dr. Maximilienne Ngo Mbe of Cameroon
- Alumni Mixer

Fall

- U.S. Prison Labour in Canadian Supply Chains: IHRP Report Launch
- Rights of Incarcerated Individuals - Social Justice Café
- Palestine, International Law and Canada: A Lecture by Raz Segal
- Madan Sara (Haiti): A Film Screening
- Release of report at UN COP30 summit in Brazil - Resistance: Mura Struggle Against Canadian Potash Mining in Brazil’s Amazon
- Critical Minerals - Can the Rush to fuel Clean Energy Stay Clean?

See our website to read more about IHRP events: ihrp.law.utoronto.ca/events

Collaborations with Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN)

Canadian Mining – Who Profits?

On February 27, we gathered a room full of students and activists for a panel with Ecuadorian Indigenous leader Zenaida Yasacama, activist and leader Natalia Greene, and U of T Law Professor David Schneiderman.

This event examined how trade and investment agreements (such as the Canada-Ecuador Free Trade Agreement) can entrench corporate power at the expense of local communities. Organized with the Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights, the afternoon featured the documentary “The Tribunal” by Dr. Malcolm Rogge, followed by a panel discussion on the global implications of Canadian mining policy.

6th Rights of Nature Tribunal

Hosted by the IHRP in partnership with the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN), the Environmental Law Club (ELC), and International Rights of Nature Tribunal, this public Tribunal brought together Indigenous leaders, legal experts, and frontline defenders to testify on the environmental and human rights impacts of Canadian mining. The event served as both a forum for accountability and a powerful call to action for governments, corporations, and global institutions to address violations perpetuated by extractive industries and to listen to the stewards of our land—Indigenous communities. Watch the recordings of all sessions [here](#).



6th Rights of Nature Tribunal at Jackman Law (February, 2026)

Conversations with Jackman Law and IHRP Alumni

Building a Career in International Human Rights with U of T Law Grad Diane Goodman

Diane Goodman (U of T Law alumna - LLM 1991), whose career began as an IHRP fellow at the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights, shared her remarkable journey from corporate lawyer to leading figure at the UNHCR. Diane recounted her time as a Protection Officer in Tanzania during the Rwandan genocide, supporting asylum seekers in Nepal, and leading responses to the European refugee crisis. Drawing on nearly three decades of experience, she offered invaluable insights to our students, encouraging them to find their passions and develop the skills needed for a career in international human rights law.



Canada's Inaction on Climate Change: A Conversation with Barbara Jackman '76

Students and community members gathered to hear from Barbara Jackman (U of T Law alumna - LLB 1976, Hon. LLD 2023) about the urgency of the climate crisis and its impact on refugees. A leading Canadian human rights lawyer, Barbara encouraged students to explore how Canada can better address the needs of climate refugees who are currently not recognized under Canadian immigration law. She emphasized the importance of dialogue between government officials, refugee lawyers, and affected communities, and proposed the creation of community-based sponsorship programs to support climate refugees in Canada.



U.S. Prison Labour in Canadian Supply Chains: IHRP Report Launch

The IHRP held a special event to launch its investigative report, **Exports & Exploitation: U.S. Prison Labour Hidden in Canadian Supply Chains**, in September. The event featured a panel discussion with: Ronald McKeithen, a formerly incarcerated worker, artist, advocate, writer, and the Director of Second Chance at Alabama Appleseed; Terrance Winn, a formerly incarcerated worker and widely respected advocate for prison reform; and 2025 IHRP In-House Summer Fellows, Julia Alvi, Lola Bigioni, Iryn McMechan, and Alysha Mohamed, who travelled to Alabama as part of the investigation for the report.

During the discussion, moderated by IHRP Research Associate Nabila Khan, the panelists answered questions addressing issues of mass incarceration and racial inequality, the working conditions of prison workers, and enforcement of the ban on goods linked to forced/prison labour. Students presented key findings from the report, including the potential links between Canadian companies and US suppliers that use prison labour.

Drawing from their lived experiences within Alabama and Louisiana prisons, respectively, Ronald and Terrance shared powerful stories uncovering the reality of a deeply coercive and violent system. The event concluded with an exploration of future avenues for advocacy, and a reflection by Ronald and Terrance on how their experiences inspired their commitment to prison reform.



Pictured left to right: Lola Bigioni, Iryn McMechan, Julia Alvi, Alysha Mohamed (IHRP clinic students); Ronald McKeithen and Terrance Winn (on screen).

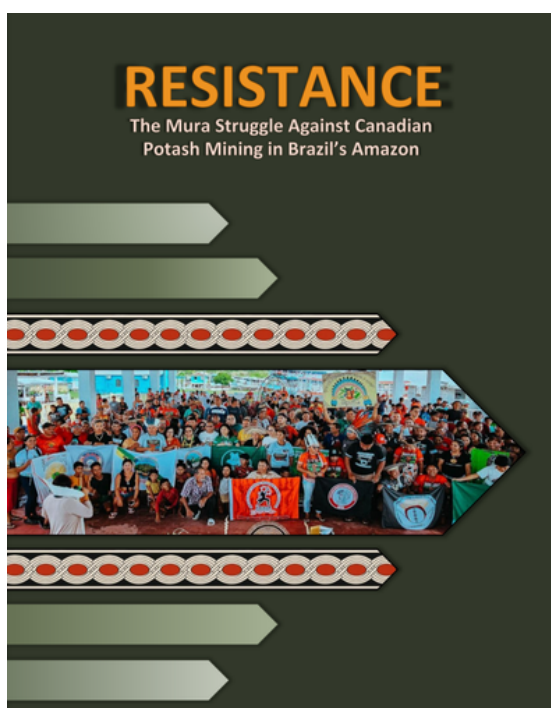
Scan to watch a recording of the discussion:



Release of IHRP Collaborative Report at the UN COP30 Summit in Brazil

On November 17, alongside Mura community members, our investigative report **Resistance: Mura Struggle Against Canadian Potash Mining in Brazil's Amazon** was unveiled at the UN COP30 summit in Brazil during a two-day event organized by our partners, CLIHHR, PPGD/UFRGS, and ODSDH/UFAM. The event, “Panel Discussion: Potassium Mining on Mura Indigenous Lands in the Amazon in the Context of the Climate Emergency,” brought together representatives of Mura Indigenous communities, lawyers, and scholars from our partner organizations to discuss the findings and recommendations of the report.

Our collaborative report examines the significant environmental and human rights concerns and future risks associated with the Autazes Potash Project, owned by Canadian company Brazil Potash. The report is based on interviews conducted by IHRP Clinic students with Mura community members and leaders in Lago do Soares. The villages of Lago do Soares and Urucurituba are located near planned mining infrastructure sites and expected to be among the most affected by the mining project. Our report highlights concerns raised by members of Mura Indigenous communities regarding significant and potentially irreversible risks to Mura peoples and to the Amazon basin in Brazil—one of the most significant and biodiverse ecosystems in the world.



Scan to read the our press release and report :



Collaborations with the ACLA and Hearing Palestine

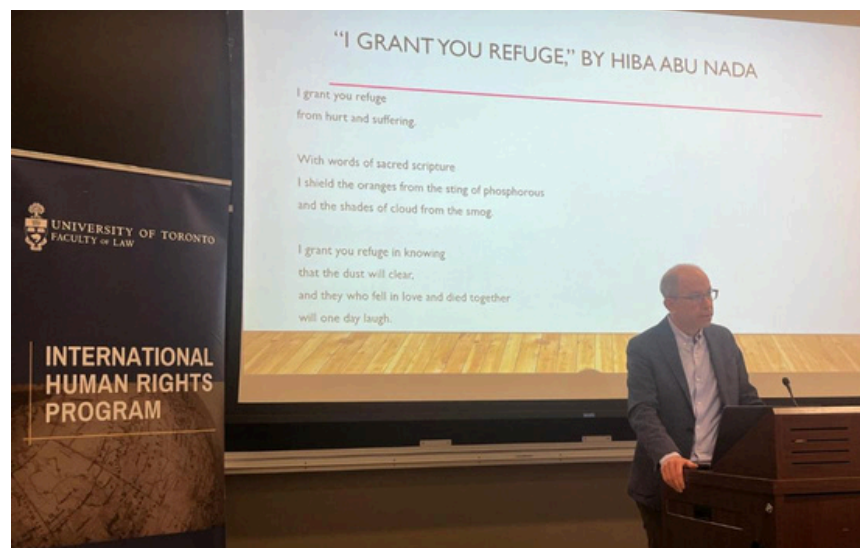
Israel's Assault on the UN

Prior to the IHRP's engagement at the UN regarding arms exports to Israel, in February, the IHRP and Hearing Palestine co-hosted a talk with Fateh Azzam, and U of T Law Professor Ariel Katz as discussant. Fateh is a Palestinian human rights researcher and consultant, and his professional experience spans across work in civil society, philanthropy, academia and the United Nations.

Palestine, International Law and Canada: A Lecture by Raz Segal

The IHRP, Hearing Palestine, and the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association co-hosted a lecture with Dr. Raz Segal, Associate Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Endowed Professor in the Study of Modern Genocide at Stockton University. Professor Segal delivered an urgent and informative lecture on the international laws and mechanisms that address and punish genocide.

In connection to the IHRP's work on Canadian arms exports to Israel, he touched on the role that Canada and the international community must play in defending the international rule of law, reminding the audience of the power they have to demand action from the Canadian government. Finally, he urged the audience to bear witness to the atrocities being committed against Palestinians in Gaza, closing his lecture with the words of the Palestinian poet and novelist, Hiba Abu Nada, who was killed in Gaza in 2023.



Dr. Raz Segal presenting at IHRP event (October 16, 2025)

Alumni Mixer

For the second year in a row, the IHRP gathered its alumni community for an evening of reconnecting and celebrating our Program's latest work, alongside Clinic students, in-house fellows, and our Founder, Rebecca Cook.

Attendees enjoyed updates on ongoing projects, meaningful conversations, and light refreshments. Special thanks to IHRP alumna and Rights Review co-founder Nicole Simes of Simes Law for generously co-sponsoring this year's Alumni reunion.



Our Team

Our team brings together lawyers and faculty members with a broad range of domestic and international human rights experience.

Founder



Rebecca Cook
Founder, 1987

Staff



Sandra Wisner
Director



Nabila Khan
Research Associate



Estefanía Rueda Torres
Program Coordinator



Galit Sarfaty
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Chair



Abdi Aidid
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Member



John Borrows
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Member



Brenda Cossman
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Member



Trudo Lemmens
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Member



Mariana Prado
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Member



Anna Su
Faculty Advisory
Committee - Member

Committees



Louis Century
Alumni Committee
Co-chair



Morgan Sim
Alumni Committee
Co-chair

Media and Publicity

Our efforts to advance the legal protection of international human rights are featured across various platforms. Below are a few highlights. Be sure to check out our social media pages for more updates!

Early in the year, **CBC Listen Radio** and **CBC News** covered our work examining how mining companies engage with First Nations communities, and on the potential social and environmental impacts of mining in the Ring of Fire.

In March, **CBA National**, covered the work of our Gender Justice in Afghanistan (GJA) Working Group. GJA student leader Cassie Heward highlighted the urgent need for meaningful political and diplomatic support for women in Afghanistan.

In July, **The Tyee** highlighted the complaint filed in April 2024 by the IHRP and our Namibian partner, Saving Okavango's Unique Life, against Canadian company ReconAfrica. The story focused on Aqua Solutions, a company with ties to ReconAfrica, that has raised conflict of interest concerns related to its role advising the government-appointed Oilsands Mine Water Steering Committee.

In August, our complaint against ReconAfrica was highlighted again by **National Observer**, which took a critical look at the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Business (CORE), highlighting the office's failure to respond to our complaint.

In October, **Lexpert** covered the release of the IHRP report, *Exports & Exploitation: U.S. Prison Labour Hidden in Canadian Supply Chains*. The article highlights the report's findings and recommendations, particularly our demand for better enforcement of the Canadian government's ban on imports made from forced/prison labour. IHRP Director Sandra Wisner stressed "It's time for government and business to confront a hard truth: our economy must not profit from modern slavery or racial injustice".

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SUPPORT US

Please help us support the next generation of human rights advocates.



tinyurl.com/2fadmckc

Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.





International Human Rights Program



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