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.

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 protester’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.

You Are Standing with Us against Police Violence

“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

continued on page 4
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

There’s one thing we can do now to help end this crisis
It’s time for a national mask mandate.

#LetScienceLead

Get your own mask and support our campaign at phr.org/let-science-lead
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 1:30 p.m. EDT**

- Rhia Boyd, M.D. M.P.H.
  The California Children’s Trust
- Marc Kupersmidt, M.A.
  Open Society Foundations
- Rebecca Holbert
  Don’t Shoot Portland

**Register at:**
www.phr.org/webinars

To sign up to join the conversation and to see past webinars, go to 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.”
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.
“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
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.

You’re Helping Secure Justice for the Rohingya

PHRecord Fall 2020
Karen Naimer
Leaning into the Deep Expertise of PHR’s Networks

“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 BzR 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.”
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.

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.