

Human Rights Newsletter

International Political Science Association

NO. 22 · OCTOBER 2026

CALL FOR PAPERS · RC26 INTERIM CONFERENCE

Sixty Years of the International Covenants on Human Rights

Online international conference to mark Human Rights Day 2026 · 16 December 2026

On 16 December 1966 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they form the International Bill of Human Rights. Their 60th anniversary is a good reason to reflect on what the Covenants have achieved, what remains unfulfilled, and how they should respond to the challenges of our time.

The decision to adopt two separate treaties reflected deep disagreements about the nature of rights. Civil and political rights were seen as immediately enforceable; economic, social and cultural rights, as goals to be realised progressively. United Nations bodies have long defended the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, yet these characteristics are still contested in theory and unevenly honoured in practice.

Technology raises new problems for freedom of expression, privacy and equality; citizens' disaffection with politics is growing and democratic institutions are under strain; the entitlement and enforcement of economic and social rights remain controversial; and the recognition of minorities and differentiated identities faces criticism from the standpoint of autonomy or gender equality.

Held online to mark this year's Human Rights Day, the Interim Conference of the IPSA Research Committee 26 on Human Rights invites scholars from political science, law, philosophy, sociology, international relations and related disci-

KEY DATES

22 November 2026

Deadline for abstracts

29 November 2026

Notification of acceptance

16 December 2026

Online conference

15 March 2027

Full papers for the special issue

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plines, as well as practitioners, to discuss these questions. Theoretical, doctrinal, empirical and comparative contributions are welcome, including proposals from early-career researchers and doctoral students.

Six panels

1. Sixty years of the Covenants: history, legacy and indivisibility. The drafting history and the split into two treaties; the Cold War divide between “liberty” and “equality” rights; universality and indivisibility from Tehran (1968) and Vienna (1993) to today.

2. Civil rights in the digital age. Freedom of expression, hate speech and disinformation; privacy and surveillance; artificial intelligence; equality and non-discrimination under the ICCPR.

3. Political rights and the quality of democracy. Article 25 ICCPR; democratic backsliding and emergency powers; deliberation, participation and accountability; the political rights of migrants.

4. Economic and social rights: from aspiration to enforcement. Progressive realisation and minimum core obligations; justiciability and the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR; austerity, poverty and inequality.

5. Cultural rights, minorities and identity. Article 27 ICCPR and Article 15 ICESCR; Indigenous peoples; recognition, assimilation and the limits of accommodation; group rights and individual autonomy.

6. Monitoring, compliance and the future of the treaty system. The Human Rights Committee and the CESCR; individual communications and treaty body reform; regional systems and domestic courts; the 2030 Agenda.

How to participate

Send an abstract of up to 400 words in English, indicating the preferred panel, with your name, affiliation, e-mail address and a short biographical note (up to 100 words), to humanrights@webphilosophia.com with the subject line “RC26 Interim Conference 2026”. The conference will be held entirely online; each panel will have a Chair and a Discussant. Participation is free of charge.

Special issue of the Journal of Global Human Rights

Selected papers will be considered for a special issue of the Journal of Global Human Rights, an international, double-anonymous peer-reviewed journal affiliated with

IPSA Research Committee 26 (Human Rights). It is published in open access, with no submission fees and no article processing charges. Full papers will be due by 15 March 2027 and will undergo the journal’s ordinary peer review.

Vision for IPSA RC26 (Human Rights)

Anju Gupta · RC26 Interim Chair & Chair-elect

Dear Members, Colleagues, and Friends of RC26,

It is a great privilege to write to you as the newly elected (Interim) Chair of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) Research Committee 26 on Human Rights. I extend my deepest gratitude to our membership for the trust and to the executive board for their dedicated stewardship of this vital academic community. In particular, I would like to place on record my sincere appreciation for the leadership and valuable contributions of my predecessor, Prof. Alex Sander Pires. His dedication to fostering critical academic engagement and advancing human rights scholarship has left a solid foundation upon which we now build. For those whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I serve as Associate Dean and Head of the Department of Liberal Studies & Political Science at JECRC University in Jaipur, India. My own scholarship revolves around the intersection of political science and human dignity—a perspective that deeply shapes my vision for our collective work ahead.

Our world faces complex, rapidly evolving crises—from persistent geopolitical conflicts and democratic backsliding to structural inequalities, misinformation, and the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence. These transformations carry profound implications for fundamental human rights, threatening to widen global divides, challenge democratic resilience, and reshape how human dignity is preserved. In my role as Chair, I view this juncture not merely as an academic challenge, but as an urgent imperative to ground our research in human dignity and ensure that our collective analysis speaks directly to how these shifting socio-political dynamics impact real human lives on the ground.

To address these pressing issues and advance our field over the next four years, I am aiming to steer our committee along four core strategic lines. First, we will build upon recent momentum by elevating the profile and international reach of our newly launched, interdisciplinary *Journal of Global Human Rights*, actively inviting

contributions across political science, law, sociology, and philosophy. Second, we are structuring dynamic tracks and open panels for the upcoming IPSA World Congress, Rome 2027 fostering rigorous debate on enduring pillars such as universalism versus cultural relativism, transitional justice, state accountability, and the vital role of civil society.

Additionally, I am committed to expanding our intellectual focus onto contemporary rights frontiers through specialized interim symposia and webinars centered on digital rights, AI governance, and environmental protection as an essential human right. Underpinning all these efforts is a sustained commitment to global inclusivity. In line with IPSA's overarching mission, I aim to expand our network by providing structured support, mentorship, and collaborative platforms for scholars from the Global South, female researchers, and early-career doctoral candidates.

Together, we have an extraordinary opportunity to shape global scholarly discourse, inform policy frameworks, and ensure that human rights research remains resilient and relevant in this era of rapid change. I warmly welcome your ideas, feedback, and proposals for joint initiatives as we shape the future of our committee. Thank you for your continued dedication to the global study and advancement of human rights.

Warm regards,

Dr. Anju Gupta

Chair, IPSA RC26 (Human Rights)

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

4 November 2026 Deadline for paper proposals, IPSA World Congress, Rome

22 November 2026 Deadline for abstracts, RC26 Interim Conference

29 November 2026 Notification of acceptance, RC26 Interim Conference

16 December 2026 RC26 Interim Conference, online, marking Human Rights Day and the 60th anniversary of the ICCPR and the ICESCR

December 2026 Journal of Global Human Rights, Volume 1, Issue 1

15 March 2027 Full papers for the special issue of the Journal of Global Human Rights

24–28 July 2027 IPSA World Congress of Political Science, Rome

Acknowledgements to Professor Alex Sander Pires for His Service as Chair of RC26

Jędrzej Skrzypczak · RC26 Vice-Chair

In recent weeks, Professor Alex Sander Xavier Pires informed the RC26 community that he had decided to resign as Chair of the IPSA Research Committee 26 on Human Rights. This decision, taken in particularly difficult personal circumstances, was prompted by health concerns and increasing professional commitments. We receive this news with deep regret, whilst offering Professor Pires our full understanding, respect and support.

We should like to express our warmest gratitude to Professor Pires for his exceptional dedication, consistent leadership and invaluable contribution to the development of RC26. His work on behalf of the Committee has been instrumental in building an international community of human rights researchers within IPSA.

Contribution to the development of RC26

Professor Alex Sander Xavier Pires served as Chair of RC26 for the 2025–2027 term, having previously served as Chair-Elect from 2023 to 2025. At the outset of his term, he set out a vision for RC26 grounded in openness and interdisciplinarity, with a particular focus on human rights education, ethics and technology—including the relationship between artificial intelligence and human rights—as well as the inclusion and protection of minority groups.

These priorities directly and permanently shaped the Committee's activities. Under his chairmanship, RC26 strengthened cooperation with other IPSA Research Committees, enhanced its presence in international scholarly debate, and continued publishing the *IPSA RC26 Newsletter*, an important channel for informing the academic community about events, initiatives, and publications related to human rights.

“His work on behalf of the Committee has been instrumental in building an international community of human

rights researchers within IPSA.”

Research, dialogue and international cooperation

Professor Pires brought a wealth of academic and professional experience to RC26. He holds a PhD in Political Science and a PhD in Legal and Social Sciences. He is a lecturer at the Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, a researcher in the culture of peace, democracy, and constitutional justice, and the author of numerous publications in law, political science, and the philosophy of law.

Within RC26, he actively supported the organisation of panels, conferences and events addressing the most significant contemporary challenges to the protection of human rights. His research interests—encompassing peace, democracy, education, human rights, and the relationship between technology and human dignity—helped broaden the Committee's agenda and bring together legal, political, and philosophical perspectives.

His contribution to building bridges between researchers from different regions of the world and across disciplinary boundaries was particularly valuable. Through his efforts, RC26 became a space for open dialogue on the universality of human rights, their protection in conflict, and the challenges arising from digital and political transformation.

A lasting legacy

Professor Pires's resignation does not mark the end of his association with the RC26 community. His contribution remains evident in the Committee's research programme, the themes it continues to explore—ranging from human rights and artificial intelligence to the protection of minorities—and the international network of collaboration he has supported over many years.

On behalf of the entire RC26 community, we thank Professor Alex Sander Pires for his dedicated service, wisdom, kindness, and commitment. We wish him strength

in managing his health and professional responsibilities, and every success in his future academic endeavours.

We are confident that RC26 will continue to advance the mission that Professor Pires has consistently championed: the study of human rights as the foundation of democracy, peace, equality and human dignity.

Dear Alex, my friend, I sincerely hope your personal difficulties will be resolved soon. I look forward to many more research projects with you and many more friendly conversations. Dear Alex, I wish you all the very best and, above all, good health. I hope we will see each other soon!

Jędrzej Skrzypczak

The Rights of Linguistic Minorities in the Context of Pluralism

Jędrzej Skrzypczak · RC26 Vice-Chair

Joint panels of RC26 and RC50 at the IPSA Colloquium in Bolzano/Bozen, Italy, 23–26 June 2026

During the IPSA Research Committees' Colloquium *Minorities under Siege? Plural Societies Facing Plural Challenges*, held in Bolzano/Bozen from 23 to 26 June 2026, RC26 Human Rights, in collaboration with RC50 The Politics of Language, organised two panels entitled 'Linguistic Minority Rights: Challenges of Pluralism'. The panels showed that linguistic minority rights are not merely about protecting cultural heritage; they also test the quality of democracy, equality, and pluralism in societies shaped by migration, digitalisation, and political polarisation.

The colloquium took place at Eurac Research's headquarters in Bolzano/Bozen and was organised by several IPSA Research Committees (RCs), most notably RC14 Politics and Ethnicity. The Institute for Minority Rights and the Centre for Autonomy at Eurac Research hosted it.

The event was interdisciplinary and inter-committee. In addition to RC14, RC13 Democratisation in Comparative Perspective, RC16 Socio-Political Pluralism, RC23 Elections, Citizens and Parties, RC28 Comparative Federalism and Multilevel Governance, RC43 Religion and Politics, RC44 Security, Conflict and Democratisation, RC50 The Politics of Language, and RC53 Indigenous Politics co-organised it.

The overarching theme, 'Minorities under Siege?', served as an analytical metaphor for the pressures, vulnerabilities, and systemic challenges minorities face in contemporary states. The choice of Bolzano/Bozen was particularly appropriate, as South Tyrol offers a key European example of autonomy and the coexistence of three linguistic communities.

Linguistic Minority Rights: Challenges of Pluralism I

The panel 'Linguistic Minority Rights: Challenges of Pluralism I', a joint initiative of RC50 and RC26, was chaired in its first part by Professor Bartosz Hordecki (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań), with Zsuzsanna Aréndas (ELTE Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest) acting as discussant. The panel focused on conceptualising and implementing linguistic minority rights as human rights in rapidly changing socio-political conditions. The speakers examined both the individual and collective dimensions of these rights, addressing why, how and to what extent they are currently being restricted. Particular attention was paid to the ideologisation and 'weaponisation' of linguistic minority rights in twenty-first-century political disputes.

The discussion revealed a tension between the formal recognition of rights and their effective protection. Language can affirm identity and enable public participation, but it can also become an object of state control, exclusion, or political instrumentalisation.

Professor Oscar Pérez de la Fuente (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid) delivered a paper entitled 'Migrants' Linguistic Rights'. He argued that debates on migrants' rights usually focus on political inclusion and economic redistribution, while cultural rights—including linguistic rights—remain less visible. International law recognises such rights only cautiously, and national legislation must reconcile the protection of national identity with the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and migrants' growing claims.

Professor Jędrzej Skrzypczak (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) presented a paper entitled *Challenges to European Linguistic Minority Rights Guarantees in the 21st Century*. He examined the evolution of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML, 1992) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM, 1995) in the context of digitalisation, migration and politicisation. He

argued that digital platforms may restrict minorities' access to content in their own languages, notwithstanding the 2024 Digital Services Act (DSA) and European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). Migration, in turn, raises the question of whether the protection traditionally afforded to established minorities can be extended to new linguistic communities, such as Ukrainians in Poland. A Polish case study on Kashubian and Silesian further highlighted legislative and financial shortcomings in implementing the ECRML.

The third paper, *The Polish Language as a Minority Language in Brazil*, was prepared by Professor Michał Szczyszek, Agnieszka Piotrowska-Wojaczyk and Zuzanna Przybysz (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań), together with Alicja Goczyla Ferreira (Federal University of Paraná, Curitiba). The authors examined the history of the Polish diaspora in Brazil, which numbers approximately 1.5 million people and is concentrated primarily in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. Their analysis covered the period before the formal codification of minority rights, the decline of Polish institutions in the 1930s and 1970s, and contemporary opportunities to sustain the Polish language in a predominantly Portuguese-speaking environment. The paper showed that a diaspora language's survival depends not only on legal protection, but also on schools, the press, community organisations, and the intergenerational transmission of linguistic practices.

“Linguistic minority rights are not merely about protecting cultural heritage; they also test the quality of democracy, equality, and pluralism.”

The Interdisciplinary Politics of Language II

The issue of linguistic minority rights was explored further in the second session of this strand, 'The Interdisciplinary Politics of Language II', chaired by Professor Yael Peled (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity), with commentary from Professor Oscar Pérez de la Fuente (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid). The panel brought together perspectives from linguistics, law, media studies, and artificial intelligence research, illustrating how digitalisation and technological regulation are transforming the conditions under which

minority languages can survive.

Professor Zorica Trajkova Strezovska (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje) and Aleksandar Takovski (AAB College, Kosovo) presented a paper entitled 'Minority Language Sustainability: Maintenance, Democratic Inclusion, and Digital Visibility in North Macedonia'. They highlighted the interdependence of minority language maintenance, democratic inclusion, and digital visibility. The paper showed that a language's presence in the digital environment is not merely a technological issue; it is a precondition for linguistic minorities' meaningful participation in public debate.

Professor Matejka Grgic (University of Ljubljana and the Slovene Research Institute, Trieste) presented a paper entitled 'From Legal Recognition to Digital Marginalisation: The Slovenian Minority in Italy in the Age of Datafication'. Her analysis highlighted a paradox: formal recognition of the Slovenian minority's rights in Italy does not automatically guarantee the community an equal position in the digital environment. Datafication may generate a new form of linguistic marginalisation when data, algorithms and digital services fail to accommodate minority languages.

Professor Costanza Nardocci (University of Milan), in her paper *Minorities at the Mirror: What Is Missing in the European Regulatory Framework on AI*, examined gaps in the European regulatory framework on artificial intelligence from the perspective of linguistic minorities. She argued that AI systems may reinforce the dominance of majority languages when training data, interfaces, and quality standards fail to account for linguistic minorities. Accordingly, AI regulation should also be assessed through the prism of language rights, equal access and protection against digital discrimination.

Professor Sophie Mangutsch (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano) presented a paper entitled 'Nationalistic Ideologies in the Protection and Promotion of Minorities: A Comparison between Friulian, Ladin and Romansh'. Her comparative analysis of Friulian, Ladin, and Romansh showed that nationalist ideologies may shape how minority languages are protected and promoted. Even measures that are formally pro-minority may reinforce identity boundaries, produce hierarchies between communities or encourage political mobilisation around language.

Conclusions

Both panels confirmed that protecting linguistic minorities' rights requires a systemic, interdisciplinary approach. An analysis of international standards alone is insufficient; it is equally necessary to examine their implementation in education, the media, digital platforms, artificial intelligence systems, migration policy and the practices of central and regional authorities.

For RC26, the sessions provided a valuable opportunity to deepen dialogue between scholars working on human rights and language policy. They also strengthened broader cooperation among IPSA Research Committees on minorities, pluralism, democratisation, federalism, and multilevel governance. The discussions identified three priorities for future research: integrating individual and collective rights; including new migrant communities alongside traditional minorities; and analysing digital, algorithmic, and narrative mechanisms affecting the protection of minority languages.

The panels' conclusions show that protecting linguistic diversity remains one of the most significant challenges facing contemporary pluralistic societies. It is not merely a matter of symbolic recognition, but of public institutions' actual capacity to guarantee equality, participation, and dignity for all linguistic communities.

The excellent collaboration between RC26 and RC50 during the colloquium has already led to further joint initiatives, including a planned joint panel at the IPSA World Congress in Rome in 2027.

More information: sites.google.com/view/ipsarc14

WRITE FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS BLOG

The Human Rights Blog of IPSA RC26 publishes short academic posts by scholars from different countries on current issues in human rights, democracy and political theory.

Each post is published in open access with its own DOI, and the blog is registered with ISSN 3127-4560. Proposals are welcome from RC26 members and colleagues.

Blog humanrights.webphilosophia.com Contact humanrights@webphilosophia.com

Anti-immigration Discourse as Hate Speech

Cristian Rodríguez Barrón · Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

Abstract These lines outline a general overview of the emergence of anti-immigration discourse as a form of hate speech aimed at undermining the dignity of people in situations of human mobility. To this end, they are based on the premise that the contemporary increase in migratory flows has resulted from other crises, such as those arising from climate change, the outbreak of armed conflicts, poverty, insecurity, and the rise of authoritarianism. These are all factors that are overlooked when political debate is reduced to the search for someone to blame rather than the management of comprehensive solutions. The text distinguishes between legitimate debate on migration and narratives that portray migration, and the people who are part of it, as undesirable, dangerous, or threatening. Finally, it reflects on the volatility and increase of this type of discourse through social media as a political tool designed to spread fear, increase hostility, intensify polarization, undermine public debate, create the conditions for the commission of hate crimes, and weaken the democratic system.

Keywords hate speech; anti-immigration discourse; dignity; democracy; migrants; human mobility; polarization

In recent years, humanity has faced numerous challenges that have highlighted the ability of States to put forward comprehensive solutions to them. The expansion of phenomena such as climate change, the outbreak of armed conflicts across the globe, the increase in poverty, the emergence of authoritarian and populist regimes, and the level of insecurity in some regions have caused an exponential increase in migratory flows.

However, alongside their development, a political and ideological current has emerged, characterized by the use of discourse that seeks to attract popular sympathy through the simplification of structural problems and by assigning responsibility for them to migrants (Krzyżanowski, 2020, 506). Hatred as a weapon, and its simplification through discourse, is a seductive tool that nevertheless causes profound and costly damage to any democratic regime.

The polarization and social fragmentation it causes not only divide public opinion regarding the significance of a totalizing social phenomenon that involves us all. They also dissolve that unbreakable boundary separating right from wrong, such as the one that raises the question of how dignified the treatment of another human being should be, and the level of dignity with which they deserve to live.

Anti-immigration discourse is a manifestation of hate

speech that undermines a person's dignity on the basis of their immigration status. That is, not all discourse centered on migration is, for that reason alone, hate speech; rather, only discourse that harms migrant identity is. And not just any migrant identity, but the one that falls outside the parameters of what is considered "desirable." In other words, irregular migration, which, despite representing a combination of different vulnerability factors for the person who migrates, is considered undesirable, dangerous, or a threat to the functioning of society.

"Not all discourse centered on migration is, for that reason alone, hate speech; rather, only discourse that harms migrant identity is."

Despite this, anti-immigration discourse is an increasingly used political tool. Its main foundations lie in the supposed danger of the "replacement", "invasion", or "destruction" of national identity by those who arrive. Those who do not belong to "us" but are distinguished as a different "them"—"the outsiders" (Pasetti, 2024).

The increased use of these narratives is characterized not only by being accompanied by the design of policies intended to restrict the rights of people in situations of human mobility, but also by encouraging a phenomenon of

social division that weakens democracy, restricts public debate, and undermines differences. This scenario is an ideal breeding ground for the commission of hate crimes (Mariscal Ríos, 2024, 68).

The “charm” of anti-immigration discourse is that it appeals to emotional content that seeks to generate fear based on difference, to which it attributes the source of all evils. Insecurity, terrorism, job shortages, the housing crisis and, in general, rising living costs are factors grouped under the unfounded idea that immigration rates are increasing; however, these are structural problems that stem from multiple factors and call for a detailed explanation rather than being simply reduced to the search for someone to blame.

Despite this, the shift in political trends in some regions of the world has moved in the opposite direction. The example of the United States and the current administration’s immigration policy clearly shows how anti-immigration discourse can successfully channel the population’s social discontent toward a specific group. This success has been enhanced, to a great extent, by the use of social media and the active participation of the companies that manage them (Muller, Schwarz, 2012, 2131–2132).

Today, the Western world faces one of its greatest challenges: the management of human mobility and the discourse surrounding it. Without a doubt, this will be one of the key factors shaping global political trends in the coming years; however, we must ask ourselves: in what way will it define us as humanity?

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JOURNAL OF GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

A double-anonymous peer-reviewed, open access journal affiliated with IPSA Research Committee 26 (Human Rights). No submission or publication fees.

Now accepting submissions for Volume 1, Issue 1 (December 2026): see the call for papers on page 15. Selected papers from the RC26 Interim Conference will also be considered for a special issue.

Submit journalglobalhumanrights.webphilosophia.com

RC26 at IPSA-WiPS 2026: Disinformation, Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights

Jędrzej Skrzypczak · RC26 Vice-Chair

On 16 July 2026, Research Committee 26 – Human Rights (RC26) took part in the second edition of the IPSA Work-in-Progress Sessions (IPSA-WiPS), held online on a platform provided by IPSA. The event, scheduled for 13–19 July 2026, is part of a new IPSA format launched two years ago. These sessions take place in the years when there is no IPSA World Congress and consist of interactive workshops devoted to research conducted by members of each Research Committee: participants present unfinished or ongoing projects and receive feedback from colleagues and committee members.

In keeping with its established practice, RC26 proposed panels on the most pressing challenges to human rights in the digital environment. The starting point of the discussion was the conviction that the growth of social media, algorithms and artificial intelligence not only expands the possibilities of communication, but also creates new threats to freedom of expression, privacy, non-discrimination, access to information and the quality of democracy.

Disinformation and human rights

The panel ‘Disinformation and Human Rights’ addressed the growing impact of disinformation on international human rights standards. The participants analysed its effects on freedom of expression, access to information and the principle of non-discrimination, while drawing attention to social polarisation, declining trust in institutions, and violations of the rights of minorities and journalists. An important point of reference was UN Human Rights Council Resolution 55/10 of 3 April 2024 on the role of States in countering the negative impact of disinformation on the enjoyment of human rights.

The panel featured four presentations which together revealed the many dimensions of the problem—from the limits of free speech, through narratives about migrants and digital participation, to the methodological difficulties of studying the dependence of the media on those in

power.

Dr Elif Dilan Kara (Maltepe University, Turkey), in her paper *The Limits of Freedom of Expression: Disinformation*, argued that the development of digital communication has created the appearance of unlimited freedom of expression while also enabling the mass dissemination of disinformation. In her view, disinformation should not automatically be protected as an exercise of free speech, since it can lead to violations of the rights of others. She stressed that freedom of expression, although fundamental, is not an absolute right and must be interpreted in the light of the indivisibility of human rights. Freedom entails responsibility, and effective regulation requires a precise definition of its limits and an answer to the question of whether disinformation falls within its scope. Her conclusion was clear: disinformation should be treated as a phenomenon with real social consequences, not as a mere exercise of the right to free expression.

Ayşe Ezgi Gurcan (Istanbul Beykent University, Turkey) presented the paper *In News We Doubt: Narratives on the Rights of the ‘Other’ and the Autocratic Turn in Migration Management*. She analysed how changing media and political narratives about migrants shape migration policy and contribute to the curtailment of liberal legal regimes. She emphasised that in populist discourse migrants—both irregular and those with legal status—are increasingly portrayed not as rights-holders but as an existential threat requiring extraordinary measures. Drawing on the distinction between ‘everyday’ and ‘technocratic’ narratives proposed by Boswell and Smellie (2023), she compared the cases of the United States, Hungary and Turkey, showing that in these countries the strengthening of executive power goes hand in hand with migration crises and the erosion of human rights protection.

Laura Alessandra Nocera (University of Milan, Italy) presented *New Frontiers for Participatory Democracy in the Social Medias Mobilizations: A Comparative Analysis of Pros and Cons in Some Recent Cases*. Her paper dealt with

the transformation of democracy under the influence of digital tools, social media and artificial intelligence. She pointed to the dual significance of these technologies: on the one hand, they can increase citizens' involvement in decision-making and broaden participation; on the other, they encourage polarisation, a simplified understanding of democracy and the shifting onto citizens of the 'duty to save democracy'. In the empirical part, Dr Nocera announced a comparative analysis of recent mobilisations in South Korea, Serbia and Romania, combining the perspectives of public law, political science and the digital humanities.

Josh King (Dublin City University, Ireland) presented *Theories of Media Capture & Implications for Empirical Analysis: A Critical Conceptual Review*. His paper addressed 'media capture', the subordination of the media to governmental or corporate interests at the expense of journalistic independence. He argued that the main difficulty in studying this phenomenon is not a lack of theory but the partial nature of existing theories: each research tradition identifies some mechanisms well but overlooks others. King discussed five main approaches—political economy, Hallin and Mancini's comparative media systems, economic models, the concept of 'soft capture', and platform studies. His conclusion was methodologically significant: reliable detection of media capture requires a multi-level tool that takes into account the conditions under which each theory applies, causal mechanisms, and calibration to the specific media system.

Conclusions

RC26's participation in IPSA-WiPS 2026 confirmed that human rights are now at the centre of the debate on the future of the media, democracy and technology. The research presented showed that disinformation, populism, migration, digital participation, media dependence on power and artificial intelligence are not separate problems but interconnected phenomena. The shared conclusion of the panels was that effective protection of human rights requires a balanced approach: States should

counter disinformation, algorithmic discrimination and abuses of power, but must not misuse tools for fighting 'fake news' to restrict freedom of expression. In this sense, the RC26 discussion was in line with the standards of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, and with the broader project of building resilient, pluralist and democratic information societies. The next edition of IPSA-WiPS will take place in two years' time.

More information: ipsa.org/events/wips2026

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Rome 2027: RC26 Open Panels at the IPSA World Congress

Luiss Guido Carli University, Rome · 24–28 July 2027

The IPSA World Congress of Political Science will be held at Luiss Guido Carli University in Rome from 24 to 28 July 2027, under the theme *Uncertain Democracies: Rethinking Governance in a Changing Global System*. RC26 Human Rights is sponsoring 18 open panels on artificial intelligence and surveillance, disinformation and platform regulation, democratic backsliding and civic space, climate justice, statelessness, minorities and state impunity.

The call for papers is open until 4 November 2026. Proposals are submitted through the IPSA website with a free IPSA online account; IPSA membership is required to register and take part in the Congress. Following the collaboration at the Bolzano/Bozen colloquium, RC26 and RC50 The Politics of Language are also planning a joint panel.

RC26 open panels

PL-4494 Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights and the Uncertain Future of Democracy

PL-3971 Artificial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Human Rights: Governance Challenges in Uncertain Democracies

PL-4137 Biometric States and Digital Surveillance: Human Rights in an Age of Datafied Governance

PL-4140 Climate Change as a Human Rights Crisis: Justice, Accountability, and Future Generations

PL-4044 Disinformation and Human Rights: Challenges for Democracy, Governance and the Rule of Law

PL-4043 Education for Peace, Democracy and Human Rights: Global Challenges and New Perspectives

PL-4466 Governing Digital Speech: Political, Legal, and Moral Perspectives on Platform Regulation

PL-4458 Human Rights at a Crossroads: Political Uses of Universalism in Times of Contestation

PL-3967 Human Rights in an Age of Polycrisis: Navigating

Intersecting Threats to Dignity and Democracy

PL-4000 Human Rights in the Age of Neoliberal Framework: Reconciling Irreconcilables

PL-4233 Human Rights in Uncertain Democracies: Rethinking Governance in Asia with Special Reference to India

PL-3944 Life in Truth: The Legacy of Charter '77 and Human Rights-based Dissent in Times of Democratic Backsliding

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The Policeman Has Left the Building

Swati Sakshi Mishra · Geopolitical journalist, MEA WorldWide; JECRC University

Abstract This essay argues that the modern human-rights regime has long rested less on universal principle than on the reputational incentives created by U.S. power. While the United States helped midwife the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it simultaneously practiced racial segregation, maintained colonial governance, and used rights language as a Cold War tool that constrained rivals more than itself. For decades, Washington's desire to preserve an image of legitimacy provided a partial—if hypocritical—backstop against overt authoritarian impunity. The piece contends that this implicit bargain has ruptured: domestic democratic backsliding and the active dismantling of multilateral commitments have signaled to governments in places such as Hungary, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia that accountability can be evaded without meaningful cost. As global freedom declines and civil-society funding shrinks, the institutions of oversight are being weakened by neglect rather than reformed. Yet the author frames this moment as a paradoxical opportunity. With the “policeman” gone, human rights must earn authority independent of Western foreign policy and be defended through local, organised civic pressure. Recent youth-led movements demonstrate that demands for accountability need not depend on American endorsement; they depend on mobilized publics willing to insist on rights as a political project.

Keywords human rights; American exceptionalism; multilateralism; civil society

On human rights, American exceptionalism, and the architecture of convenient conscience

There is an old joke in international relations: human rights are what powerful states demand of weaker ones. It is not actually a joke.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, the United States voted in favour. Eleanor Roosevelt had chaired the drafting committee. The symbolism was enormous, the sincerity, selective. At the time of signing, the US maintained legal racial segregation at home, ran a colonial administration in Puerto Rico, and was orchestrating coups in Iran and Guatemala within the same decade. The Declaration was a magnificent document. It was also, in significant part, a Cold War instrument, a rhetorical cudgel with which the West could beat the Soviet Union while (silently) exempting itself from the same blows.

You might think it's cynicism. But (unfortunately) this is history.

For seventy years, the global human rights system operated on an implicit understanding: the United States was its guarantor of last resort. Flawed, hypocritical, frequently

absent, but present enough to give the architecture some credibility. Dictators knew there were limits. Not because Washington had a conscience, but because it had an image to maintain.

Reputational cost is a real cost in international politics, even when moral cost is not.

That calculation has now collapsed.

In the course of a single year, the Trump administration undermined trust in elections, attacked judicial independence, defied court orders, rolled back women's rights, stripped protections from trans and intersex people, eroded privacy, and used government power to intimidate the media, law firms, universities, civil society organizations, and, remarkably, even comedians. Comedians. The regime that cannot tolerate a joke is historically not a regime that tolerates much else.

The US withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council, the World Health Organization, and announced plans to exit 66 more international institutions. You might call it isolationism, but isolationism, my dear readers, is passive. This is active demolition.

“His departure is a test of whether

human rights ever meant anything beyond his convenience.”

There is a meaningful difference between a country that stops attending the meeting and one that burns down the meeting hall on its way out.

The consequences are not abstract. Authoritarians worldwide have monitored this assault and learned that they are unlikely to be held accountable internationally in the near term. Observation and emulation are the sincerest forms of political flattery. When Budapest, Ankara, and Riyadh see Washington sanction ICC judges and call it foreign policy, they do not feel embarrassed. They feel vindicated.

Here is the deeper problem, and it requires some philosophical honesty to state: the human rights system was always underpinned more by American power than American principle.

John Rawls built his theory of justice on the idea of a veil of ignorance, that we design fair rules when we do not know which position we will occupy. The American approach to human rights worked on the opposite logic. Washington always knew exactly which position it occupied, and designed the rules accordingly. What is remarkable is how long the rest of the world politely pretended otherwise.

Freedom House recorded its 19th consecutive year of declines in global freedom. Human rights funding globally faces a projected reduction of \$1.9 billion by 2026 compared to 2023 levels. Civil society organizations are being defunded, banned, and in some cases disappeared. Nearly 44 percent of peacebuilding organizations surveyed would run out of funds by the end of 2027. The infrastructure of accountability is not being reformed. It is being starved.

So where does that leave human rights as a political project?

Precisely here: stripped of its most powerful patron, the idea must now justify itself on its own terms. That is, paradoxically, the most honest position it has ever been in. For decades, human rights advocacy was contaminated by association with Western foreign policy, a problem that scholars from the Global South, feminist IR theorists, and postcolonial critics had been raising long before it became fashionable to notice. When Amnesty Interna-

tional's credibility depended partly on the State Department's credibility, that was always a fragile foundation.

Civil society organizations are more important than ever and can play a critical role in defending rights, protecting minorities, and holding governments accountable. Youth movements in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal and Venezuela demonstrated in 2024 and 2025 that accountability does not require American endorsement. It requires people who are angry enough and organized enough to demand it themselves.

The policeman has left the building. He was, admittedly, a policeman who sometimes robbed the same houses he claimed to protect. His departure is not a tragedy for human rights. His departure is a test of whether human rights ever meant anything beyond his convenience.

The answer to that test will define the next century of global politics.

Read the blog: humanrights.webphilosophia.com

What Does the Moralization of Politics Mean? Populism, Social Identity, and Political Mobilization

Luis Miguel Jaraba · Universitat de Barcelona

Abstract This article examines what it means to describe contemporary politics as increasingly moralized and emotionally driven. It argues that these developments are intertwined because both arise from the construction of political identities in antagonistic terms. Drawing on philosophical accounts of the distinction between facts and values and on social identity theory, it explains how political narratives connect descriptions of social reality with normative judgments, group expectations and emotionally charged commitments, and asks whether populist mobilization strengthens democratic participation or encourages a culture-war logic that undermines pluralism.

Keywords moralization of politics; populism; social identity; political mobilization

Academic researchers and political commentators frequently argue that, in the context of populism, we are witnessing the phenomenon of the ‘moralization’ of politics. They also point out that politics is increasingly driven by emotions rather than reason. Although these may be understood as two distinct processes from a conceptual standpoint, I argue that they are intertwined in practice and often refer to the same underlying phenomenon: the growing tendency to understand political identities—a particular form of social identity—in antagonistic terms. This tendency leads us to intensify our efforts to mobilize around the causes that matter to us, as we come to interpret the political projects of opposing groups as existential threats to our cherished ways of life. Broadly speaking, this is what it means to say that politics has become moralized and increasingly driven by emotions.

Some researchers conceptualize the moralization of politics as a process whereby political debates shift toward moral questions—what is right and what is wrong—rather than focusing on evidence-based arguments about how to address specific social problems through support for or opposition to particular public policies (Schaub, Tosun & Becker, 2025, p. 2). Meanwhile, researchers such as Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) argue that moralization extends to social identities, portraying the political landscape as a struggle between a ‘corrupt’ or ‘evil’ elite and a ‘pure’ or ‘virtuous’ people (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwas-

ser, 2017, pp. 11–12). In other words, politics becomes a struggle between antagonistic identity-based camps that understand themselves and others in moralized terms. This entails a Manichaean view of intergroup relations, rooted in the very narratives through which these political identities are constructed.

Facts and values

The world is not inherently moral in the sense that moral values are not observable properties of physical objects or events. David Hume famously distinguished between statements about what *is* and statements about what *ought* to be, highlighting the difficulty of deriving normative conclusions from purely descriptive premises (Hume, 1888, p. 469). Ludwig Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, argued that the world consists of facts and that these can either be the case or not be the case (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 23).

However, ethical propositions are different. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein argues that ethics cannot be expressed through propositions (Wittgenstein, 1922, p. 88) about what is or is not the case. Ethical value does not constitute another fact among the facts that make up the world. Consequently, ethical questions cannot be resolved simply by establishing the truth or falsity of empirical propositions through observation or experimentation.

When we discuss politics and morality, therefore, we do more than describe the world: we also *evaluate* it. Political discourse involves not only claims about what is but also judgments about what matters, what is desirable or undesirable, and what should be done. In this sense, political and moral reasoning belong to the realm of practical life, where we deliberate about human action and offer reasons for acting in particular ways. The moralization of politics can thus be understood as a process through which descriptions and interpretations of social reality become intertwined with normative judgments, shaping how political groups understand themselves, evaluate their opponents, and justify collective action.

“When we discuss politics and morality, we do more than describe the world: we also evaluate it.”

Social identity and group norms

However, we do not guide our moral conduct merely by adhering to what we consider random or arbitrary mandates. Rather, the strong influence of social morality depends on our perceiving it as compelling because it is underpinned by a narrative that makes it meaningful and valuable. Even moral actions grounded in custom and tradition have normative force precisely because we believe that they preserve a society or way of life that we consider worthy of protection.

Social identities cannot be maintained without a commitment to certain perceived group expectations. We ought to behave as we believe members of our group are expected to behave in order to maintain a positive self-evaluation as members of that group. Otherwise, we might regard ourselves as *bad* democrats, *bad* citizens, *bad* lawyers, *bad* Spaniards, and so on. Our deviation from group norms may even reach a point at which it becomes difficult to consider ourselves members of a particular social group. By defining ourselves and others in terms of a set of group memberships, we also internalize group norms, understood as “cognitively stored attitudes about beliefs, feelings, and behaviors” (Wellen et al., 1998, p. 48). However, this drive is not merely rational; it is also emotional. It stems from sentiments such as the desire to belong, pride in our group memberships, love for our ways of life, and fear of potential existential threats to them.

Populism and the culture war

Populist rhetoric promotes divisive, reductionist, and antagonistic narratives about social groups. It divides the population into *bad* elites and *good* common people. Note that the use of evaluative terms such as *bad* and *good* prescribes how we ought to be and, consequently, how we ought to act: we should emulate the common people and reject the ways of thinking and behaving associated with the elites. However, this is presented not merely as a recommendation but as an urgent imperative necessary to ensure the survival of what we cherish as a group, including the values and ways of life that characterize our social identities. The conflict is interpreted as a ‘culture war’ in which there is no room for coexistence between opposing groups and in which the goal is to impose our own values on others.

Some conservatives genuinely believe that the traditional family is at risk when discourses advocating sexual and gender rights and opposing discrimination gain prominence. They may frame these discourses as threats to traditional values, referring to them using terms such as ‘gender ideology’ or ‘wokism’.

Strong emotions are mobilized by this kind of interpretation of society, encouraging greater activism and political engagement. But is this a positive form of mobilization? Does it promote democratic practices of cooperation and respect for diversity, or does it resemble a cultural crusade, driven by the fear that the values and ways of life we cherish are in decline and must be defended at all costs?

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