

Venice School for Human Rights Defenders

Opening session



Alessandro lenzi – Raizes Teatro

Alessandro lenzi, born in Palermo on 03/24/1987, is a human rights lawyer, actor, playwright and director and founder of Raizes Teatro Italia, an organization that promotes human rights, equality and inclusion through the arts and theatre. After training in International Relations and International protection of human rights at the Società Italiana per l'organizzazione internazionale (SIOI) in Rome, he graduated as actor and director at Teatro Biondo - School of Theatre in Palermo. He specialized in acting at Stella Adler Los Angeles and in digital filmmaking at the School of Visual Art in New York. He specialized in "Public Diplomacy" at the United Nation Institute for Training and Research and in protection of human rights with the arts at the Global Campus of Human Rights, where he attended the 2020 Cinema Human Rights and Advocacy Summer School. In 2020 he founded Raizes which creates original theatre shows, video exhibitions and photo exhibitions, based on real stories. Raizes is now active around the world. On the same year, he won the International Human Rights Art Festival in New York, and he has then collaborated with the European Parliament, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Columbia University, the Council of Europe, the European Union Human Rights Forum. He has written and directed plays on migration, women's rights, freedom of thought, youth rights and climate. All the plays are staged with young artists from all over the world who are trained in their theatre workshop. His theatre has been performed in Senegal, Egypt, Nepal, Malta, Spain, Belgium, France, Holland, Italy, and the United States. He is currently director of the Together we Thrive program, created with IOM Egypt and Barcelona Mundo, a cultural program for human rights, active in Barcelona until December 10, 2025.



Lorent Saleh

Lorent Saleh, born in San Cristóbal, Táchira, Venezuela, on July 22, 1988, is a tireless defender of human rights and a student leader. Since 2007, after the closure of Radio Caracas Televisión, he became a critical voice against the Venezuelan government, embarking on a journey marked by courage and determination. From that same year, he was the victim of constant persecution by the authorities, suffering arbitrary detentions and harassment in various regions of the country. At an early age, Saleh, along with other students, founded the Venezuelan student movement and the international organization Operation Liberty. Since 2008, he has led historic hunger strikes that resulted in the release of more than 20 Venezuelan political prisoners, consolidating his leadership and becoming a symbol of hope for many. Since 2008, Saleh has expanded his struggle internationally, working hand in hand with former presidents and Nobel laureates such as Óscar Arias from Costa Rica. His commitment to the defence of human rights has led him to establish a strong network of contacts and to become a recognized figure on the international stage.

The persecution he was subjected to intensified in 2014 with his kidnapping in Bogotá, Colombia, by Colombian intelligence officials and the National Police of Colombia. He was illegally handed over at

the border with Venezuela to the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN). During his captivity in the La Tumba and Helicoide prison, he suffered torture and mistreatment, but he never wavered in his fight. After more than 4 years of unjust imprisonment and exile, on October 12, 2018, he was finally released and handed over to a diplomatic commission of the European Union led by the Government of Spain, being transferred to Madrid.

Despite the persecution, Saleh has received numerous international recognitions, including the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, awarded by the European Parliament in 2017. In 2019, he was honoured with the medal of honour by both the Senate of France and the Senate of Chile, in recognition of his tireless struggle for democracy and human rights. Importantly, Saleh has achieved significant advancements in international justice by obtaining a conviction against the Colombian state for its role in his kidnapping and subsequent delivery to Venezuelan authorities.

From his exile in Spain, Saleh continues his tireless work as an activist, denouncing human rights violations in Venezuela and in various armed conflicts, working hand in hand with several universities in Europe and the European Parliament, in favour of freedom of conscience and democracy. His legal struggle against the Colombian state sets an important precedent in the fight against impunity and the defence of human rights. His story is an example of courage and perseverance, and his legacy inspires millions of people around the world to fight for a more just and free future.

[Lorent Saleh | Amor y Resistencia: 4 años de injusta prisión política](#)

Faculty



Kalliope Agapiou-Josephides

Kalliope Agapiou Josephides holds a PhD in Political Science from Paris I Panthéon - Sorbonne University, Paris, France, and is a Jean Monnet Chair holder (2001) and Assistant Professor at the University of Cyprus. She sits on the Council of the Global Campus of Human Rights and is the European Master's Director for her University. She served as chair of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EU Agency) and Vice- President of the European Inter University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation, Venice. She is a founding member of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and a member of the

scientific advisory board of the European Yearbook of Human Rights. She has a great interest, and long experience, in the nexus of human rights, democratisation and gender equality. She served as lead author in the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty and the European Parliament study on Women's Rights During Democratic Transitions. She also served as a convener of the Venice School of Human Rights. She has participated in and led several national and international research projects. She has served as academic convener/speaker at high-level international events and has taught/delivered lectures around the world.



Antónia Barradas

Antónia Barradas has a PhD in Law, Justice and Citizenship in the 21st century by the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra in Portugal. Lawyer and head of Barradas Direitos Humanos, her consultancy for human rights advocacy, she is also a trainer of the list of specialists for the Portuguese Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality. In 2019 she was the Senior Gender Expert to the European Union Delegation on a project on gender equality in the Public Prosecution Service in Brazil and in 2018 she was the adjunct to the President of Socialist Women of the Portuguese Socialist Party. Previously she was

the Institutional Relations and External Policy Officer for Amnesty International, and she works with NGOs focused on the rights of women and children. She is an E.MA graduate from 2011 and carried out the E.MA Internship at UNESCO's Sector for Social and Human Sciences in Paris and a Fellowship as part of the human rights team at the European Union Delegation to the UN in Geneva in 2012. She is Senior Non-Key Expert in Gender Equality and Digital Politics for the European Union-Brazil Sectoral Dialogue Support Facility on strengthening Women's Participation in Politics and Fighting Gender Violence in the Digital Era (2025 - 2027).



Susana Borràs-Pentinat

Dr. Susana Borràs-Pentinat is Associate Professor of International Environmental Law and EU Law at the Faculty of Law at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) (Spain). Master in Environmental Law (2004) and European Doctorate in Law (2007), with Extraordinary Prize to the Doctoral Thesis. Member of the Research Group on Environmental Law, Citizenship and Sustainability of the Centre for Environmental Law Studies of Tarragona (CEDAT) of the URV, associated with the Centre de Recherche en Droit Public of the Université de Montréal (Canada) and the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law. Legal expert

on climate change and refugees for the United Nations Network on Migration, the South American Network on Environmental Migration, the Catalan Commission for Refugee Aid, the Global Network for the Study of Human Rights and the Environment, and Expert Member of the United Nations Harmony

with Nature Platform. Academic Director of the Spanish Platform on Climate Displacement and Migration and member of the IUCN World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL). She is a former Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellow in the CLIMOVE Project (Climate Migration from a Gender Perspective), (H2020-MSCA-IF-2020) no. 101031252. Her main fields of research are climate migration, rights of nature, climate justice, ecofeminism, human rights and environmental defenders.



Thomas Coombes

Thomas Coombes is a global communications strategist who developed an approach called hope-based communications (www.hope-based.com) to help the human rights and other progressive movements develop new narratives for social change. He has spent 15 years working in political communications for Amnesty International, Transparency International, the European Commission and global PR firm Hill & Knowlton. He studied post-colonial history at Trinity College Dublin and obtained a Master in Human Rights and Democratisation at Global Campus of Human Rights.



Felipe Gómez Isa

Felipe Gómez Isa is Professor of Public International Law and researcher at the Pedro Arrupe Institute of Human Rights of the University of Deusto (Bilbao, The Basque Country, Spain). He was Spanish Representative before the UN open-ended working group for the adoption of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. He has been Director of the UN Fellowship Programme for Human Rights Education to Latin American indigenous peoples. He has published extensively on issues such as international protection of human rights, transitional justice or indigenous peoples' rights. He is National Director of the EMA and Vice-Dean for International Relations of Deusto Law School.



Dalila Mujagic

Dalila Mujagic has worked as a human rights advocate since 2005 and is currently an independent legal advisor specializing in digital evidence and case-building strategy for complex and international litigation. She has directly supported social justice movements in more than 25 countries with proving violations including mass atrocities, state violence, and environmental crimes, and works with movement lawyers in the defense of Indigenous, youth, and at-risk human rights activists. Dalila is committed to fostering the ethical application of AI and other emerging technologies for international justice and accountability through teaching, delivering trainings, and publishing globally renowned practitioner guidance for lawyers, judges, and prosecutors. She currently sits on the Advisory Board for the Visual Evidence Lab at the University of Colorado Boulder, has served as the Legal Lead at the international human rights organization WITNESS, and has taught at and trained stakeholders at numerous universities and institutions globally including domestic Prosecutors' General Offices, the United Nations, the International Bar Association, and Google.



Manfred Nowak

In addition to his function as Secretary General of Global Campus, Manfred Nowak is Professor of International Human Rights at the University of Vienna (where he is head of the Vienna Master of Arts in Human Rights and two human rights research centres, including the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, which he founded in 1992). In October 2016 he was appointed as UN Expert to lead the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty. Aside from Vienna University, Manfred Nowak was Professor of International Law and Human Rights at various prestigious universities, such as Utrecht,

Lund, Stanford and the Graduate Institute in Geneva and has published more than 600 books and articles in this field. In the past, Manfred Nowak also carried out various expert functions for the UN, the Council of Europe, the EU and other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations. Most importantly, he served for many years in various functions as UN Expert on Enforced Disappearances (1993 to 2006), as one of eight international judges in the Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo (1996 to 2003), and as UN Special Rapporteur on Torture (2004 to 2010).



George Ulrich

Prof. George Ulrich has worked for the Global Campus in a variety of capacities. He served as GC Europe / EMA Programme Director from 2016-2019, as Secretary General of EIUC (the predecessor of the Global Campus) from 2003-2009, and as Academic Coordinator / Programme Director of EMA from 2001- 2004. In between these appointments, he held the position of Rector and Professor of Human Rights at the Riga Graduate School of Law from 2009-2016. George obtained his Ph.D. as well as an M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Toronto, Canada, and holds the degree of Cand. Mag. in Social Anthropology and History

of Ideas from Aarhus University, Denmark. Among his main research interests are issues related to the history and philosophy of human rights, human rights diplomacy, human rights and development cooperation, health and human rights, international medical ethics, and ethics for human rights professionals.

He is one of the joint editors of a Global Campus publication on music and human rights. A key focus of his teaching is to equip students to effectively engage with expressions of human rights scepticism.



Marjolein van den Brink

Dr Marjolein van den Brink is a senior lecturer in law at the Utrecht University School of Law, where she works for the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) and participates in the Utrecht Centre for European Research into Family Law (UCERF). Her research focuses on human rights and gender in a broad sense, focusing in particular on issues of biased law, privilege and non-discrimination. Together with Gender Studies colleague CQ Quinan (University of Melbourne), she is working on the 'GIRARE project' (Gender Identity Registration And

human Rights Effects) exploring relationships between changes in sex registration practices and human well-being. Tensions between new legislation and long-standing social attitudes are an important focus of the project, as is the interaction between invocations of human rights discourses and changes to the institutionalization of binary conceptions of sex and gender. With Peter Dunne (University of Bristol School of Law) she undertakes many projects focused on gender identity issues from a legal perspective, including a report on 'Trans and Intersex Equality Rights in Europe' (2018), commissioned by the European Equality Law Network. In the spring of 2025, Peter and Marjolein, together with some other colleagues and in cooperation with three European NGOs (TGEU, OII and ILGA EUROPE) have launched a survey on the experiences with the law of people identifying as non-binary. Marjolein is co-coordinator of the Bristol based network on 'Gender beyond the binary', and was a member of the Sevilla based research project BINASEX on non-binary citizenship (between 2022 and 2025). In 2018 she joined the editorial board of the Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights. Between 2000 – 2009 she combined her academic work with a position as committee member of the Dutch national equality body (Commissie gelijke behandeling, now the Dutch national human rights institute).

Closing session

Starlight Stadium

Starlight Stadium is an online educational game for human rights defenders – by Human Rights Defenders Team of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) supports human rights defenders (HRDs) across the OSCE region through a broad range of dedicated project activities. These include monitoring the situation of HRDs across the OSCE region, and providing capacity-building support through training, including online learning opportunities. As part of this initiative, ODIHR has developed [FreedomLab](#), a virtual learning platform for HRDs to safely learn and expand their skill sets. One of the key tools available on the platform is [Starlight Stadium](#), an interactive online game that transforms ODIHR's training curriculum on human rights monitoring and safety and security into a practical, scenario-based learning experience. The game was created in consultation with HRDs, and experts in the human rights, education, and game development fields. It consists of four episodes, each tackling a different aspect of the human rights monitoring cycle whilst players follow a fictional case study – grounding theory into real examples. Furthermore, FreedomLab hosts various e-learning courses for HRDs, for example, on [managing risks in human rights work](#) and on [trauma-informed interviewing](#).

In this session, ODIHR's Human Rights Defenders Team **Zala Cas** (Assistant Project Officer at ODIHR) and **Johannes Heiler** (Senior Human Rights Adviser / Acting Deputy Head of the Human Rights Department at ODIHR) will present Starlight Stadium and how it can be used for capacity building of HRDs. Participants will play a selected episode of the game and engage in a discussion on applying monitoring principles and experiences in real-life contexts. The session concludes the first week of the Venice School programme by offering a hands-on opportunity to reflect on knowledge and skills acquired throughout the week and explore the learning opportunities provided by Starlight Stadium.