

The Institute for the Study of Human Rights
at Columbia University
welcomes the 2025-26 cohort of the



Human Rights Advocates Program



TATSIANA ZINIAKOVA

Legal Analyst
Human Constanta

BELARUS



Working in exile, Tatsiana Ziniakova (she/her) is a legal analyst with Human Constanta, a Belarusian human rights organization that was disbanded by the Belarusian authorities.

In her current role at Human Constanta, Tatsiana leads the analytical and advocacy lines of the organization's work, coordinating multilateral advocacy at, inter alia, the UN, OSCE, and ICC platforms, as well as strategic litigation before the UN Human Rights Committee. She is also involved with fundraising for civil society

coalitions. Through advocacy, analytics, and education, Human Constanta tackles the questions related to repressive uses of anti-extremism laws, digital rights, cybersecurity, migrants' rights, and broader issues of accountability for human rights violations.

Bringing a perspective grounded in legal rigor and advocacy, Tatsiana's work explores how authoritarianism manifests across both digital and physical civic spaces in Belarus and the wider region. She is engaged in developing strategies to support civic resilience in exile and to challenge transnational repression through international mechanisms. Now based in Warsaw, she continues to advance rights-centered policy change that prioritizes the voices and vulnerabilities of repressed communities online and offline.

As a researcher, Tatsiana has co-authored Nations in Transit 2023 and 2024 Belarus reports for Freedom House, as well as studies on digital authoritarianism, civic technology, and other digital rights challenges in Eastern Europe. Her scholarship on gender-based violence in international human rights law was recognized with the American Society for International Law David D. Caron Prize.

Tatsiana holds LL.B. and LL.M. degrees in Public International Law and Human Rights Law from Belarusian State University and Wake Forest University, respectively. As a Fulbright scholar and grantee of the Edmund S. Muskie Professional Fellowship Program, she was a research fellow with the World Justice Project, focusing on legal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global erosion of the rule of law.

Tatsiana is a participant in the 2025-2026 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.



JÚLIA MOTA SILVA

Advocacy Specialist
Fundo Agbara (Agbara Fund)

BRAZIL



Júlia Mota (she/her), is a 25-year-old black Brazilian woman, working to promote racial, gender and economic equality for black women across Brazil. In 2023, she joined Fundo Agbara, where she has held various responsibilities, ranging from structuring institutional development processes to fundraising. During her first year at Fundo Agbara, she co-organized their first international event, in partnership with the Brazilian Consulate and the Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce.

She then shifted her attention to Fundo Agbara's advocacy work, focusing on national and international advocacy in economic justice, reparations for the Black population, and the well-being of Black women. In this role, she began representing Fundo Agbara in networks such as the Rede Orçamento Mulher and in multilateral spaces including the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent.

Following this, Júlia structured and began to lead Fundo Agbara's first international project: Black Women Shaping Afrofutures, a forum that brings together Black women from the Global South and the African diaspora to debate economic justice, historical reparation, and possibilities for the future. The first edition took place in New York during the UN Summit of the Future in partnership with Brazilian and other international organizations.

She is also part of and contributes to the Rede Brasileira de Defensoras de Direitos Humanos and, in 2025, was elected representative of the Free Conference of Women Human Rights Defenders for the National Women's Conference.

Júlia's activism began with popular movements resisting the coup against President Dilma Rousseff. While at university, she worked as a researcher at The Professor Doctor José Renato de Campos Araújo Interdisciplinary Observatory of Public Policies (OIPP), through the Bachelor's in Public Policy Management interdisciplinary course at the University of São Paulo aimed at creating transversal solutions to public policy, and was a member of the student union for the course. She became closer to civil society by working at a social impact consultancy, ponteAponte, as well as working as a counselor at the Rede Potências Periféricas.

She holds a degree in Public Policy Management from the University of São Paulo.

Júlia is a participant in the 2025-2026 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.



MAIYA SHANG

Regional Program Technician, AYNi Fund
International Indigenous Women's Forum

INDIA



Maiya Shang (she/her) is a Tangkhul Naga Indigenous Woman from North-East India. Currently, she is the Regional Program Technician for the Asia-Pacific region of the International Indigenous Women's Forum/Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI). In this role, she works closely with Indigenous Women's organizations at the local, national, and regional levels across Asia and the Pacific region, providing support in grant-making, project management and capacity building.

Maiya is also involved in the organization of various linking and learning workshops, communities of practice and other trainings for FIMI's partners in the region. She has represented FIMI in donors' meetings and at conventions of global alliance of feminist organizations. The thing she likes most about her work is the interaction with Indigenous Women at the community level and learning about their aspirations, issues, and stories of self-empowerment.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Science and a Master's degree in English Literature from Delhi University in India. Upon completing her studies, she worked for multinational companies in content development, including the creation of school textbooks, the development of onsite and online courses, and copy editing. She also worked as a freelance copy editor for several Indigenous People's organizations on various publications, including training manuals, reports, briefing papers, handbooks, proposals, books, etc.

She was born and raised amidst armed conflict in the Naga Hills and witnessed its destructive and lasting impact on the communities. This experience shaped her commitment to social justice, especially women's rights.

Maiya is a participant in the 2025-2026 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.



RONALD ROGER ROHROHMANA

Senior Campaigner
Environmental Justice Foundation

INDONESIA



Ronald Roger Rohrohmana (he/him) is a development professional with over a decade of experience in program management, policy advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and rights-based campaigns on transnational organized crime, environmental justice, human rights, and sustainable development.

He currently serves as Senior Campaigner at the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) in Indonesia, leading campaigns to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, forced labor, and human trafficking.

He advocates for policy reforms and enforcement with national stakeholders, conducts research and investigations, facilitates multi-stakeholder dialogues, and represents EJF in high-level forums and coalitions.

Previously, Ronald was National Program Coordinator for Transnational Crime & Illicit Trafficking at United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Jakarta, designing anti-organized crime initiatives, building law enforcement partnerships, and implementing monitoring systems for regional reporting. As National Program Officer for Forestry Crime at UNODC in Jayapura, he led anti-illegal logging efforts in Papua, developed stakeholder networks for environmental goals, and created impact assessments to guide policy.

Earlier, he coordinated sustainable agriculture communications at Rikolto in Denpasar, Indonesia, producing content, managing digital engagement, and strengthening ties with media, NGOs, and donors. As Communications Associate at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime he directed strategic campaigns, managed events like World Drug Day, and advised on outreach. He began as Public Information Assistant at the United Nations Information Centre in Jakarta, handling press releases, materials, media relations, and high-profile events.

Ronald holds a Master's in Anthropology from Cenderawasih University where his thesis focused on cultural adaptation among Mbaham Matta nutmeg growers in Fakfak, West Papua. He earned a Bachelor's in International Relations from Budi Luhur University in Jakarta where his thesis was on INGO roles in conflict resolution via the CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation in Aceh. He is proficient in Bahasa Indonesia (native), English (advanced), and Spanish (intermediate).



Ronald is a participant in the 2025-26 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.

NYAWIRA WAHITO

Executive Director
Resource Center for Women and Girls

KENYA



Nyawira Wahito (she/her) is a Kenyan feminist dedicated to nurturing the leadership, voice, and personal transformation of girls and young women, particularly in rural communities. With nearly 13 years of experience in feminist organizing, she has worked extensively with grassroots movements, centering the lived realities, dreams, and power of girls in both programming and advocacy.

Her leadership is rooted in the belief that when girls are given space to dream, ideate, and take up space, they not only transform their own lives but also reimagine the systems and structures around them. A proud alumna of the Resource Center for Women and Girls (RCWG)'s Girls' Empowerment Retreats, Nyawira credits the experience with igniting her political consciousness, teaching her how to use her voice, build confidence, and make informed, values-aligned choices. Nyawira remains unwavering in her commitment to creating spaces where girls can question, imagine, and lead boldly. Her work is a living testament to the transformative power of feminist mentorship, solidarity, and community. Today, she serves as Executive Director of RCWG, where she leads a vibrant team of young feminist leaders walking alongside girls as they rediscover their power.

Nyawira is a vocal advocate for centering girls in all areas of development, particularly in philanthropy. She regularly engages with funders to share insights from her work and to champion approaches that fund girls differently by meeting them where they are, and on their own terms. This perspective is not only theoretical but deeply embedded in her day-to-day practice.

She holds a Master's degree in Security, Leadership and Society from King's College London and a Bachelor's in Sociology and Philosophy from the University of Nairobi. Nyawira is an alumna of the African Leadership Centre Scholar's Program.

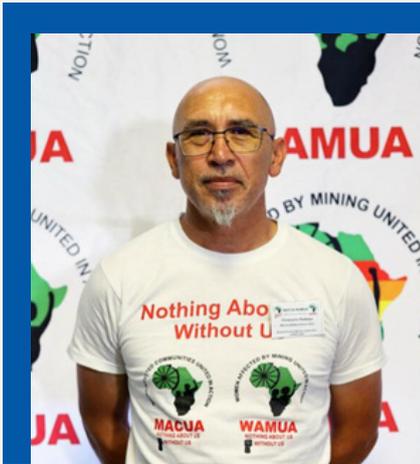
Nyawira is a participant in the 2025-26 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.



CHRISTOPHER RUTLEDGE

Executive Director
MACUA WAMUA Advice Office /MWAO

SOUTH AFRICA



Christopher Rutledge (he/him) is the Executive Director of the MACUA WAMUA Advice Office, an institution that provides legal, advocacy, and research support to mining-affected communities across South Africa. Since the earliest days of Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA), Christopher has worked in collaboration with a leadership collective to build the movement into the most organized rural social justice formation of communities in South Africa. Together, they have transformed MACUA from its humble beginnings into a formidable national movement that

impacted legislation and policy involving mining-affected people.

Central to his leadership practice is a commitment to feminist leadership and collective decision-making. Christopher does not approach leadership as individual authority but as a shared responsibility, advancing participatory and inclusive structures that ensure women and marginalized voices are at the forefront of MACUA's strategies. This praxis has enabled the organisation to grow its legitimacy while sustaining a powerful grassroots base.

Through this collective approach, MACUA has become a recognized force in South Africa's extractive debates, successfully challenging corporate power and securing policy recognition for communities historically excluded from decision-making. The Advice Office, under Christopher's direction, strengthens this work by equipping communities with legal support, advocacy tools, and research that amplifies their struggles at both national and international levels.

With a background in trade union organizing, anti-apartheid activism, and resource justice, Christopher brings decades of experience in movement-building. His role has consistently been to create enabling structures, build networks, and connect community struggles to broader campaigns for environmental justice, land reform, and economic democracy.

Christopher is a participant in the 2025-26 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.



ONESMO OLENGURUMWA

National Coordinator
Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition

TANZANIA



Onesmo Olegurumwa (he/him), a human rights lawyer, is a founding member of the East Africa Human Rights Institute (EAHRI) and a Managing Partner at Afritanza Attorney. He applies his extensive legal expertise and dedication to promoting justice and human rights both in educational spaces and the field. He has served in key leadership roles, including as the Founding National Coordinator (CEO) of the Tanzania Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC).

With experience spanning over 15 years, Olegurumwa is an ardent advocate of human rights and social justice in Tanzania. With a multifaceted approach, Olegurumwa participated in various studies examining the intersection of human rights with diverse sectors, including the impacts of major investments, climate justice, civic space, freedom of expression, and the rights of defenders. His expertise extends to navigating legal complexities such as addressing civil societies compliance challenges, promoting civic engagement including the rule of law, advocating for disability rights, child rights, climate justice, and many more. His other areas of intervention include freedom of expression, access to justice and human rights mechanisms, non-profit sector taxation, human rights violations in the extractive and wildlife/ protected areas, public interest litigation, criminal justice, social justice, and challenges afflicting pastoralist and marginalized communities.

Olegurumwa has collaborated with stakeholders both domestically and internationally, offering strategic insights into legal and human rights matters. His versatile skill set encompasses training, policy analysis, legal support, public interest litigation, legal analysis and advocacy, bolstered by his credentials as a registered advocate and certified tax consultant. Olegurumwa's commitment to social justice is evident in his comprehensive understanding of complex issues, coupled with his dedication to effecting meaningful change within Tanzania and beyond.

Olegurumwa holds a Master's degree in Research and Public Policy and a Bachelor's degree in Law (Hons) from the University of Dar es Salaam. He earned a Post Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Law School of Tanzania. Committed to continuous growth, he has honed his skills through courses at Harvard Business School, York University, Cambridge University, the University of Oslo and Pretoria University.

Olegurumwa is a participant in the 2025-26 Human Rights Advocates Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.



HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES PROGRAM 2025-2026

THE 2025-26 HRAP started online in the fall with workshops led by staff from organizations including Human Rights Watch and Candid. They met with HRAP alumni who spoke about their experiences in the program and the impact it had on their work.

The advocates will join the Columbia University community in January 2026 for the spring semester during which time they will continue to attend skill-based workshops while also networking with donors, organizations and institutions in NYC and DC, attending graduate-level courses, and speaking about their work both on- and off-campus. They will also participate in the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

ISHR would like to thank the following for supporting the 2025-26 HRAP:

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To learn more about ISHR and HRAP, including when the next HRAP application will open, please sign up for the ISHR Newsletter [here](#).

To support HRAP, please consider making a gift [here](#). Thank you.