



CALL FOR PAPERS
Human Rights Week

ACADEMIC COLLOQUIUM

Discriminations and Inequalities

**GENEVA ACADEMY OF INTERNATIONAL
HUMANITARIAN LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS
THURSDAY 25 AND FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2021**

DEADLINES

Applicants are invited to submit proposals of up to 500 words, in English, plus a short biographical note of 100 words, and 5 keywords by 7 June 2021, 5 pm CET.

**GENEVA
ACADEMY**

Académie de droit international
humanitaire et de droits humains
Academy of International
Humanitarian Law and Human Rights



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**
FACULTÉ DE DROIT

ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK

The Human Rights Week is a major event in Geneva for anyone interested in the current human rights challenges that our world is facing. Organized by the University of Geneva in partnership with the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Republic and State of Geneva and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, it consists in a week-long series of events, including conferences, debates, film screenings, exhibitions and artistic performances.

At its centerpiece, an academic colloquium brings leading experts and practitioners to discuss a topic of specific interest, related to the overall focus on the week.

2021 FOCUS

The 2021 edition will focus on discrimination and inequalities. While the prohibition of discrimination is well entrenched in international human rights law (IHRL) and appears high on the international community's agenda – reducing inequalities and ensuring that no one is left behind figures prominently amongst the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) –, discriminatory practices and inequalities have always been a subject of international concern. Trends in recent years indicate an increase rather than a decrease of the phenomenon that has been further aggravating by the COVID-19 pandemic.

THE PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Both the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#) open up with a similar provision whereby States Parties undertake to guarantee the rights recognized therein without 'discrimination/distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status' (see art. 2, paragraph 1 and 2 of the ICCPR; art. 2, paragraph 2 of the ICESCR). Additionally, art. 26 of the ICCPR provides an autonomous guarantee of equality before the law.

All specific human rights treaties, such as the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(CERD, 1965\)](#) or the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW, 1979\)](#), have at their core the prohibition of discrimination.

All regional human rights treaties also include non-discrimination clauses (see art. 1 of the [American Convention on Human Rights](#); art 2 of the [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#), art. 14 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#) and art. 1 of [Protocol n° 12 to the ECHR](#). See also the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Part III](#)).

Last but not least, the customary or even jus cogens nature of the fundamental principle of equality and non-discrimination has been recognized by international courts and scholarly writings (see e.g. [ICJ, Barcelona Traction, 1970, §34](#); [IACtHR, Juridical Condition of the Undocumented Migrants, Advisory Opinion OC-18/03 2003, §101](#)).

THE 2021 ACADEMIC COLLOQUIUM

The 2021 Academic Colloquium will explore the different facets of discriminations and inequalities and discuss their human rights impact in our contemporary world. The broad sub-themes envisaged are as follows.

1. DISCRIMINATIONS AGAINST SPECIFIC GROUPS

While we celebrate in 2021 the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), racial discrimination remains a vivid issue, as demonstrated by the shocking and paradigmatic death of George Floyd in the US and the ensuing movement "Black lives matter". Similarly, discrimination against women has not been eradicated and has an impact on every aspects of the lives of a number of women around the world (e.g. right to life and security, right to work, sexual and reproductive health and rights). Other groups of individuals – persons with disabilities, migrants (in particular irregular ones), the LGBTIQ or the elderly – are also particularly confronted with discriminations. Some persons are also victim of multiple discrimination, i.e. discrimination on several discriminatory grounds either separately ("additive discrimination") or in a combined manner ("intersectional discrimination").

While the human right to non-discrimination is well entrenched in IHRL, how can it be better implemented in practice? Which positive measures State must put in place in order to prevent discrimination, including multiple discrimination?

Do human rights monitoring bodies give full weight to non-discrimination treaty provisions? Should the protection of specific categories of individuals, such as LGBTIQ or the elderly, be enhanced by the creation of new specialized treaties?

2. DISCRIMINATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities within and among countries. Not only the virus itself has hit the most vulnerable, but the related socio-economic crisis has disproportionately impacted disadvantaged or marginalized groups. The COVID-19 outbreak has provoked social stigma and favored discriminatory behaviors, such as hate speech, against individuals or communities perceived to have been in contact with the virus. The access to the vaccine has become a worldwide competition and mechanisms such as the COVAX have not succeeded in reducing inequalities in terms of access to the vaccine. Given the ongoing debate about the COVID-19 “vaccine passport”, the possibility for States and private actors to discriminate between individuals based on their health status is in everyone’s mind.

To what extent may inequalities, which result from or which were worsened by this pandemic, lead to discrimination from a human rights law perspective? What kind of positive measures should States put in place in order to protect vulnerable groups from the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may foster or reinforce existing inequalities? How can States prevent and address social stigma associated with COVID-19? How can States and the international community eliminate discrimination in the health-care system and ensure equal access to comprehensive, quality and affordable health care for all? How can States and the international community combat unequal vaccine distribution? May States – or private actors – discriminate between individuals based on their health status and restrict their freedoms accordingly?

3. DISCRIMINATION IN ARMED CONFLICTS, COUNTER-TERRORISM AND STATES OF EMERGENCIES

Discrimination is at the core of many armed conflicts and is also, sometimes, the cause of ethnic or religious conflicts and leading to the commission of atrocity crimes such as acts of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. Additionally, in the fight against terror (which may or may not be connected to an armed conflict situation), States have taken measures that have disproportionately impacted certain communities. Penal laws, administrative sanctions – sometimes commanded by the UN Security Council – as well as softer CVE/PVE measures have been applied in a discriminatory manner in the name of the fight against terror.

To what extent is the prohibition of discrimination guaranteed in armed conflicts and what is the interplay between international human rights law and international humanitarian law in this respect? How can international criminal law further contribute to ensure respect for the prohibition of discrimination, especially in relation to armed conflicts and other situations of violence? How can States ensure that measures aimed at preventing and combating terrorism are not applied in a discriminatory manner and thus lead to counter-productive side-effects?

CALL FOR PAPERS

In the context of the 2021 Scientific Colloquium, we invite graduate and postgraduate researchers who obtained their PhD within the past ten years to submit proposals that address the above three sub-themes.

DEADLINES FOR PROPOSALS AND PAPERS

- Applicants are invited to submit proposals of up to 500 words, in English, plus a short biographical note of 100 words, and 5 keywords to Ms Roswitha Zahler (Roswitha.Zahler@unige.ch) by 7 June 2021, 5 pm CET.
- Applicants whose proposals have been selected will be informed by mid-June 2021.
- Final papers, of about 8,000 words in English, to be submitted by selected applicants, will be due by Thursday 30 September 2021.
- An academic publication will follow the conference.

FORMAT AND FUNDING

The Academic colloquium is planned to take place in person at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. Depending on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be turned to an online or hybrid conference. Researchers whose proposals have been selected may be eligible for assistance with travel and accommodation costs upon request.