



*Health professionals protesting in support of racial justice and against police violence in Portland, Oregon in July 2020.  
Photo: Andrew Stanbridge for Physicians for Human Rights*

## You Are Standing with Us against Police Violence

The police killing of George Floyd last May brought hundreds of thousands of people to the streets of the United States and around the world to demand an end to systemic racism, racial inequality, and police violence. When U.S. law enforcement met this massive wave of public protest with tear gas, rubber bullets, stun grenades, and other crowd-control weapons, you made sure that Physicians for Human Rights' deep expertise was shaping the national and global conversation around the deadly potential of these so-called less-lethal weapons.



**"The basic rights like free speech and free assembly are being suppressed globally and the primary way that that's happening is because of crowd-control weapons."**

*Dr. Rohini Haar, PHR Medical Advisor*

Following President Trump's July 26 order to deploy federal agents to protest sites around the country – which, in Portland, Oregon, dramatically escalated the violence – at the request of local partners, PHR sent an expert team to investigate reports of the extreme force police and federal agents were using against protestors there, including targeted attacks on medics trying to provide assistance to the injured. We found that the response by police and federal agents was disproportionate, excessive, and indiscriminate, and deployed in ways that caused severe injury to civilians, including medics. We also produced a groundbreaking visual investigation, "Shot in the Head," showing how law enforcement officers injured at least 115 protestors across the United States in the two months following George Floyd's death by shooting them with rubber bullets and other kinetic impact projectiles. PHR also published a primer on crowd-control weapons, a series of fact sheets on their effects for policymakers and the media, and a protestor's guide to protecting yourself during protests, as well as a case study showing how police interfered with medical care and arrested health workers in a violent crackdown on peaceful New York protestors.

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# COVID-19 Update

## You Said #LetScienceLead

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, PHR has mobilized our 130,000-strong network of medical professionals and human rights activists to demand science- and rights-based responses to the worst public health emergency in more than a century. In the face of the abdication of national leadership to address the pandemic and the White House's dangerous anti-science stance, you and thousands of others joined our calls for universal protections for health care workers, demanded an end to the Trump administration's withdrawal from the World Health Organization, rallied in support of Dr. Anthony Fauci – the top U.S. infectious disease official – and demanded that the National Governors Association (NGA) take action to protect workers in health care settings. We met with the offices of then-NGA Chair Governor Larry Hogan (R-MD) and Vice Chair Governor Andrew Cuomo (D-NY) to advance such protections in Maryland, New York, and across the United States. We also convened 10 leading U.S. health professionals associations – representing tens of thousands of physicians, nurses, and other health professionals – to demand protections for health workers, and our advocacy supported efforts in the Virginia legislature to implement an Emergency Temporary Standard for worker protections during COVID-19.

Amidst ongoing U.S. administration attacks on immigrant rights, we submitted several public comments formally expressing our concerns about new restrictive rules that all but eviscerate the asylum process in the United States in the name of public health. We also advised on, endorsed, and promoted new legislation that bans deportations during the pandemic due to concerns about fueling the virus' global spread. Our clear message: we will not stand for policies that systematically undermine children's safety and family unity, nor that weaponize public health arguments against asylum seekers.

As the United States passed the grim milestone of 200,000 COVID-19 deaths on Sept. 22, and President Trump himself tested positive for the coronavirus in early October, we launched our campaign for a national mask mandate – a proven method to limit the spread and harms of this deadly disease. And we are raising funds to send 10,000 face masks to a community particularly hard-hit by the coronavirus, continuing our decades-long work mobilizing activists and health professionals on behalf of the world's most vulnerable populations. Thanks to supporters like you, we are protecting health workers, fighting back against anti-science rhetoric, and safeguarding the human rights of all people at this critical time.

## Bloomberg

“With the Trump administration attempting to simply wish away the pandemic, it's again up to the states to shape the next phase of our response to Covid-19. Crucially, this includes a responsibility to protect the health workers on the front lines in the weeks and months ahead.”

*Dr. Michele Heisler, PHR Medical Director, and  
Dr. Ranit Mishori, PHR Senior Medical Advisor*



Get your own mask and support our campaign at [phr.org/let-science-lead](https://phr.org/let-science-lead)

# Feeding a Hunger for the Truth During this Time of Crisis

As the coronavirus emergency has grown and deepened, PHR's popular, weekly COVID-19 webinar series has fed an enormous appetite for reliable, science-based information about the impact and implications of the pandemic. More than 20,000 people have signed up to join over 25 live conversations with leading global voices in the fields of medicine, public health, law, social justice, and many more on a wide range of topics, including racial disparities and COVID-19, the impacts of COVID-19 on native and at-risk populations, and policing and public health in the age of COVID-19.



**Policing and Public Health**

Thursday, August 27, 2020 1:00 p.m. EDT

**PHR**  
Physicians for Human Rights

Rhea Boyd, MD, MPH  
The California Children's Trust

Marc Krupanski, MA  
Open Society Foundations

Teressa Raiford  
Don't Shoot Portland

*moderated by*  
Mary Bassett, MD, MPH, director of the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Register at  
[www.phr.org/webinars](http://www.phr.org/webinars)

To sign up to join the conversation and to see past webinars, go to [phr.org/webinars](http://phr.org/webinars).

## PHR Voices: Michelle Munyikwa

### The New Generation of Physicians and Human Rights Leaders



*Michelle Munyikwa is a student in the MD/PhD program in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. She serves as co-chair of the Student Advisory Board of PHR's Student Program, an international network of PHR student chapters and asylum evaluation clinics. We spoke to her about what it means to be a medical student during the COVID-19 pandemic and the burgeoning racial justice movement.*

"Worldwide, we have witnessed profound shifts in daily life as we grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has revealed existing inequalities between the Global North and the Global South and highlighted the vulnerabilities of marginalized communities everywhere. This year has shown us that human rights, despite their aspirational universality, are not and have never been for everyone. Those who are not truly seen as human do not have access to these rights. This pandemic has revealed what was always true about the staggering inequality in our world, inequality that we are all, in some way, complicit in.

For medical students, this moment has shown us that the best-laid plans are always subject to disruption. Yet, amidst the turmoil of career paths upended and transformed, we should remember that the core maxims of our profession – to aid our fellow human and do no harm – remain. We may be living through unsteady, uncertain times, but remaining grounded in our principles helps to focus us on what matters.


As an anthropologist, I often reflect on how anthropology teaches us that there are many ways of being in the world. Anthropologists and other social scientists have documented how communities living under unthinkable injustices forge a path of survival and imagine better futures. This resilience reminds us that, while the future may not be what we anticipated, human beings are relentlessly adaptable. We can and will change to respond to these challenges.

As part of the next generation of physicians and human rights leaders, we can help shape the future. We are an integral part of rebuilding a world that is more equitable and just. This feels daunting, but in moments of uncertainty, I always return to the Jewish proverb: *You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.*

We all have a role. The challenge is finding it."



# You Are Standing with Us against Police Violence



*PHR Medical Director Dr. Michele Heisler (far left) and Executive Director Donna McKay (second from left) were part of an emergency PHR team that deployed to Portland in July to investigate and report in real time on the protests. Here, they speak with journalist Nicholas Kristof (center) and with Shelby van Leuven and Michelle Ozaki (right and far right), student coordinators of the volunteer medic group affiliated with Oregon Health & Science University.  
Photo: Andrew Stanbridge for Physicians for Human Rights*

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Our research was regularly cited in a vast array of media, and our team of medical experts were in high demand for our medical- and human rights-based insights about this pivotal moment for police accountability and the Black Lives Matter movement. PHR Medical Advisor Dr. Rohini Haar – a leading global expert on crowd-control weapons – was one of the most-cited medical voices on the harms caused by these weapons around the world and in the United States. We brought our Portland findings to members of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and presented our evidence to advise state and local legislative bodies across the country – including the Boston City Council and the Virginia House of Delegates – that are seeking to limit the use of tear gas and kinetic impact projectiles. In early September, we

welcomed Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler’s announcement that he was directing the Portland Police to immediately end the use of CS tear gas for crowd control – and with your advocacy, we can expand this important gain to other cities. As police and security forces in the United States and around the world escalate their suppression of the basic rights to free speech and assembly – most recently in Belarus – you are supporting PHR as a vital global source of information and helping to limit these dangerous weapons.

*Facing page: The Protestor’s Guide is one of PHR’s top resources released since the swell of 2020 protests in support of racial justice, and has been accessed by more than 3,000 people.*





# THE LANCET

"We documented many instances of weapons being used in improper and potentially deadly ways, such as tear gas canisters fired at people's chests and rubber bullets apparently aimed at people's faces. As medical professionals and human rights advocates, we know that this is unacceptable."

*PHR's Dr. Michele Heisler, Medical Director;  
Kathryn Hampton, Senior Officer, Asylum Program;  
and Donna McKay, Executive Director*

## San Antonio Express-News

"They're called non-lethal weapons, but in fact they are not benign and they can absolutely be lethal.... They should be weapons of last resort when all of the other de-escalation tactics fail or when there is really an imminent threat."

*Dr. Ranit Mishori, PHR Senior Medical Advisor*





# You're Helping Secure Justice for the Rohingya



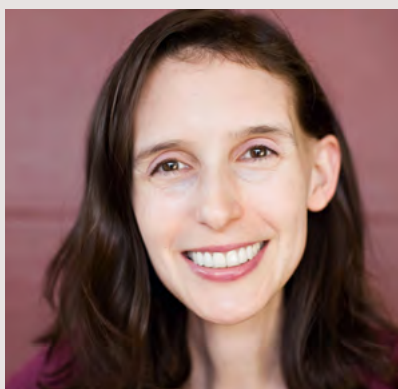
*Rohingya women walking inside Balukhali refugee camp in Bangladesh. Photo: Munir Uz Zaman/AFP/Getty Images*

In August 2017, the armed forces of Myanmar unleashed a wave of horrific violence on Rohingya communities, driving more than 720,000 Rohingya into neighboring Bangladesh. PHR has produced numerous reports documenting serious human rights violations against the Rohingya during these attacks. Our latest research, based on interviews with health workers who cared for Rohingya survivors in Bangladesh, sheds new light on the patterns of extreme injuries, specifically

related sexual violence, that they suffered through rape, gang rape, mutilation, forced witnessing of sexual assault, and other forms of sexual violence. Our findings suggest that sexual violence was a deliberate strategy used by Myanmar's security forces to intimidate, terrorize, punish, and force the displacement of the Rohingya civilian population – actions that have had deep and long-lasting impacts on survivors' mental and physical health. Myanmar is currently facing legal

proceedings at the International Court of Justice, where it is accused of violating the Genocide Convention, and at the International Criminal Court, where two former Myanmar soldiers recently testified that they were ordered to kill and rape Rohingya villagers. Our critical findings and your support are helping to inform these processes and keeping up the drumbeat for justice for the Rohingya people.

## Remembering a Hero of Human Rights



Physicians for Human Rights was deeply saddened by the loss in April of Serena Simmons Connelly, an extraordinary ally in the work to protect and elevate the world's most vulnerable people. A humble, soft-spoken person with a huge heart, Serena first joined the cause of defending human rights in her 20s and came to be one of our strongest partners. Her innate sense of how inequitable the world is and how poorly it treats those who are different made Serena an exceptional champion of people living amid poverty, injustice, and violence, particularly in her home state of Texas. Through her incredible compassion for others, her generosity, and her unshakable understanding of what is just, Serena made an indelible mark, a legacy of kindness and resolve to leave the world a better place.

## Karen Naimer

### Leaning into the Deep Expertise of PHR's Networks



*Karen Naimer, JD, LL.M, MA has recently been named PHR's new director of programs, overseeing all of PHR's programmatic work across the globe. She brings to her new role extensive experience in international criminal law, international humanitarian law, and human rights law. We asked Naimer about her vision for the organization as a whole.*

"As I consider PHR's trajectory over the next few years, I am eager to build on the rigor of the scientific and medical approaches that we use to strengthen our human rights documentation, and leverage the expertise of the medical, scientific, and forensic communities to widen our reach in the United States and globally.

Specifically, I am looking forward to working with our many partners around the world to help strengthen this expertise at the national and local levels and to supporting our extraordinary PHR team as we take this work to scale so that we can expand our impact at such a critical moment for health and human rights.

I've been so privileged to have worked with PHR's Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones team for most of the last decade, where we have learned the importance of engaging in human rights work with humility, respect, collaboration, and technical expertise.

I hope that this model will inform how we approach our broader programmatic work as we look to the future.

At this pivotal moment, PHR is so well poised to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, having medical experts on our in-house team and a real depth of expertise available on our advisory council and PHR's board. We are ready to respond to this public health emergency by leaning into our networks to help us ensure that we are pursuing the most technically rigorous approach to our work. This robust community has also positioned us to be able to respond quickly and nimbly in the last several months to the violent crackdowns on racial justice protests by bringing to bear our deep knowledge about the misuse of crowd-control weapons. I will value the chance to learn from the advice and wisdom of the scientific, medical, and forensic communities as we contemplate new areas for PHR's work in the coming years to inform our advocacy and ensure the greatest impact."

## Darren Thompson

### Building a Sustainable Model for PHR's Work



**PHR is delighted to announce that Darren Thompson, MBA has joined our board of directors.**

With more than 30 years of leadership experience building high growth businesses and working in the financial services industry, Thompson brings entrepreneurial expertise that, among other things, will help PHR bring our groundbreaking and critical work to scale.

He is currently the EVP and CFO of Bowery Farming, the leading technology-enabled vertical farming company in the United States. Previously, he was the president of Spruce Finance, a leading tech-enabled consumer finance company serving the renewable energy industry, and served as CFO for B2R Finance, a Blackstone owned fintech company, as well as EVP and CFO for RevolutionMoney.

Thompson spent the first half of his career in leadership roles at some of the leading financial institutions, including Fannie

Mae, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley. He holds a degree in biochemistry from Harvard College and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

"I have always been inspired by the power of truth to drive change," Thompson told us. "Unfortunately, the value of truth has been diminished in the current climate by those who actively seek to undermine it. I look at the medical community as our last and best hope to bear witness to injustices and tragedies across the globe. The mission of PHR is more vital now than it has ever been.

"As an experienced business builder, a former scientist, and spouse of a doctor whose life goal is to remedy inequities in the health system, I bring a passion for the work of PHR and a commitment to helping to build a sustainable model that will allow its work to perpetuate."

Dr. Richard Horton

## We Need to Do More to Protect Health Care Workers



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*Protecting health workers, a central mission of PHR, has taken on new urgency during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they face shortages of protective equipment, retaliation for speaking out, and physical violence for caring for the sick. PHR Board Member and The Lancet Editor-in-Chief Richard Horton, FRCP, FMedSci recently moderated a high-level international conversation for PHR's COVID-19 webinar series on how we can better protect and support health care workers in their critical roles. These are excerpts from his remarks.*

"Back in March and April, I started to receive messages from frontline health care workers battling COVID-19 in the United Kingdom. 'The hospitals in London are overwhelmed.' 'It's terrifying for staff ... I don't feel safe.' 'We need protection, total carnage, humanitarian crisis.'

Our countries were simply not prepared, despite decades of warnings that a pandemic would at some point engulf the world, as pandemics have done repeatedly. We were also not prepared for the disproportionate way that COVID-19 has impacted communities of color and others in vulnerable settings. This pandemic has accentuated and exploited existing inequalities across our society with frightening facility.

And as infections and deaths from COVID-19 rise, fears engendered by the spread of the disease are also stoking egregious violence against health care workers, who are targeted by those who perceive them not as critical and courageous actors in the fight against COVID-19, but as vectors of the disease.

We need to do much more to protect the doctors, nurses, technicians, ambulance drivers, and all the health care workers who

are relentlessly and selflessly putting their own physical and psychological well-being on the line every day to stop COVID-19. Governments must dedicate resources for personal protective equipment and ensure that health workers' voices are heard and protected, but they must also call out and punish acts of violence that target those on the front lines of the pandemic.

When one looks back at the history of epidemics and pandemics, we can be sure of one thing: this pandemic will change society. We will see a rebirth of the state, which has such a critical part to play in rebuilding health systems and strengthening social protections. COVID-19 will highlight the importance of public health and primary care in strengthening individual health security as a mechanism for strengthening global health security. And the pandemic will demand accountability.

We are witnessing an acute and chronic human emergency on our planet. This is a moment of instability, but also a moment of transformation. And it's up to all of us to seize that moment, seize that opportunity – which should give us great hope for the possibilities for the future.



Physicians for  
Human Rights

For more than 30 years, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has used science and the uniquely credible voices of medical professionals to document and call attention to severe human rights violations around the world. PHR, which shared in the Nobel Peace Prize for its work to end the scourge of landmines, uses its investigations and expertise to advocate for persecuted health workers and facilities under attack, prevent torture, document mass atrocities, and hold those who violate human rights accountable.



Shared in the 1997  
Nobel Peace Prize

*PHR received the highest Charity Navigator rating for the fifth consecutive year, a distinction held by only 15 percent of the 1.5 million charities that are rated annually.*

