



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

# **GENOCIDE & CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY**

TORONTO, 2023

Conference Booklet



## Collaborators



The Alliance of  
Genocide Victim  
Communities



AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL  
UTSC



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
ACTION  
GROUP

# INTRODUCTION

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Northern Justice Watch is honored to welcome you to the "International Conference on Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity".

In collaboration with esteemed partners, including the Alliance of Genocide Victim Communities, Human Rights Action Group, Amnesty International University of Toronto Scarborough, and Amnesty International York University, this conference is set to serve as a platform for the convergence of experts, artists, and activists. Together, they will address some of the most serious transgressions against human rights, both historical and ongoing.

In addition to the invaluable discussions and insights offered by these esteemed speakers, the conference also presents an opportunity for 4 registered grade 12 and university students to win a \$500 scholarship. The students must attend the conference on both days, December 2 and 3, to be eligible for this scholarship.

# CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

## Friday, December 1st

16:00 20:00 Panel Discussion: "Breaking the Silence: Understanding and Combating Crimes Against Humanity."

## Saturday, December 2nd

11:00 12:30 Session 1 - Conceptual Discussion on Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity

12:30 13:30 Lunch Break

13:30 15:00 Session 2 - Conflicts in the Middle East and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity

15:00 15:15 Coffee/Snack Break

15:15 16:45 Session 3 - Regional Cases 1

16:25 17:00 Coffee/Snack Break

17:00 18:30 Session 4 - Regional Cases 2



### **Sunday, December 3rd**

- 10:00 10:30 Registration and Welcome Coffee  
10:30 11:00 Networking Session  
11:00 12:30 Session 1 - Keynote Addresses  
12:30 13:30 Lunch Break  
13:30 15:00 Session 2 - Pathways to Genocide  
and Crimes against Humanity - Cases from Turkey  
15:00 15:15 Coffee/Tea Break  
15:15 16:45 Session 3 - Preventing Genocide:  
Early Warning Systems and Intervention Strategies  
16:45 17:00 Coffee/Tea Break and Networking  
17:00 18:15 Session 4 - Unmasking Injustice:  
Insights on Contemporary and Past Genocides and  
Crimes against Humanity  
18:15 18:30 Recap of the Day  
18:30 Networking Reception
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# MEET THE SPEAKERS



**Adulrahman Matar**

## **Biography**

Abdulrahman Matar, a Syrian writer, journalist, poet, and novelist, now based in Canada, has worked in media and culture in Syria and Libya. He focuses on Euro-Mediterranean relations, human rights, and terrorism as a researcher and leads the Mediterranean Studies Center and Syrian-Mediterranean Cultural Forum - SEEGULL. Matar, who has published five books and numerous articles in Arabic media, was imprisoned for nearly ten years due to his advocacy for freedom and human rights. His novel "Wild Mirage" reflects his experiences of political imprisonment and torture. He is a member of the Syrian Writers' Association, the Association of Journalists, "Writer in Exile" / PEN Canada, and the Writers' Union of Canada.





**Alex Neve**

### **Biography**

Alex Neve, is a lawyer, with an LLB from Dalhousie University and a master's degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex. He is presently an adjunct professor of international human rights law with the Faculties of Law at the University of Ottawa and Dalhousie University. He served as Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada's English Branch for 20 years between 2000 - 2020. In that role he has led and been part of numerous human rights research and advocacy delegations throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, Guantánamo Bay and, First Nations communities across Canada.

He serves on the Board of Directors of the Centre for Law and Democracy. Alex has been named an Officer of the Order of Canada and a Trudeau Foundation Mentor. He is a recipient of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. He has received honorary Doctorate of Laws degrees from St. Thomas University, the University of Waterloo and the University of New Brunswick.



**Asoo Qadir**

### **Biography**

Asoo Mohammed Sofi Qadir, a retired judge from the Iraqi High Criminal Court, is renowned for his extensive work in human rights and international law. His career, marked by significant roles in the court, includes pivotal participation in landmark cases like the Halabja chemical attack, Alfayleen Kurds, Al Barzaneen, the Anfal, and the Uprising of 1991, emphasizing his commitment to justice in the face of grave human rights violations.

Internationally recognized, Judge Qadir has collaborated with institutions such as the UN in Geneva, and has been a prominent figure in global forums, including the European Parliament in Brussels and the International Association of Genocide Scholars. His contributions, particularly in genocide studies and the advocacy of Kurdish rights, have made him a respected authority in the field, leaving a lasting impact on the pursuit of international justice and human rights.

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**David Matas**

### **Biography**

David Matas is an immigration, refugee and international human rights lawyer based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. He was member of the Canadian delegation to Rome conference in 1998 which negotiated the treaty for the International Criminal Court. He led implementation seminars in Mongolia and Afghanistan, states parties to the Court treaty. In 2008, he was awarded the Order of Canada.



**Davut Akca**

### **Biography**

Dr. Davut Akca (Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology, M.A. in Criminology) is an Assistant Professor in Criminology at the Interdisciplinary Studies department of Lakehead University and a Credentialed Evaluator (CE). He worked as a program evaluator at the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies for 2 years (2019-2021). Dr. Akca is a passionate researcher, and his research interests fall within the domains of investigative interviewing, policing, program evaluation, radicalization, and hate crimes. He teaches several courses including policing, criminological research methods, program evaluation in criminal justice, and investigative interviewing.



**Derakhshan Qurban-Ali**

### **Biography**

Derakhshan Qurban-Ali is a global human rights advocate, researcher, social entrepreneur and co-founder of The Hazara Collective, a non-profit organization that seeks to raise collective awareness about the human rights situation of persecuted communities in Afghanistan. She holds a Juris Doctor and Bachelor of Civil Law (JD/BCL) from McGill University, and a Joint Specialist in International Relations and Peace, Conflict & Justice from the University of Toronto.

Derakhshan has been steadfastly committed to amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable communities worldwide for over a decade—from working on the front lines of the refugee crisis in Europe, to holding leaders accountable to their commitments towards refugees as a Compliance Director with the G20 Research Group, to supporting local refugee integration in Toronto as Co-Director of WelcomeHomeTO. She has shared her insights in multilateral forums such as the UN Human Rights Council, where she conducted research on the challenges and lived experiences of human rights defenders from persecuted communities in navigating and advocating within international human rights mechanisms to combat genocide.



**Ewelina U. Ochab**

### **Biography**

Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab is a lawyer, human rights advocate, and author, serving as a programme lawyer at the IBA's Human Rights Institute and co-founder of the Coalition for Genocide Response. Her work primarily addresses genocide, especially the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities. Key projects involve Daesh in Syria and Iraq, Boko Haram in West Africa, Rohingya in Myanmar, Uyghurs in China, Tigrayans in Ethiopia, and Hazara in Afghanistan. She also focuses on conflict-related sexual violence and the plight of children in conflicts, including in Ukraine. Dr. Ochab has contributed over 30 reports to the UN, spoken at various international forums, and initiated the proposal for the UN International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief on August 22.



**Farhad Rezaei**

### **Biography**

Dr. Farhad Rezaei is a Senior Research Fellow at the Philos Project in New York City, USA. His work primarily focuses on Iran's politics and the examination of violations perpetrated against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran. Dr. Rezaei is a former visiting professor at the department of Political Science, Glendon College, York University.

He possesses over a decade of experience as an academic with a concentration on Iran's politics. He has authored a multitude of books and articles focusing on Iran's foreign and defense policies. His work has been featured in esteemed publications such as the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Harvard Iran-Matters, Middle East Policy, the National Interest, National Review, Center for International Policy Studies (CIPS), Journal of International Affairs, the Hill, and the Jerusalem Post, among others.

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## **Hamza Ansari**

### **Biography**

Hamza Ansari leads the Global Partnerships Unit at HelpAge Canada, collaborating with HelpAge International and offices in over 80 countries for emergencies and advocacy with organizations like Global Affairs Canada. Starting his international development career in 2017, he worked in Bangladesh, Ukraine, and Sudan. During his initial assignment, he witnessed the Rohingya Refugee Crisis and joined the WHO Health Emergency Team, contributing to the health section of the Joint Humanitarian Response Plan (JRP).



## **Huseyin Demirtas**

### **Biography**

Hüseyin Demirtaş, a Turkish veteran with 22 years of service, participated in missions across the Middle East, Balkans, and Western Europe. Fluent in English and German and conversant in Arabic, he's a family man with three children. Demirtaş holds several project management certifications, including UN Military Observer and Prince 2.

Currently, his work centers on applying his experience in civil society-state relations, international peace, human rights, and social integration. He has written books on military management, the July 15th incident in Turkey, human rights issues under the Erdogan regime, and human trauma.





**Joanne Hodges**

**Biography**

Joanne Hodges works with the Alliance of Genocide Victim Communities. Joanne is also a documentary filmmaker, and a human rights defender and is among the Board of Directors at Friends of Tigray.



**Millete Birhanemaskel**

**Biography**

Millete Birhanemaskel is a Tigrayan human rights advocate and business owner with MBA from Colorado State University in Business Administration and Management. She is a former journalist of 10 years and worked for several newspapers in Colorado, California and Tennessee.



**Mark Kersten**

### **Biography**

Mark Kersten is an Assistant Professor in the Criminology and Criminal Justice Department at the University of Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Canada, and a Senior Consultant at the Wayamo Foundation in Berlin, Germany. He is the founder of the blog Justice in Conflict and the author of the book, published by Oxford University, by the same name.



**Mukesh Kapila**

### **Biography**

Mukesh Kapila, an author, medical doctor, and professor, specializes in crisis and conflict management, humanitarian affairs, and HIV/AIDS. He has experience with the UK National Health Service, the British government, and the UN, and has witnessed genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Darfur, where he was the UN head in Sudan. Kapila authored two books on genocide: "Against a Tide of Evil" (2013) and "No Stranger to Kindness" (2019). He serves as a professor of global health and humanitarian affairs at the University of Manchester and as a Special Representative for the Aegis Trust, focusing on preventing crimes against humanity.



**Peter Stoett**

### **Biography**

Dr. Stoett has been researching genocide and crimes against humanity since he won the 1994/5 Marvin Gelber Essay Prize for his essay on "This Age of Genocide: Conceptual and Institutional Implications." His research has mostly centered on global environmental governance challenges, such as biodiversity loss and climate change, and their intersection with human rights and various conceptions of justice. He is currently the Dean of Social Science and Humanities at Ontario Tech University in Oshawa; previously he co-founded the Loyola Sustainability Research Centre at Concordia University.



**Sameer Zuberi**

### **Biography**

Sameer Zuberi is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities and the MP for Pierrefonds—Dollard since 2019. He serves on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and chairs its Subcommittee on International Human Rights. He has worked on various parliamentary committees and was involved in education, including teaching English in Kuwait. After law school, Zuberi joined McGill University's Faculty of Medicine as a Diversity and Engagement Officer and served in the Canadian Army Reserve for five years. He advocates for minority rights, climate change action, diversity, inclusion, and language rights in Quebec. Zuberi holds a BA in Mathematics from Concordia University and a Law degree from UQAM, where he received the Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré scholarship for social engagement.



**Sarah Teich**

### **Biography**

Sarah Teich, a Toronto-based attorney, holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Toronto and an M.A. in Counter-Terrorism and Homeland Security. She studied law at McGill University and the National University of Singapore. Teich has been involved with the Munk School of Global Affairs, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, and projects for the International Criminal Court.

Her work focuses on international human rights and national security law. Affiliated with groups like the Canadian Coalition Against Terror and the Canadian Security Research Group, she also co-founded the Human Rights Action Group. Her law firm advises organizations on justice for human rights abuses globally, including the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project and United Tegar Canada.





**Sherap Therchin**

**Biography**

Sherap Therchin is the Executive Director Canada-Tibet Committee. He was born and grew up in Tibetan refugee communities in Nepal and came to Canada in 2015. In Nepal, Sherap worked as Assistant Deputy Director of the Himalayan Society for Youth and Women Empowerment where he designed and monitored projects to empower indigenous women. He later moved to India to serve as Deputy Chief of Tibet Fund India, with responsibility for oversight and evaluation of USAID projects supporting education and healthcare in Tibetan refugee communities. He has also worked in the office of Canadian MP Arif Virani, as a proposal consultant at Agriteam Canada Ltd.

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