

Human Rights in Canada and Abroad: Looking at the 21st Century and Beyond

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Guest Editors

In 2022, Canada celebrated the 40-year anniversary of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*,¹ which is the core of human rights protections in Canada. This important milestone coincided with the 40-year anniversary of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre (HRREC) housed at the University of Ottawa.² The histories of the *Charter* and of the HRREC are intimately connected as the founding Directors of the HRREC played important roles in the elaboration of the *Charter* which, in turn, propelled the HRREC's subsequent work.³

The forty years since the adoption of the *Charter* saw great change, but the important work of fighting for human rights remains and the HRREC continues to be an important part of this in Canada. As we reflect on recent years, it is clear there has been grave and urgent human rights challenges throughout the world – exacerbated by inequalities laid bare through the global COVID-19 pandemic and heightened by the increasing number of conflicts around the world.

As part of celebration of our *Charter* and of the HRREC, junior scholars affiliated with the HRREC hosted a roundtable event, titled “Human Rights in Canada and Abroad: Looking at the 21st Century and Beyond”, at the University of Ottawa on June 16-17th, 2022. Both emerging and longstanding

¹ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part 1 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982 (UK)*, 1982, c 11 [Charter].

² University of Ottawa, “HRREC Hits 40!” (last visited 1 January 2025), online: <uottawa.ca/research-innovation/hrrec/about/CREDP40HRREC> [perma.cc/7S6U-DRS6] [HRREC].

³ Georgiana Ghitau, “Reviewing the U of O’s Human Rights Research & Education Centre’s Contribution to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms” (4 April 2022), online (The Fulcrum): <https://thefulcrum.ca/features/reviewing-the-u-of-os-human-rights-research-education-centres-contribution-to-the-canadian-charter-of-rights-and-freedoms/> [perma.cc/5L3U-ALXH]. For a fuller history, see Karina Juma, “Human Rights in Canada and the World: Forty Years of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre and the Canadian Charter”, *Canadian Yearbook of Human Rights*, Volume III (2019/2021), pp 75-92, available online at: <uottawa.ca/research-innovation/sites/g/files/bhrsksd326/files/2023-03/CanadianYearbookOfHumanRights_uOttawa_Vol3_2019-2021.pdf> [perma.cc/Y7QS-AKFR].

human rights concerns, in Canada and abroad, were addressed. The contributions were diverse and multidisciplinary as speakers highlighted different perspectives on the pressing issues of our time from the fields of political science, law, music theory, the social sciences, technology studies and, of course, human rights. One of the central goals of the roundtable event was to provide a space for junior scholars and emerging thought leaders in the field of human rights to share knowledge and expertise about contemporary human rights issues. At a time of many challenges – including pushback against the precepts and tenets of human rights norms, standards and institutions – we believe that new and more voices critically engaging with human rights can help light the path for a more just, peaceful and sustainable Canada and world.

This special issue has been the result of the roundtable event in 2022 and our many subsequent discussions and ongoing work. Our goal as editors for this issue was to capture the work of participants in relatively short think pieces that would illustrate the many articulations of human rights work. We are grateful for all who have been involved in this initiative and effort. A special thanks goes to HRREC's Director Professor John Packer for his leadership in and support for this event and over the past decade in steering the HRREC. We are grateful to the *Canadian Journal of Human Rights* for hosting our work and bringing it to completion, and especially to the work of the student editors for whom we wish fruitful careers in the field of human rights. We are grateful also to the anonymous reviewers who provided their valuable insights in these scholarly endeavours.