ANNUAL REPORT

2021/2022

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER
UC Berkeley School of Law

OUR MISSION

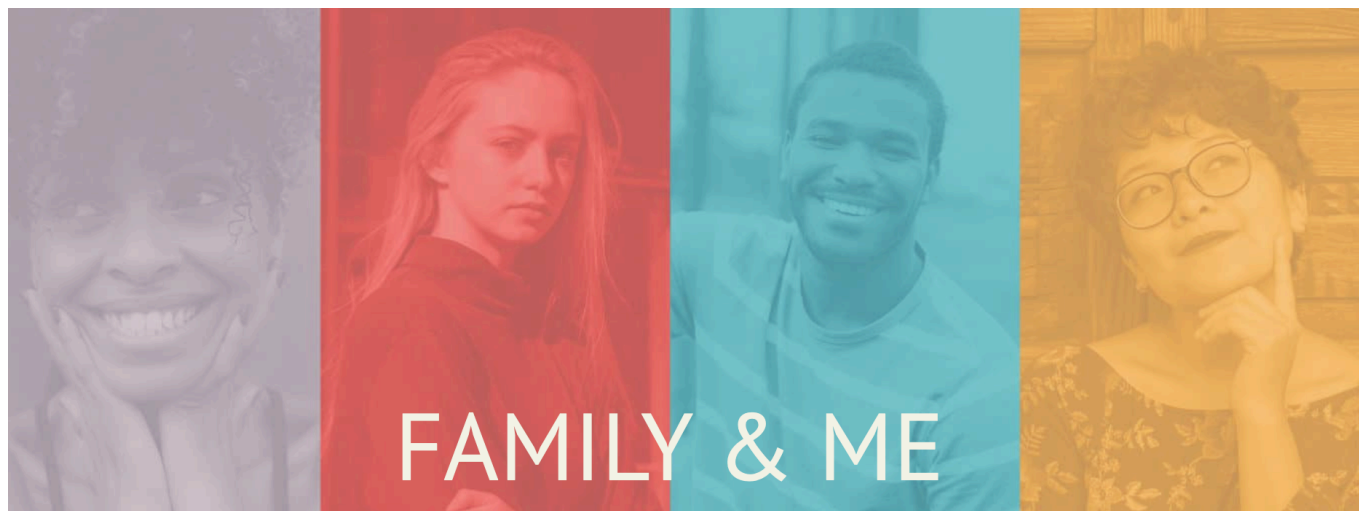Amplify the voices of survivors to ensure that their needs are addressed.

Improve the quality of human rights research to secure justice and accountability.

Train the next generation of human rights advocates.

The Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley, recipient of the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions, is globally recognized for its use of science and law to improve the investigation of human rights violations and potential war crimes through education, research, and collaboration. Based at the world's leading public university, the Human Rights Center has had nearly 30 years of impact, marshaling the expertise of the university to make change in the world.

Cover image: Journalist Khwaga Ghani is one of HRC's Afghan scholars. She was evacuated from Kabul after the Taliban retook control of the region in 2021. Credit: Brittany Hosea-Small.

Health and Human Rights Program

FAMILY & ME

The Health and Human Rights Program aims to improve the health and protection of marginalized people affected by armed conflict, natural disaster, and other humanitarian crises. Using innovative methods and frontline technical assistance, we partner with leading local and international organizations to develop new tools and guidelines that can improve health and save lives. We are currently working to understand how to prevent exploitation, including trafficking and child marriage, and better meet the needs of young people who are at risk.

Trafficking

In 2021 and 2022, we continued to collaborate with the powerful Family and Me (FAM) program to evaluate and develop innovative solutions to the crisis of trafficking and exploitation of young people in the Bay Area—efforts that we hope will someday be seeded nationally. FAM is a family-based foster care pilot that delivers specialized services and focuses on developing a community of healthy family and peer relationships for young people at risk of sexual exploitation. To date, we have released three reports, along with recommendations that have been used by our partners to improve program design and implementation.

"[Youth survivors of commercial sexual exploitation] believe in FAM so much. They really think that this caregiving model would be huge and would make a difference for their experience fostering and for the [other] teens they know."

—FAM Service Provider

Health and Human Rights Program

Child Marriage

The Health and Human Rights Program continued our work to support girls at risk of child marriage during humanitarian crises such as armed conflict or natural disaster, and to help practitioners respond more effectively to protect their childhoods and enable them to stay in school.

In May 2021, we launched a report entitled "Child Marriage in Humanitarian Crises: Girls and Parents Speak Out on Risk and Protective Factors, Decision-Making, and Solutions" at a live-streamed event from Copenhagen. The report presents the findings from phase 2 of our child marriage study, which provides humanitarian practitioners with first-of-its-kind, youth-centered guidance on how to prevent and respond to child marriage in displacement settings. Additionally, a special report examines the impacts of COVID-19 on adolescent girls and marriage decision-making.

This year, we are working with our partners Save the Children and Plan International to develop and evaluate a comprehensive pilot program to prevent and respond to child marriage in humanitarian contexts.

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"A husband's home is a prison. If you go there, they will be forcing you. You don't move, you don't do anything. That is the reason that makes some girls wait [to] get married."

—girl aged 17,
Bidi Bidi refugee camp
in Uganda

Technology and Human Rights Program

THE INVESTIGATIONS LAB

In September 2021, the Investigations Lab celebrated its fifth anniversary. Each of our accomplishments results from a vision seeded five years prior. We're now comprised of 70+ students speaking 25 languages and representing more than 30 majors. Our alumni are driving change around the world, working in organizations that span the fields of law, policy, journalism, and more.

In 2021, the Lab advanced HRC's long-standing commitment to investigative journalism and factual reporting. We mobilized at critical moments, including the January 6 insurrection, and deepened our focus on training journalists in digital verification techniques. HRC fortified its collaboration with Berkeley Journalism's graduate-level Investigative Reporting Program, and students worked directly with the Associated Press, Reveal and others to bring injustice into public view.

Our students continue to prove their unique skills are indispensable. Our alumni have gone on to win multiple Pulitzer Prizes and Polk Awards, among other journalism honors of the highest esteem.

We've empowered and championed a cross-campus cohort of more than 100 students by mentoring and supporting emerging investigation labs at UC Santa Cruz and UCLA, joining with them to launch the UC Network of Digital Fact-finding. In August 2021, we began our first two joint investigations with UCSC.

Working with Media Matters for America, students documented misinformation spreaders, especially targeting underserved voting communities—AAPI, Latinx, Indigenous, and Black—mapping social media networks.

Currently, to support the efforts of Human Rights First and the Institute for Women and Migration in Mexico, Lab students are helping to track human rights violations and violence experienced by asylum seekers who are crossing or deported to Mexico. This is just one of more than thirty high-impact investigations and dozens of research projects that our staff and students have both directed and assisted at the highest levels over the last six years.

Technology and Human Rights Program

TECH, LAW, AND POLICY

"We would like to make sure they're seeing the cyber domain as an actual domain of warfare, because in this case, it truly is."

—Program director Lindsay Freeman quoted in WIRED magazine on her team's article 15 submission to the International Criminal Court

In 2022, the Human Rights Center submitted a historic recommendation to the International Criminal Court to consider Russian cyberattacks against Ukraine's civilian infrastructure as war crimes, under a provision of the Rome Statute known as article 15. The report focused specifically on a group known as Sandworm—among other names—a cyber military unit in Russia's armed forces responsible for offensive cyber attacks and malware development. Sandworm is responsible for a number of large-scale cyber attacks, including disabling large sections of Ukraine's power grid in December 2015 and 2016, and malware attacks destroying data from Ukrainian banks, energy firms, government officials, and airports in 2017.

The team's investigation and case-building on cyberwarfare in Ukraine began a year before Russia's escalation of hostilities on February 24, 2022, and the team continues to document cyberattacks in Ukraine. This would be the first time that cyberattacks are tried as potential war crimes at the ICC.

HRC's Tech, Law, and Policy program is also working with the 5AM Coalition, a group of civil society groups devoted to documenting potential war crimes in Ukraine. Additional support for the 5AM Coalition is taking form through HRC's advising on tech infrastructure for the gathering and preservation of digital evidence, supporting the verification of documented incidents, and helping with case-building.

HRC's legal investigation team continues to support case-building by our external partners related to war crimes in Syria. The Syria project gives students hands-on legal experience, exposes them to the intricacies of strategic human rights litigation and, most significantly, provides an opportunity for them to contribute to concrete outcomes with real-world impact.

The Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations

The Human Rights Center and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights launched the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations in 2020, making it the first international guidelines for using publicly available online information in investigations of violations of international criminal, humanitarian and human rights law. The Protocol, already translated into Ukrainian to assist the documentation of potential war crimes in Ukraine, is currently being translated into all of the languages of the United Nations for global impact. Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Iryna Venediktova, announced in March 2022 that she and her team were using the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations to guide their investigations into potential Russian war crimes, so that evidence collected could meet the standards required of international courts. We are now training war crimes investigators around the world in how to meet these standards.

Digital Lockers:
Archiving Social Media
Evidence of Atrocity Crimes

Since the release of the Berkeley Protocol, HRC has continued to work on standard-setting and quality control in international criminal investigations. Our current research focuses on how to better preserve digital evidence from social media companies like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, which have been accidental archives of war crimes and human rights documentation. Preserving social media evidence and ensuring it is made available to prosecuting authorities, especially those working on international criminal cases, has been a challenge for years. HRC is working with international lawyers, courts and technology companies to come up with a workable solution to ensure long-term digital preservation.

In 2021, we published our Digital Lockers report to advance the role of social media companies in preserving content that may document evidence of atrocity crimes. U.S. Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney, Stephen F. Lynch, Gregory W. Meeks, and Bill Keating cited the report in congressional letters to Meta, TikTok, Youtube, and Twitter in May 2022, urging the social media companies to archive the content shared on their platforms in light of widely-documented atrocities in Ukraine. In 2022 and 2023, we will be hosting a series of in-person workshops to teach the Digital Lockers infrastructure.

Open Source Investigative Reporting

From left to right: Brian Nguyen, Andrea Lampros, Alexa Koenig, Richard Koci Hernandez, Gisela Pérez de Acha and David Barstow. Photo: Buddy Terry

"Our class found new ways to work by combining the new with the old — OSINT techniques enhanced and accelerated the traditional investigative reporting techniques, allowing reporters to access and leverage more information from more sources to create fuller, deeper stories."

—Brian Nguyen, course instructor

The Human Rights Center joined forces this year with the Investigative Reporting Program at Berkeley Journalism to offer the first class of its kind: a graduate-level open source investigative reporting program that partners students and professional members of our team with diverse media outlets.

Led by experts in both digital investigations and time-honored investigative journalism methods, this class pushed the boundaries of what's possible in a classroom setting by leveraging data, social media, and traditional reporting. Students examined the undercurrents driving anti-abortion efforts forward with Reveal at the Center for Investigative Reporting, and shone a light on the specific ways in which migrants make their way to the United States for the Associated Press.

The class will continue in 2022/3 as faculty from HRC and IRP, under the leadership of Alexa Koenig and David Barstow, develop an entirely new pedagogy for investigative reporting with digital methods.

A team of students at Berkeley Journalism—including HRC alum Gisela Pérez de Acha, who helps teach this class—has just received the Polk Award for the mini-doc American Insurrection about extremism in the United States.

Human Rights Center Fellowship Program

Every fellow in HRC's student fellowship program works closely with a distinguished partner organization to support that organization's mandate and gain critical skills as human rights professionals. Since 1994, HRC has supported more than 375 students in over 80 countries and territories.

The 2021 and 2022 portfolio of projects includes using open source information to verify chemical weapons attacks as international war crimes, protecting the reproductive health rights of Ukrainian refugee women and families, mentoring refugee filmmakers in Kenyan IDP camps, advocating for the welfare of US foster youth, fighting for the rights of indigenous people in El Salvador, and defending death penalty cases in Texas, among many others.

2021 Alexii Sigona, Astha Agarwal, Brett Simpson , Ceren Fitoz, Mir Fatimah Kanth, Forogh Bashizada, Ghaleb Attrache, Gustavo Capela, Harjot Singh Dhindsa, Idris Muktar Ibrahim, Helena von Nagy, Lucy Meyer, Mayra Lopez, Meher Wadhawan, Michael Bakal, Naomi Spoelman, Samanta Anriquez, Sara Osman, Sarah Abdelrahman, Tiana Cherbosque, Tiffany Taylor

2022 Adéṣẹ̀wà Adéṣínà, Anna Judson, Anthony Ghaly, Bhavya Joshi, Caroline Lester, Eunchong Cho, Francis Santos, Kenneth Ng'etich, Malak Afaneh, Riya Desai, Violet Barton, Wafa Alawi

Special Projects

AFGHAN SCHOLARS AT RISK

August 2021 marked a turning point in Afghanistan as the Taliban claimed control of the country and thousands of Afghans––including women and children, human rights defenders, journalists, scholars, and students––found their lives at risk.
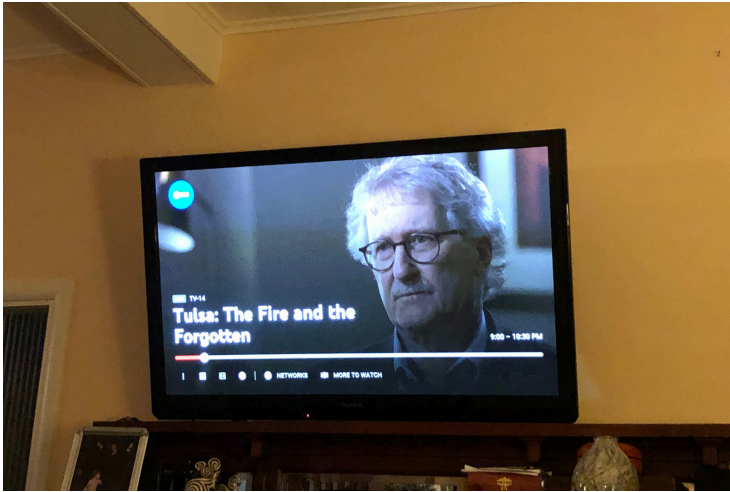
In partnership with the Human Rights Institute at San Jose State University, the UC Berkeley Chancellor's Office, and the UC Berkeley Afghan Student Association, the Human Rights Center launched the Afghan Scholars at Risk Fund to raise the resources needed to evacuate and host Afghan scholars who needed to flee the country, along with their families. Through the generosity of hundreds of donors we raised $351,087––the most successful crowdfunding campaign in UC Berkeley history. We have also received offers from dozens of volunteers for in-kind support, including transportation and translation services, housing, and donations of household items.

This funding and support has allowed us to invite 6 scholars and their families––a total of 38 individuals––to the Bay Area, where they will have an intellectual home to continue their profession while having the support of our community during their transition to the U.S. Two of the invited scholars, Ms. Khwaga Ghani and the Honorable Basira Qazizada, have safely arrived in the Bay Area, with a third on her way.

We recognize that there are hundreds of thousands of other Afghans who need evacuation and immigration guidance. To that end, we have created and been sharing a guide that details relevant resources and a list of organizations that are assisting with evacuation, relocation, and immigration.

Special Projects

TULSA'S HUSHED HISTORY

The film was co-produced by HRC faculty director Eric Stover, Jonathan Silvers of Saybrook Productions, and DeNeen Brown of The Washington Post.

Faculty Director Eric Stover co-produced a documentary about the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and the current effort to uncover and identify the remains of those who perished during the violence. Former HRC Associate Director Andrea Lampros supervised a team of Investigations Lab students who fact-checked the film.

"Tulsa: The Fire and the Forgotten" premiered on 31 May 2021 on PBS. The film commemorates the centennial of a white mob's three-day rampage in a thriving area known as Black Wall Street that burned down nearly 40 blocks of Black businesses and homes, and left over 8,000 people homeless. The official death count was 36, although historians estimate the actual casualties may number in the hundreds.

Local police helped arm the mob and even deputized some members. Many Black residents fled the city, while others were held in internment camps and could only leave if their white employer came to release them. The dead were buried in unmarked graves in Oaklawn Cemetery and other locations around Tulsa. No white person was ever indicted for the crimes.

"For the privileged whites, it was simply, 'We need to keep this quiet because we're a prosperous oil capital," says Stover. "In the Black community many feared talking about it. So a hushed history descended."

In June 2021, forensic scientists discovered 35 coffins in an unmarked mass grave in Oaklawn Cemetery. The remains of 19 people were examined in a forensic lab not far from the mass grave. In late 2021, the city selected Intermountain Forensics, a laboratory in Idaho, to conduct DNA analysis to identify the remains. So far, no identifications have been made public and the investigation continues.

HRC Staff and Students

Staff

Eric Stover, Faculty Director
Alexa Koenig, Executive Director and Technology Program Director
Alan Iijima, Development Manager
Alexey Berlind, Fellowship, Programs and Events Coordinator
Bryan Nguyen, Research Manager
Gisela Pérez de Acha, Supervising Reporter
Julie Freccero, Health and Human Rights Program Director
Lindsay Freeman, Technology, Law and Policy Program Director
Maggie Andresen, Communications Specialist
Sofia Kooner, HRC Investigations Lab Coordinator
Stephanie Croft, HRC Investigations Lab Director

Graduate Student Researchers

Anthony Ghaly, Tech and Human Rights Program
Brian Nguyen, Tech and Human Rights Program
Caroline Eskandar, Health and Human Rights Program
Safa Faki, Tech and Human Rights Program
Shalini Chatterjee, Health and Human Rights Program

HRC Investigations Lab Student Leaders

A.J. Schumann	Lily Lucero
Avani Yadav	Mackenzie Berwick
Catey Vera	Subuk Hasnain
Danielle Cosmes	Vyoma Raman
Incia Haider	Wendy Zhou
Karina Nguyen	Yaas Farzanefar

Finally, a heartfelt thank-you to the following former team members for their outstanding work with the HRC and for all they will continue to do for human rights:

Aditi Joshi, Health and Human Rights Manager
Andrea Lampros, Associate Director, Investigations Lab Co-Founder
Audrey Taylor, Health and Human Rights Program Research Manager
Faris Natour, Human Rights and Business Initiative Director
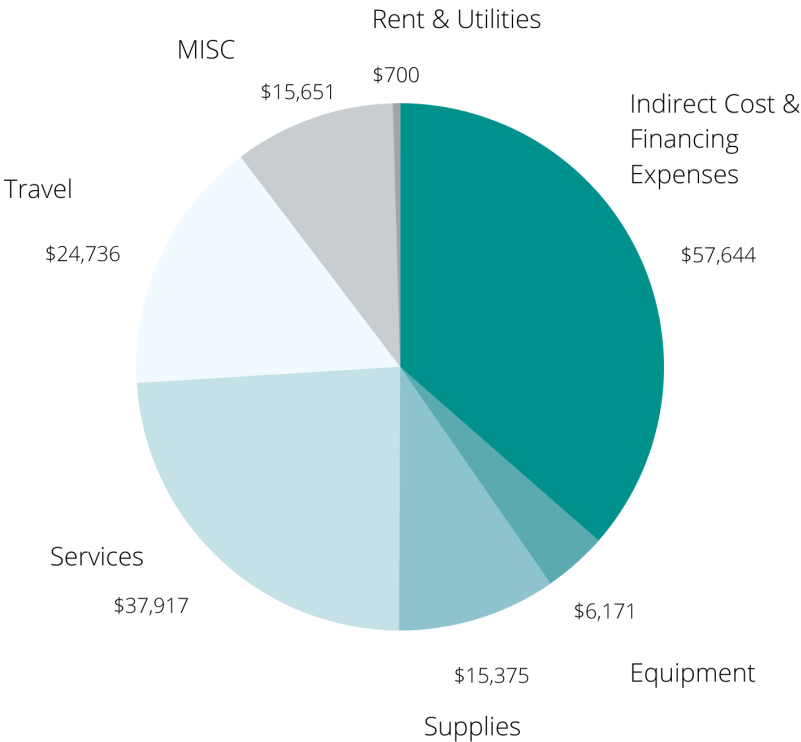Sydney Saubestre, Health and Human Rights Program Researcher
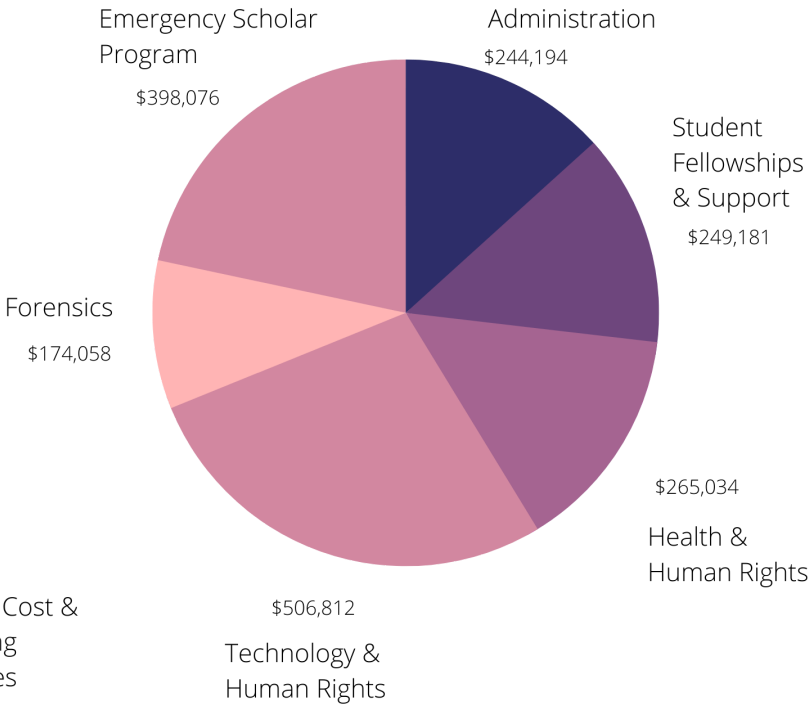
By the numbers

Total Revenue: $2,063,492
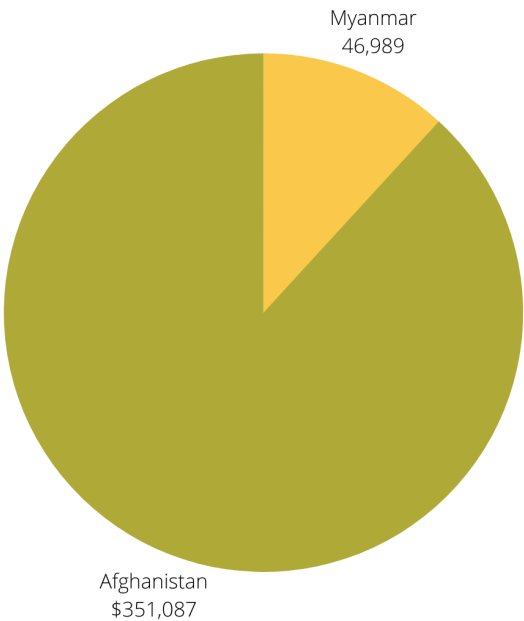**Total Expenses: $2,027,178**

Program Expenses: $1,837,354
Includes relevant salaries

Emergency Scholar Program
$398,076

Administration
$244,194

Student Fellowships & Support
$249,181

Forensics
$174,058

$265,034
Health & Human Rights

$506,812
Technology & Human Rights

Rent & Utilities
$700

MISC
$15,651

Indirect Cost & Financing Expenses
$57,644

Travel
$24,736

Services
$37,917

$6,171
Equipment

$15,375
Supplies

General Expenses: $189,824

Myanmar
46,989

Afghanistan
$351,087

Emergency Scholar Funding: $398,076

In Appreciation

Thank you to the following foundations for their generous support:

Commission for International Justice and Accountability
Humanity United
Lois and Irving Blum Foundation
Oak Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Open Society University Network
Plan International
Public Interest Technology University Network
San Francisco Department on the Status of Women
Save the Children
Sigrid Rausing Trust
The Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS)
UC Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives
US Department of State

Thank you to the 1560 individual and corporate donors whose contributions make our work possible, we couldn't do this work without you.

90%

of our budget is supported by private gifts

Events and Activities

We trained everyone from INTERPOL to Syrian and Uighur activists, from human rights defenders in Mexico to U.S. Congressional staff. Our trainers teach the methodology and techniques found in the **Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations** and the handbook **Digital Witness: Using Open Source Information for Human Rights Investigation, Documentation and Accountability**.

Our foundational training focuses on investigations into violations of international criminal, humanitarian, and human rights law. It involves a combination of theory and practice taught through lecture, case studies, and hands on exercises. HRC also offers specialized courses, classes, and modules in legal investigations, OSINT for journalism, resiliency, and sexual and gender based violence investigations.
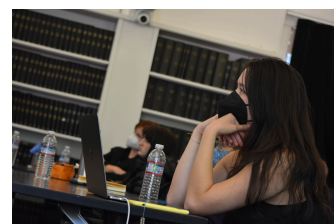
Many agencies and organizations request that the Human Rights Center keeps its assistance to them confidential. A number of specialized courses conducted in 2021-2 are therefore not mentioned for security and confidentiality reasons.

In Person Events:

HRC Fellows Human Rights Talks
UC Berkeley
October 14–November 4, 2021

Welcome Reception for Afghan Scholar:
Ms. Khwaga Ghani, Journalist
November 8, 2021

Welcome Reception for Afghan Scholar:
Hon. Basira Qazizada, Judge
February 23, 2022

Advanced OSINT Training
Institute for International Criminal Investigations, The Hague
April 4–8, 2022

Post-Logan Symposium Investigative Journalism
OSINT Open House
UC Berkeley
May 1, 2022

Events and Activities

Virtual Events:

January 2021
- Institute for International Criminal Investigations Foundational Course
- Training to Foley Hoag LLP Law Firm
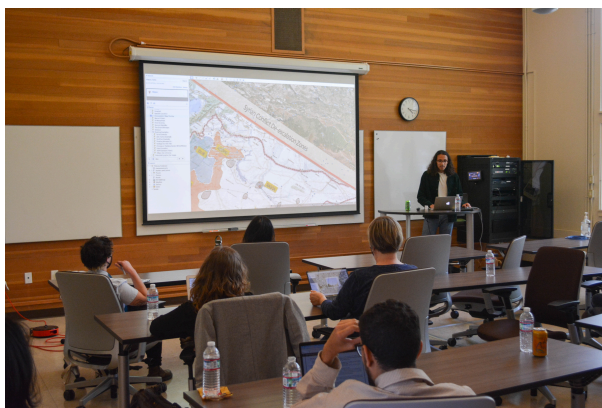- Training to UC Los Angeles students

February 2021
- Training to UC Santa Cruz students
- Open Source Research 4 Rights Workshop

March 2021
- Training with the Project On Government Oversight for U.S. Congressional staff

June 2021
- Training for Center for Justice and Accountability and Syrian lawyers
- Institute for International Criminal Investigations Foundational Course
- Office of the UN High Commissioner in Mexico, Center of Innovation for Access to Justice, Línea de Investigación en Derecho e Inteligencia Artificial, and Artificial Intelligence research group at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
- RightsCon: Online investigation planning: assessing the digital landscape creating space to process trauma in human rights organizations and collectives

Events and Activities

Virtual Events (Continued):

September 2021
- Training for the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights
- Training for the Open Society Justice Initiative
- Training for UC Network for Human Rights and Digital Fact-Finding
- Institute for International Criminal Investigations Foundational Course
- AI and Human Rights
- Eradicate Hate Global Summit

November 2021
- Training for International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)

January 2022
- Training for UN-Philippines Joint Programme for Human Rights

March 2022
- Holistic Digital Security and Early Career Human Rights Researchers: Inspiring Industry Change
- Training for Afghan Journalists through New America

April 2022
- From Genocide to Ecocide

Classes Taught at UC Berkeley

Health and Human Rights
Rohini Haar, Eric Stover

Human Rights and War Crimes Investigations
Alexa Koenig, Eric Stover

Open Source Investigative Reporting
David Barstow, Alexa Koenig, Andrea Lampros,
Gisela Pérez de Acha, Brian Nguyen

Introduction to Open Source Investigations
Stephanie Croft, Alexa Koenig

Human Rights Research and Practice
Rohini Haar, Alexa Koenig, Eric Stover

Human Rights and Social Justice Writing Workshop
Carolyn Patty Blum, Eric Stover

Open Source Investigations and Legal Practice
Alexa Koenig

"We're headed into an entirely new era of investigations and war crime investigations."
–ALEXA KOENIG ON 60 MINUTES

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER

UC Berkeley School of Law

Visit the QR code to learn more about our programs, sign up for our newsletter, or make a donation to sustain our nonprofit work.

We are almost entirely funded by private gifts and individual donations. Your generous contribution is tax-deductible and gives us the ability to respond immediately to crises, and engage in sustained efforts to protect human rights.