



# GLOBAL CAMPUS ALUMNI STORIES

*Many Paths, One Commitment to Human Rights*

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## What's inside?

This publication opens with welcoming introductory materials, including greetings from the Global Campus leadership, followed by spotlights on alumni powering the GC network internally and those in EU institutions—highlighting the EU's foundational partnership with the Global Campus. Key figures then provide quantitative snapshots.

Profiles of individual alumni journeys follow in a mixed format—interviews, reflections and records—creating an engaging flow without strict order. This mosaic approach reveals shared commitment amid varied paths, keeping the narrative dynamic.

While there's no table of contents, the last page offers an alphabetical name index for quick navigation to any featured alumnus or alumna. Enjoy discovering these voices!

# Alumni Stories

*Voices from across the Global Campus Alumni community*



● *Global Campus alumni at a research and advocacy gathering in Bangkok hosted by GC Asia-Pacific, November 2025*

## BEYOND LEARNING: TRANSFORMATION

Our alumni carry forward stories of curiosity and courage. Their paths span diverse contexts and moments of change: from academic halls to community spaces, from legal advocacy to grassroots action. Some work in roles that may not appear directly connected to human rights and democratisation, but what connects all of them is a shared experience of learning that reshaped how they understand the world—and their role within it.

## ACROSS REGIONS, ACROSS GENERATIONS

Each alumnus and alumna brings a distinctive voice, yet all share an enduring commitment to dignity, equality and change. What makes the Global Campus Alumni network extraordinary is not simply its global reach but the depth of its human connections.

These pages offer a glimpse into the journeys of our graduates across programmes, regions and generations, drawn from interviews and personal reflections gathered throughout 2025. This publication does not aim to be representative; it simply shares the stories alumni chose to tell—with honesty, openness and their own voice.

# What makes us proud of our alumni

What makes us proud of our alumni is not only the excellence of their academic achievements, but the remarkable impact they continue to make in advancing human rights and democracy around the world. Graduates from our eight postgraduate master’s degrees have carried the values learned in our classrooms into diverse professional arenas—international organizations, civil society, government institutions, academia, and local communities—where they are shaping meaningful change every day.

Our alumni stand out for their commitment to justice, equality, and human dignity. Whether they are advocating for marginalised groups, designing public policies, strengthening

democratic systems, or conducting research that informs global debates, they demonstrate the transformative power of education aligned with ethical purpose.

Spread across continents, their trajectories remind us that the defence of human rights is a collective endeavour that transcends borders. Their courage, leadership and unwavering dedication inspire current students and strengthen our global network. We are proud to celebrate their accomplishments, confident that their work continues to contribute to more just, inclusive, and democratic societies for all.

*Veronica Gomez, President of the Global Campus of Human Rights*



● Alumni gathering at Panteion University (GC Europe / EMA member), April 2024

# The vital role of the Global Campus regions

Over the years, the Global Campus regional Master’s programmes have built a unique learning community across continents. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all programme directors, academic teams, partner universities and staff for their dedication and hard work in educating generations of human rights and democratisation professionals. Their commitment has ensured that each cohort—whether younger graduates taking their first steps or experienced practitioners returning to study—is equipped with the knowledge, skills and ethical grounding to navigate complex realities and pursue meaningful change.

Today, Global Campus alumni carry this shared experience into diverse roles and contexts. They support remote communities, strengthen civil society, advance research and education and contribute to public service at the highest levels—including as ministers, ombudspersons, legal advisors and policy professionals shaping decisions that affect millions. We believe that without this growing community of alumni, the world would be a different place. Their work is a lasting reflection of the values, cooperation and vision that the Global Campus continues to foster worldwide.

*Manfred Nowak, Secretary General of the Global Campus of Human Rights*



# Alumni who power the GC network from within

Across regions and generations, many Global Campus alumni continue to shape the programmes that once shaped them. Today they serve as professors, lecturers, tutors, administrators and researchers, and remain engaged in regional alumni communities, continuing to accompany new generations of students. Their engagement keeps the Global Campus a living community: knowledge returns to classrooms, mentorship reaches new cohorts, and institutional memory is carried forward through experience.

We warmly recognise and celebrate this wide network of alumni contributors—knowing well that the list can never be complete. The names below are presented in no particular order.

*Prof Nkatha Murungi, Prof Magnus Killander, Ntandoyenkosi Moyo, Dr David N.C. Ikpo, Rotondwa Mashige, Dr Tresor Makunya, Henok Kremte, Oluwatosin Adegun, Barbara Lamara, Fortunate Chilenje, Merga Dibaba, Matilda Lasseko-Phooko, Brian Kibirango, Nqobani Nyathi, Seyitan Solademi-Ibrahim, Michael Aboneka (University of Pretoria); Prof Attiya Waris, Dr Paul Ogendi, Dr Seth Wekesa, Dr Evelyne Asaala (University of Nairobi); Prof Christopher Mbazira, Dr Adrian Jjuuko, Dr Daphine Agaba, Mary Auma (Makerere University); Prof Akinola Akintayo (University of Lagos); Prof Benyam Mezmur, Prof Yonatan Fessha, Prof Jamil Mujuzi (University of the*

*Western Cape); Prof Ademola Jegede (University of Venda); Prof Usang Maria Assim (University of the Western Cape); Ravi Prakash Vyas (Sydney Law School and Kathmandu School of Law); Joash Tapiheru (Universitas Gadjah Mada); Prof Christina Binder (Bundeswehr University Munich and University of Vienna); Dr Mariana Hadzijusufovic, Marija Ivanović, Nejira Pašić, Dr Federico Sicurella, Prof Valida Repovac – Nikšić, Prof Midhat Izmirlija (University of Sarajevo); Prof Nenad Marković (University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius); Prof Afrim Hoti (University of Prishtina); Prof Antonija Petričušić (University of Zagreb); Prof Zilka Spahić Šiljak (University of Zenica); Mariam Muradyan (Yerevan State University); Louise Lagarde, Veronique Lerch, Kersty Mccourt (Saint Joseph University of Beirut), Ángel David Zapata Martínez (University of San Martin); Dr Angela Melchiorre, John Paul Amah, Julia Runte, Hazem Mized, Vukašin Pajović (Global Campus HQ); Areen Eideh, Nuno Oliveira, Mélina Pele, Diego Naranjo, Marjan Icoski, Lamija Tiro, Benedetta Merlino, Merushe Zeneli, Stamatis Psaroudakis, Razan Ali, Adity Karki, Dewi Ratnawulan, Ridwan Al-Makassary, Mahmudul Hasan, Louise Suamen, Andrea Flores Ruilova, Merel Cosijn, Lea Frerichs, Geanina Turcanu, Kelly Christine Wong, Muhammad Ebaid, Clarisse Fagard, Mariana Groba Gomes, Chiara Mongiello (various capacities).*

# Alumni who work in EU institutions

Global Campus graduates represent a remarkable wealth of talent across European Union (EU) institutions, drawn from diverse countries and generations. Their specialised training equips them to navigate complex policy challenges, bringing rigorous analysis, intercultural sensitivity and practical expertise to the EU's mission.

These alumni amplify the GC network's impact, embedding human rights principles into diplomacy, justice, crisis response and governance. From advising on missions to shaping multilateral strategies, they bridge academia and policymaking, fostering inclusive institutions amid geopolitical shifts.

A small sample of the many alumni currently working in EU institutions:

- Teresa Anjinho (European Ombudswoman)
- Robin Clapp (EUPM Moldova – Human Rights, Gender and Civil Society Advisor and National Contingent Leader)
- Samantha Chaitkin (Human Rights Officer, EEAS)
- Lydia Malmedie (Policy Officer / Seconded National Expert, EEAS)
- Eduardo Padrón Hernández (Junior Expert – Conflict Prevention and Early Warning, EEAS)
- Sophie Kammerer (Head of UN Section, EU Delegation to the International Organisations in Vienna)
- Janne Dewaele (Policy Officer, DG Justice, EU Commission)
- Veronika Bílková (Member of the Management Board, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights)

- Guido Oestreich (Head of Criminal Justice Unit, EU Advisory Mission Ukraine)
- Dina Sinigallia (Team Leader Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations – EU ECHO)

...and countless EU "Blue Book Trainees" advancing human rights year after year.



● Venice – EMA graduates (left to right) Andra Matei (Andra Matei Law Office, Avant-Garde Lawyers) and Dr Lydia Malmedie (European External Action Service – EEAS) joined the Orientation Week for the GC Europe students of the 2025–26 cohort.

# Key figures

These figures offer a glimpse into a vibrant alumni community whose contributions stretch across borders, disciplines and generations, including many who followed unconventional paths into human rights yet share a deep commitment to human dignity, justice and democratic transformation.



## OUR ALUMNI

A small sample of our 4,600+ alumni community



## COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Alumni come from (almost) every world region



## SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

From public institutions and international organisations to civil society, academia, journalism and the private sector.



*The Global Campus HQ in Venice regularly invites alumni and hosts alumni reunions.*

# Abel Vijayakumar (Malaysia)

*Human rights work begins by listening, especially to histories, communities and truths that are often sidelined.*

Abel's path through the Asia-Pacific Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (APMA) marked the beginning of a long-term engagement with questions of justice, memory and displacement in the region he calls home. Coming from Malaysia, APMA offered not only academic grounding but a space to think critically about human rights from within Asia shaped by regional histories, postcolonial realities and lived experience rather than distant abstraction. The Programme reinforced for Abel that decolonial thinking begins at home, through humility, proximity and accountability to the communities most affected by structural harm.



Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2017

Following APMA, Abel deepened his focus on transitional justice and refugee protection through work and research in Sri Lanka and Geneva. His exposure to international human rights institutions sharpened his understanding of global frameworks, while also strengthening his conviction that meaningful impact depends on local agency and regional leadership. These experiences helped shape a practice that moves fluidly between policy, partnership-building and community-based engagement.

Today, Abel works as a Programmes and Partnerships Manager with HOST International Foundation Malaysia, supporting refugee communities in Malaysia through protection-oriented programming, cross-sector collaboration and advocacy. His work sits at the intersection of displacement, access and dignity, navigating relationships between humanitarian actors, civil society and affected communities themselves. Alongside his professional work, Abel continues to write and contribute to public discourse on refugees, migration and memory, ensuring that human rights remain connected to real lives and evolving regional contexts. For Abel, APMA was not simply a credential, but a compass—one that continues to guide how he listens, collaborates, and works toward futures imagined by communities themselves.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Programmes and Partnerships Manager  
HOST International Foundation |  
Selangor (Malaysia)**

# Meline Avagyan (Armenia)

*The CES programme gave me the confidence to move across disciplines and apply human rights thinking in practical, institutional settings.*

Meline’s journey into human rights began with a conscious change of direction. Originally trained in linguistics and literature, she realised through volunteer work with the Red Cross that her interests were shifting toward social justice, governance and institutional change. The Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) offered a bridge: an interdisciplinary programme that combined theory, policy analysis and applied research, and welcomed students beyond traditional legal pathways. She later pursued a second Master’s degree in political science and governance in Estonia, further strengthening her ability to work at the intersection of human rights, public policy and institutional reform.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2016

Today, Meline works with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Armenia office), an independent academic institution established at Lund University in Sweden in 1984. Her work includes developing training programmes, practical tools and online courses aimed at embedding human rights knowledge beyond one-off workshops. A key priority is accessibility: ensuring that materials are available in local language and tailored to non-legal audiences. Meline coordinates projects on environment and human rights in close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, local NGOs and universities. She also works with the National Human Rights Institution (the Human Rights Defender’s Office) to strengthen efforts in areas such as the prevention of torture in penitentiary institutions, implementation of the CRPD and systemic reforms to improve institutional effectiveness in line with international human rights standards.

Meline remains closely connected to CES. She supervises interns from the Programme, supporting their professional growth and contributing to the CES ongoing multiplier effect. For her, the Programme’s value lies in its ability to equip people from diverse backgrounds to work credibly, practically and collaboratively in complex human rights environments.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Programme Officer***

**Raoul Wallenberg Institute, Armenia office | Yerevan (Armenia)**

# Dr Adebayo Okeowo (Nigeria)

*Supporting communities to document and verify their experiences strengthens accountability and protects truth.*

Adebayo’s career has been guided by a long-standing commitment to justice and accountability. While studying law as an undergraduate, he was already certain that his professional path would lie in human rights—a field where legal principles could translate into meaningful protection for individuals and communities.

That conviction led him to the Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) programme, which he joined in 2014. Beyond its academic reputation, HRDA offered him a space to grow alongside peers equally driven by social change.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) | Cohort 2014

Studying with human rights advocates from across Africa, Adebayo took part in collective advocacy initiatives such as the Bring Back Our Girls and Migrants Matter campaigns, experiences that reinforced the power of solidarity in advancing rights.

Equally formative were the relationships built during the Programme. Many of these connections have endured, becoming part of a trusted network within the HRDA and Global Campus Alumni community. These networks continue to support collaboration across advocacy, research and institutional work.

Today, as Associate Director of Programs at WITNESS, Adebayo works closely with communities to strengthen their ability to document human rights abuses and demand accountability through video evidence. His work focuses on amplifying marginalised voices and safeguarding the integrity of truth at a time when disinformation increasingly threatens public trust.

Reflecting on his journey, he remains struck by the reach of the HRDA alumni community across key human rights institutions on the continent: a lasting reminder of the Programme’s collective impact and shared commitment to human dignity.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Associate Director of Programmes,  
Regional & Partner Engagement,*

**Witness | Newcastle upon Tyne (UK)**

# Maria Agnes Bere (Timor-Leste)

*The Global Campus gave me the foundation to work for a justice system that is people-centred, culturally grounded and responsive to Timor-Leste’s realities.*

Maria Agnes’s path in human rights and justice has been deeply shaped by her lived experience in Timor-Leste, a country still healing from the legacies of conflict and transition. Driven by a commitment to strengthen access to justice and institutional reform, she joined the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (APMA), which she credits with providing a solid blend of academic rigour and practical insight. The Programme equipped her to engage more effectively with her country’s formal justice system and deepened her understanding of how transitional justice,

rule of law and institutional reform can be adapted to local context.

Today, Maria serves as Partner at JU,S Jurídico Social Consultoria Lda, a Timorese social enterprise offering legal support and consulting across human rights, gender equality, access to justice and good governance. At JU,S, she works alongside other legal professionals to provide legal analysis, capacity development, policy advice and advocacy on challenging issues—including women’s and children’s rights, socio-economic rights and monitoring of law and practice in Timor-Leste.

Her academic work continues to inform her professional commitments: alongside her role at JU,S, Maria’s research explored barriers to access to justice for victims of gender-based violence in Timor-Leste, identifying legal and institutional hurdles faced by rape survivors in court proceedings.

Beyond technical expertise, Maria highlights how the Global Campus experience broadened her worldview and connected her to a network of practitioners and scholars who continue to inspire and support her work. She remains convinced that justice must be people-centred and culturally grounded—especially in societies like Timor-Leste where institutional capacity and community trust are still evolving.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2021

Current role, affiliation and location

**Partner**

**JU,S Jurídico Social Consultoria Lda | Timor-Leste**

# Adel Ramdani (Algeria | Belgium)

*True justice work means holding up a mirror to philanthropy itself, asking hard questions about power and how we can rebuild systems to be fairer and more regenerative.*

Adel describes his experience in the Arab Master’s in Human Rights and Democracy (ArMA) as a journey that extended beyond academic learning. Growing up in Belgium, he saw the Programme as an opportunity to reconnect with his roots and to question perspectives shaped by a Global North lens. ArMA became a space for re-examining assumptions, engaging more deeply with Middle Eastern realities and learning through exchange with people whose experiences differed from his own.



The Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2020

Adel’s fieldwork for the thesis reflected this approach. Rather than remaining an external observer, he worked within local contexts and daily life, an experience that continues to inform how he relates to partners and communities in his professional work. This immersion gave him both perspective and legitimacy—not only analytical understanding but lived awareness of the environments in which many human rights and social justice initiatives take place.

After completing the Programme, Adel interned at the EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva and went on to work with UNICEF and the ICRC in fundraising and institutional engagement. These roles strengthened his understanding of philanthropy and international cooperation and eventually led him to his current position at the Oak Foundation, where he supports organisations working at the intersection of climate justice and human rights. His work focuses on helping partners strengthen strategies, navigate funding systems and build capacity in sustainable and equitable ways.

Alongside his professional path, Adel has remained engaged in broader networks and conversations on climate activism and decolonising environmental approaches, which continue to shape his thinking and practice.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Programme Associate*

**Oak Foundation | Geneva  
(Switzerland)**

# Magdalena Schaub (Chile)

*After LATMA, I returned to Chile with renewed conviction to keep building civic education—because what we do, however small, can be part of the larger effort to defend democracy.*

Magdalena entered the Latin American Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (LATMA) seeking deeper understanding and practical tools to advance her work in civic education. At the time, she was already co-founding and directing Fundación Momento Ciudadano—an organisation committed to strengthening democratic culture and human rights from the ground up in Chile.

For Magdalena, one of the most meaningful aspects of the Programme was studying alongside peers from across Latin America and



Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2024

the Caribbean. The diversity of contexts and disciplines enriched her perspective on dignity, democratic participation and shared challenges in the region, and the connections formed during that year continue to inform her work.

In 2024, she expanded her engagement by participating in the Global Campus-organised Global Classroom in Kyrgyzstan, a space that broadened her view of democracy and human rights beyond the Americas.

Today, as Director of Sustainability at Fundación Momento Ciudadano, Magdalena leads efforts to make civic education more accessible and relevant to people throughout Chile. Her work includes developing educational content, training teachers and supporting schools and communities in engaging with democratic life—especially at a moment when public confidence in democratic institutions faces significant strain. She believes that democracy is defended not only through formal institutions but through the active, informed participation of citizens in everyday life. Her journey from civic educator to human rights professional reflects both her theoretical grounding and her commitment to translating knowledge into inclusive practice—a trajectory rooted in persistent engagement with democratic values and public dialogue.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Director of Sustainability*

**Fundación Momento Ciudadano |  
Santiago (Chile)**

# Dr Artūrs Kučs (Latvia)

*What stayed with me most was not only the intensity of the studies, but the sense of belonging to a community shaped by shared values and purpose.*

Artūrs' experience at the European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) marked a formative moment in his long-standing engagement with human rights and law. He recalls late nights studying in the monastery library — moments of quiet focus that shaped both his academic discipline and his appreciation for a learning environment grounded in rigor, reflection and shared purpose.

After completing his studies, Artūrs began his professional path in academia, working as a researcher at the Human Rights Institute of the

University of Latvia and later becoming its Director. He went on to complete a doctoral degree in law, focusing on freedom of expression and its limits, and pursued an academic career as a lecturer and associate professor in international and European law. These early years laid the groundwork for a professional trajectory that consistently bridged scholarship and practice.

Over time, Artūrs moved into public service and judicial roles, including work at the Latvian Ombudsman's Office and as an ad hoc judge at the European Court of Human Rights. In 2017, he was appointed Judge of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia, contributing to the protection of fundamental rights at the national level. More recently, he was elected as a Judge of the European Court of Human Rights, where he now helps shape human rights jurisprudence across Council of Europe member states.

Alongside his judicial career, Artūrs has remained connected to the Global Campus community, attentive to its sustainability and to the importance of maintaining strong links between alumni, programmes and institutions. His reflections highlight the value of collective memory, ongoing engagement and practical preparation for emerging generations of human rights professionals.



The European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2002

Current role, affiliation and location

*Judge of Latvia*

**European Court of Human Rights |  
Strasbourg (France)**

# Alumni recognition



- On 4 August 2025 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Andrea Jessenia Gómez Rodríguez (left) was sworn in as the new Secretary General of SEDESOL (Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Desarrollo Social) by attorney Heidi Alachán (right), current Undersecretary of Justice and LATMA faculty.

SEDESOL (the Secretariat of State in the Office of Social Development of Honduras) is the government institution responsible for designing, coordinating and implementing public policies and programmes to reduce poverty and inequality and improve living conditions for vulnerable populations, with a focus on social inclusion and access to basic rights and services.

According to SEDESOL, **Andrea Jessenia Gómez Rodríguez** joined the institution at a crucial moment for advancing these priorities, in line with the government's vision of strengthening social development institutions through committed public service.

“ Being part of LATMA was an honour that shaped my career; learning from top-level faculty strengthened my commitment to public service and to the rights of the most vulnerable populations. ”

Andrea Jessenia Gómez Rodríguez  
(LATMA, cohort 2019)  
Secretary General of SEDESOL (Tegucigalpa, Honduras)

# Ahmed M. Al Aydi (Palestine)

*Coming from Gaza, I've always believed that education is the key to change, and that we must take every opportunity we can, no matter how rare.*

Growing up and working in Gaza, Ahmed learned early how distant long-term goals can feel in contexts shaped by conflict and restriction. Before joining the Arab Master's in Human Rights and Democracy (ArMA), he was already active as a lawyer and human rights advocate, working closely with civil society organisations focused on youth and children. Education remained central to his path: not as an abstract ideal but as a practical tool for understanding and change.

The journey to join the ArMA programme was itself a reminder of the realities he was studying. Travelling from Gaza to Beirut via



The Arab Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2023

Egypt required navigating uncertainty and constraint, reinforcing his commitment to human rights and to strengthening his skills. Once in the Programme, Ahmed encountered new ways of thinking about human rights in the Arab world, particularly in conflict settings, reshaping how he understood both his region and his role within it.

Through exchanges with classmates and professors from diverse backgrounds, Ahmed connected local struggles to wider regional and global contexts. Alongside coursework, he completed internships that strengthened his research and analytical skills—first in Beirut and later with a partner institution in Tunisia, supporting his thesis work. These experiences led to a funded post-graduation internship with a Belgian organisation focused on Palestine and Israel.

Over time, Ahmed's focus shifted toward documentation and analysis in conflict settings, contributing research on the impact of war on children and civilian communities. Ahmed's trajectory reflects how education, when combined with opportunity, networks and sustained engagement, can open pathways even in highly constrained environments—shaping a practice rooted in persistence, critical inquiry and responsibility.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Conflict Researcher***

**Airwars, London (UK)**

# Maida Salkanovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

*Human rights work begins with how stories are told—and whose voices are allowed to shape the narrative.*

For Maida, the European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) was an intense and deeply engaging experience that shaped both her academic skills and professional direction. Coming from a background in journalism and communications, she developed a more critical and research-driven approach to media through the Programme. Her thesis on the representation of women in online media in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) laid the groundwork for her ongoing PhD studies in Media and Communication at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade.



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2017

After graduating, Maida moved into research roles, including with the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) as the first Balkans researcher. There, she contributed to documenting political violence and protests in the region, drawing on the analytical and communication skills reinforced during the ERMA.

She later joined the War Childhood Museum, an initiative based in BiH that collects and shares children’s experiences of growing up in wartime globally. In her communications role, Maida leads outreach, content creation and the promotion of the Museum’s exhibition, research and educational work, strengthening public understanding of how conflict shapes childhood and memory, and how storytelling can foster empathy and dialogue. She also works for SEE Check, a network of six fact-checking organisations across five countries in Southeastern Europe, promoting media accountability, strengthening media literacy and countering misinformation and disinformation, while also collaborating with several other journalistic and media organisations.

Maida values the ERMA Alumni network as a dynamic community, often collaborating with fellow graduates on initiatives linked to youth empowerment, STEM education and civil society development.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Communications Professional / Journalist**  
**War Childhood Museum / SEE**  
**Check | Sarajevo (BiH)**

# Daria Ignatenko (Ukraine)

*At some point, reporting on injustice was no longer enough—I needed to be part of the response.*

Daria’s path into human rights work grew out of her early career in the media during the first stages of the Russia–Ukraine war in 2014. While journalism gave her a front-row view of conflict dynamics, it also made clear the limits of observation alone. The Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) equipped her with the analytical tools and practical grounding needed to engage more directly with human rights issues, particularly those affecting internally displaced persons, women and persons with disabilities.

After graduating, Daria managed a nationwide programme aimed at strengthening local social security services for internally displaced people.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2015

The role required close attention to emerging patterns of vulnerability and discrimination, as internal displacement was a new phenomenon in the Ukrainian context. Her work later expanded internationally through research roles with the humanitarian organisation IMPACT in Somalia and Bangladesh, where she supported evidence-based humanitarian programming and policy design.

In 2022, Daria joined The HALO Trust in Ukraine as a programme officer, combining project administration, representation and project design functions. Seeking to address security challenges more directly, she later became a reconnaissance drone operator with the Ukrainian Armed Forces at the frontline (Donetsk region)—a role made accessible to women only recently. This experience exposed both advances and persistent resistance around gender equality within military structures.

Alongside the physical and psychological demands of war, Daria remains committed to resilience, mental health support and volunteer initiatives for service members. Her trajectory illustrates how academic training, combined with humanitarian and security engagement, can prepare professionals to confront conflict with clarity and an evolving understanding of human rights under extreme conditions.

Current role, affiliation and location

*Drone operator with the Armed Forces*

**Ministry of Defense | Kyiv (Ukraine)**

# Marco Antonio Ramirez Shupingahua

(Peru)

*Human rights education gave me the tools to lead and empower young people to claim their rights with dignity.*

Marco is a prominent Afro-Peruvian leader whose work centres on youth empowerment, governance and the defence of human rights in Latin America. He pursued the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) to deepen his advocacy on racial justice and political inclusion. His thesis examined the human rights barriers that prevent Afro-Peruvians from accessing political representation—research that was later published by Peru’s National Jury of Elections as a pioneering contribution to electoral debates.

Before and after his studies, Marco has been



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2018

deeply involved in civic engagement and community advocacy. He serves as President of Ashanti Perú – Peruvian Network of Afro-Descendant Youth, an organisation dedicated to training and supporting young Afro-descendant leaders across the region. Since 2013, he has directed the organisation’s Training School for Young Afro-Descendant Leaders, through which more than 300 young activists from Afro-Peruvian communities have received training on human rights, governance and leadership. Under his leadership, and with the support of partners such as UNFPA, Marco founded the first Afro-Descendant Youth Leadership School in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has graduated representatives from 18 countries and strengthened cross-border networks for racial justice and inclusion. Ashanti Perú’s work reflects a commitment to addressing discrimination and exclusion while promoting policies that ensure equal access to rights and opportunities for Afro-descendant communities.

Marco continues to advocate for structural change within democratic institutions and civil society, combining grassroots mobilisation with policy engagement to elevate Afro-descendant voices in political and human rights debates across Peru and the region.

Current role and affiliation

**President**

**Ashanti Perú – Peruvian Network of Afro-Descendant Youth | Chorrillos (Peru)**

# Pokiza Juraeva (Uzbekistan)

A young human rights professional, Pokiza focused her academic work on human rights research and policy-oriented analysis. Her MAHRS thesis, “From Taboo to Awareness: Delving into Domestic Violence in Uzbekistan,” demonstrates her engagement with human rights scholarship and evidence-based approaches to social change. Alongside her studies, she supported electoral observation and civic engagement initiatives, guided by the belief that even modest contributions can make a meaningful difference. She participated in election observation missions with OSCE/ODIHR and ANFREL in Uzbekistan and the Philippines and contributed to training citizen observers in Bangladesh.

Following graduation, Pokiza completed a five-month internship with the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) in Bangkok through a Global Campus internship opportunity,



Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS) | Cohort 2025

supporting regional efforts to strengthen electoral transparency and democratic participation across Asia. She was also selected to join the Forum “Unleashing Human Rights” (9–11 December 2025) as a young educator. Co-organised by OHCHR and the Council of Europe, with partners including the Global Campus, the Forum brought together over 200 participants working on human rights education with and by young people.

Pokiza has recently joined the Green University – Central Asian University of Environmental and Climate Change Studies, where she works in the International Cooperation Department, contributing to the university’s sustainability portfolio. Her work focuses on expanding partnerships and strengthening cooperation in law, ecology and environmental studies across Central Asia and beyond.

Current role, affiliation and location

**Chief Specialist**  
**Green University | Tashkent**  
**(Uzbekistan)**

*The Master of Arts in Human Rights and Sustainability (MAHRS) is the newest addition to the Global Campus of Human Rights family, launched in Central Asia to bridge human rights, governance and sustainability in an interdisciplinary regional setting. Though its first graduates completed the programme only in February 2025, MAHRS graduates are already taking their first steps in the field—applying human rights and sustainability learning in early professional roles across Central Asia and beyond.*

# Anand Deo (India)

*Change begins when you stay close to people’s realities—and allow their needs to guide your work.*

Anand’s professional path has been shaped by a conscious decision to pursue work grounded in proximity to communities rather than in institutional comfort. His early experience at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva introduced him to global anti-discrimination frameworks, while his thesis—comparing the situation of Dalit communities in India with marginalised groups in Nigeria—strengthened his awareness of how structural inequality plays out across different contexts.

After the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), Anand moved into roles that connected human rights with development practice across Asia and Africa.



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2013

Through his work with organisations such as Medic Mobile and the Grameen Foundation, Anand engaged in initiatives on community health, women’s empowerment and livelihoods. These experiences exposed him to everyday barriers faced by rural and indigenous communities, particularly by women and girls, and reinforced the value of approaches grounded in long-term presence rather than short project cycles.

In 2019, this reflection led him back to his home region in India, where he founded the Ananda Foundation. Living and working among tribal and indigenous communities, he began organising medical camps, menstrual health and hygiene awareness activities, and the distribution of essential materials for girls and young women. Over time, the foundation has expanded to include vocational skills support, with the aim of strengthening dignity, autonomy and economic participation. The work continues to evolve gradually, guided by local needs and by sustained community relationships.

Anand sees his learning journey as one shaped as much by peers and field exposure as by academic study. Encounters with diverse classmates and engagement with post-conflict contexts during the Programme influenced the way he thinks about privilege, proximity and responsibility in human rights practice.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Founder**  
**Ananda Foundation | Mumbai (India)**

# Andrea Arriola (Paraguay)

*Human rights training changes how you approach the law—it reminds you that beyond every case, there are people.*

Andrea’s career has evolved at the intersection of public service, gender justice and strategic human rights litigation. Before beginning the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA), she worked within the Gender Secretariat of Paraguay’s Judiciary. The Programme broadened this experience through exposure to peers and perspectives from across Latin America, strengthening her regional awareness and shaping how she links legal work to social realities. Andrea’s thesis examined technology-facilitated rights violations against women online—work that soon moved beyond academia and led to invitations to present her findings to judges and institutions in Paraguay, Costa Rica, Bolivia and Ecuador.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2019

That engagement marked an early moment where study, practice and public dialogue came together.

Andrea transitioned from policy implementation and judicial training into a new professional direction: human rights litigation on behalf of the State. At the Attorney General’s Office, she assumed responsibility for strategic litigation in cases before the inter-American and Universal Human Rights Systems, contributing to Paraguay’s legal defence in several proceedings before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR). This shift consolidated her identity as a practitioner working at the interface between law, institutions and international accountability.

Andrea’s work has since continued to evolve through periods of further specialisation, including advanced training and a visiting professional experience at the IACtHR in Costa Rica. There, she deepened her focus on procedural dimensions of international litigation and on the complex intersections between children’s rights, gender-based violence and cross-border restitution cases. These experiences have reinforced her commitment to a legal practice that keeps individuals and their circumstances at the centre of State defence strategies.

Current role, affiliation and location

***Head of the Strategic Litigation Department in Human Rights***  
**Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Paraguay | Asunción**

## Alumni in action



● On 29 April 2024, the Director of the Memorial Centre Srebrenica Dr Emir Suljagić gave a speech at the United Nations

**Dr Emir Suljagić** is a Bosnian journalist, scholar and human rights advocate, and a survivor of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. He fled ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian War and later completed graduate studies in democracy and human rights with ERMA. Since 2019, he has served as Director of the Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Centre in Potočari, leading its work on remembrance, education and countering genocide denial.

Emir has also held positions in government, including as Minister of Education of Sarajevo Canton and Deputy Minister of Defence, and teaches genocide and security studies at the International University of Sarajevo. He continues to advocate against genocide denial and for a deeper understanding of human rights, transitional justice and collective memory in Bosnia and beyond.

**“ I was convinced I wouldn’t survive an encounter with Mladić\*, but today there stands Srebrenica Memorial Centre. ”**

Dr Emir Suljagić  
(ERMA, cohort 2005)  
*Director of the Srebrenica Memorial Centre  
(Potočari, Bosnia and Herzegovina)*

\* Ratko Mladić was the military leader of the Army of Republika Srpska during the Bosnian War (1992–1995) and a convicted genocide perpetrator

# Dr Gina Bertolone (Argentina)

*The LATMA programme reshaped how I teach, research and understand the role of law.*

Before joining the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA), Gina was already teaching and conducting research in law, but the Programme marked a decisive turning point in how she approached both teaching and scholarship. The training had an immediate and direct impact on her work as a university lecturer in constitutional law and human rights, strengthening both the depth and quality of the content she delivers to students.

Gina’s Master’s thesis offered the first systematic analysis of jurisprudence from Catamarca’s Superior Court on vulnerable groups. By compiling and analysing rulings, she identified judicial trends and proposed concrete

improvements to rights protection. Selected for publication and made openly accessible, the thesis has become a reference for legal practitioners and a foundation for further research she now supervises. LATMA also expanded Gina’s research internationally. Through the Global Classroom (a Global Campus annual student research programme), she contributed to a comparative study on forced displacement, publishing academically in English for the first time and deepening her interdisciplinary and intercultural approach to human rights research.

Deeply committed to the social role of public universities, Gina is actively involved in a free legal clinic that handles human rights cases, offering students hands-on experience while serving communities unable to access legal representation. She strongly believes that public universities in Argentina have a responsibility to train lawyers with both solid legal grounding and a clear social commitment.

In 2025, Gina was elected Dean of the Faculty of Law at the National University of Catamarca. She attributes this recognition in part to her academic trajectory and the professional legitimacy gained through the Global Campus experience, which continues to inform her leadership, teaching and research.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2022

Current role, affiliation and location

*Dean of the Faculty of Law*

**Universidad Nacional de Catamarca UNCA | Catamarca (Argentina)**

# Mirza Dinnay (Iraq)

*EMA gave me a framework to understand my work not only as emergency aid but as an expression of justice—rooted in international human rights and grounded in the dignity of every life I meet.*

Mirza Dinnayi’s life and work reflect a rare convergence of lived experience and deep commitment to justice. Born into the Yazidi community in Sinjar, Iraq, he endured political upheaval, genocide and displacement—experiences that eventually shaped his decision to pursue the European Master’s in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA). Graduating shortly before receiving the 2019 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, he wrote his thesis on the “Yezidi Minority and ISIS: the Victims of

Trans-Generational Genocide”, engaging academically with the trauma and resilience of his community.

The EMA Programme helped him systematise his understanding of human rights, connect lived experience with international standards and sharpen how he speaks about justice, responsibility and accountability. That foundation sits alongside a body of humanitarian action that has gained global recognition. Mirza is the co-founder of Air Bridge Iraq (Luftbrücke Irak), an organisation supporting Yazidi survivors through evacuation from conflict zones, access to medical care and longer-term recovery and protection.

In recent years, Mirza has expanded his work into reconciliation and community rebuilding in Sinjar. In 2022, he established the House of Coexistence, a multicultural peacebuilding space bringing Yazidis, Arabs, Kurds and other communities together through dialogue. The initiative reflects his conviction that recovery after mass atrocities cannot be reduced to reconstruction alone but must also include trust-building and accountability. Alongside this work, Mirza continues to advocate for justice for Yazidi survivors, including through public engagement marking the 10th anniversary of the genocide and renewed calls for sustained protection and support for communities still living with displacement, insecurity and loss.



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2019

Current role, affiliation and location

**Founder**

**House of Coexistence in Sinjar | (Iraq)**

# Awa Gai (The Gambia)

*I have learned that human rights advocacy is not confined to courtrooms or legal documents; it thrives in the heart of the community.*

The Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) profoundly shaped Awa’s professional and personal life: it enhanced her understanding of the socio-political dynamics affecting human rights in Africa, which has been crucial in her work advocating for women’s rights and social justice in her community and beyond. As a feminist human rights lawyer, the Programme’s emphasis on critical thinking and practical engagement resonated strongly with her. It reinforced her conviction that human rights work must be rooted in communities and responsive to lived realities, of marginalised communities particularly.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) | Cohort 2023

This approach has been a guiding principle throughout Awa’s career in public service, civil society and regional human rights organisations. She began her professional journey within the civil society sector before completing her pupillage at a private law firm, the Attorney General’s Chambers and the Ministry of Justice in The Gambia. Following HRDA, she had the opportunity to expand her work regionally through a graduate placement with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. She is also the Founder of She Awards Gambia, a national platform celebrating women trailblazers and promoting girls’ leadership. More recently, she has contributed to regional legal advocacy after being awarded a Waging Justice for Women Fellowship by the Clooney Foundation for Justice, supporting strategic litigation and advocacy on women’s rights.

Awa has been recognised as an “African Legal Millennial” by The People’s Accolade Law Magazine (The PALM). She is also a 2024 Mandela Washington Fellow and a former Fellow of the She’s the First Girl-Centered Incubator programme. These honours highlight her leadership and commitment to women’s human rights and feminist-based initiatives. What Awa values most from the HRDA programme are the lasting friendships and strong sense of community, which continue to inspire her work.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Legal Officer**

**Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa | Banjul (The Gambia)**

# Marko Matović (Serbia)

*ERMA helped me connect what I already cared about—ethical journalism and communication—with a deeper human rights lens, and that stayed with me in every role that followed.*

Coming from a journalism and communication background in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Marko was looking for stronger academic grounding and a wider perspective—something the European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) provided through its interdisciplinary approach and regional relevance. During the Programme, Marko strengthened his analytical skills and began to see human rights not as separate from journalism but as a framework that supports



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2017

more accurate reporting and stronger public accountability. ERMA became a key reference point for his next steps, including a five-month gender studies experience in Iceland through a partnership programme, followed by work with the European Union.

Marko later spent five years with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), working in communication in contexts shaped by conflict and its long-term consequences. Among the work he values most was supporting better standards around sensitive reporting, including engagement with journalists and editors on how to report on missing persons from the war in a responsible way.

More recently, Marko moved into the start-up ecosystem with Entrepreneurs for Global Change, a US-based organisation, where he supports young people—often aged 18–25—in developing business ideas and taking their first steps into the market. For him, the link to human rights remains clear: building opportunities, strengthening agency and supporting more inclusive socio-economic participation. In his current work, he combines communication, training and public speaking with strategy and marketing support, while continuing to learn from a new professional environment.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Marketing and Communication Coordinator**  
**Entrepreneurs for Global Change |**  
**Belgrade (Serbia)**

# Nicole Bjerler (Sweden/Austria)

*Embedding human rights into business means moving from intention to practice.*

Nicole builds her work at the intersection of human rights, strategic operations and corporate responsibility, bringing a vision of rights-centred business practice into global value chains and organisational cultures. Drawing on various professional experiences, from working with human rights defenders while with Amnesty International to contributing to the development of the National Action Plan of Business and Human Rights in Uganda while with the OHCHR, she emphasises that advancing human rights inside corporations requires clarity, shared purpose and practical tools—not token gestures.

Nicole’s academic foundation in human rights was strengthened through the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), which she credits with sharpening her ability to think strategically



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2002

while remaining attuned to community realities. For her, human rights education matters not only for specialists but for those seeking to embed universal standards within diverse organisational environments, including private sector contexts.

In her role within Inter IKEA Group, Nicole works on integrating human rights into core strategy, operations and value chain systems—advocating for internal training, strengthening due diligence efforts and sector-specific engagement that help teams develop a deeper understanding of “human rights impact.” Her commitment to interdisciplinary approaches is rooted in the belief that structural change requires both global insight and local responsiveness, and that enhancing internal capacity is a key step toward more accountable and rights-aware business practice.

Nicole is also passionate about bringing a human rights perspective to other strategic priority areas, including climate, circularity and water, and she champions initiatives that broaden access to human rights learning within corporate contexts, encouraging cross-sectoral dialogue and knowledge-sharing among practitioners. In all her work, she emphasises that meaningful change often begins with personal connections and small, deliberate steps taken with humility, vision and an open mind.

Current role, affiliation and location

***Strategic Sustainability Topic Developer:  
Human & Children’s Rights***

**IKEA | Älmhult (Sweden)**

# Niaz Kandhir (Pakistan)

*I wanted to create a space that is not elitist—a space for people who speak different languages and for communities that are usually left out.*

Niaz’s engagement with human rights stretches across two decades and is rooted in his deep commitment to inclusive democratic practice and cultural identity. Before joining the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA), he gained experience managing democratic governance and electoral programmes. Through APMA, he strengthened his understanding of rights frameworks and how they intersect with communication, inclusion and identity.

Niaz’s professional journey spans governance, electoral support and civil society engagement across national and international settings. He has worked with the National Democratic



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2010

Institute on party strengthening, women’s political participation and conflict-sensitive programmes; advised on democratic reform with the UK’s Department for International Development; and served as a Senior Expert on Democratic Governance with Palladium and other development partners. He has also contributed to policy and advocacy with organisations such as Democracy Reporting International and WaterAid and supported election monitoring in Iraq and Afghanistan—reflecting a sustained commitment to transparency, participation and accountable institutions. More recently, he has taken on electoral projects specialist roles with the United Nations Development Programme in Vanuatu and Fiji.

Beyond formal roles, Niaz’s interest in language, culture and rights has shaped how he thinks about inclusion. He founded an annual language rights festival in Pakistan—held around International Mother Language Day—as a space that celebrates linguistic diversity and opens dialogue on discrimination, exclusion and cultural belonging beyond elite literary spaces. By placing language rights at the centre, he draws attention to how identity and communication shape access to rights and democratic participation and engagement across national and international settings.

Current role, affiliation and location

***Electoral Projects Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting Specialist | Board Member***

**UNDP / Indus Cultural Forum | Suva (Fiji) / Islamabad (Pakistan)**

# Ekatarina Fomina (Russia)

*Journalism becomes a human rights practice when it is grounded in evidence, context and responsibility.*

Ekaterina has over twelve years of experience reporting on social injustice, women’s and LGBTQ+ rights and the situation of political prisoners in Russia. After working as a correspondent for Novaya Gazeta, she enrolled in the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) in 2017, seeking a stronger academic foundation to support her human rights journalism and deepen the analytical rigor of her work.

Learning alongside professors and peers from the same region provided insights closely connected to local realities, sharpening her capacity to document violations with precision and contextual understanding.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2023

After graduation, Ekaterina returned to Russia, where she continued her journalistic work for outlets such as Coda Story and later IStories. In 2022, following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, she was forced to leave the country in order to continue her reporting.

Since 2022, Ekaterina has been living in exile in Europe while carrying on her work amid mounting repression. Her reporting has focused on human rights violations and war crimes, including award-winning documentaries documenting the experiences of Ukrainian women tortured in Russian captivity. In 2025, she was sentenced in absentia to eight and a half years in prison on charges of spreading so-called “fake news” related to the war in Ukraine.

Despite risks, Ekaterina remains committed to independent journalism, producing investigative reports and documentaries under increasingly difficult conditions. She continues to report on the consequences of the war for both Russia and Ukraine. Her story underscores the role that solid academic training and personal resolve play in keeping journalism alive as a form of human rights advocacy under pressure.

Current role

*Independent journalist (in exile)*

# Alumni recognition



● On 21 September 2025 in Venice, Italy, EMA alumnus Thomas Coombes was awarded the EMA Alumni award.

The EMA Alumni Award is an annual distinction granted by the EMA Alumni Association (EMA Alumni)—the alumni network of the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA). The award recognises an EMA graduate who has made a significant professional contribution to human rights and democratisation.

The EMA Alumni Award 2025, a glass sculpture “Collective Memory” donated by artist Koen Vanmechelen, was given to **Thomas Coombes**, human rights strategist and hope-based communication expert. Founder of the “Hope-based communications” activist community, with a journalism and strategic communications background, he has worked globally with NGOs, activists and media to develop uplifting, mobilising messaging.

“ Hope is the act of seeing and carrying out alternatives. It is literal circuitry in our brain activated when we plan for the future. That makes hope, like human rights, a tool designed for dark times. ”

Thomas Coombes  
 (EMA, cohort 2006)  
 Founder of Hope-based communications  
 (Berlin, Germany)

# Dr Ashwanee Budoo- Scholtz (Mauritius)

*Every time I have reached out to a fellow graduate requesting information about human rights or democracy issues in a given African country, there has been no hesitation.*

Ashwanee’s long engagement with human rights across Africa reflects both deep professional expertise and a commitment to community-oriented practice. She currently serves as Deputy Director of the Africa Division at Human Rights Watch, where she works on a broad range of human rights issues across the continent, with a focus on accountability, civic space and the functioning of the African human rights system. Before, Ashwanee played a key role in human rights education and regional advocacy as the Programme Manager of the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA).



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) | Cohort 2012

Earlier in her career, Ashwanee worked closely with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, supporting the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa and contributing to legal standards and landmark cases on children’s and women’s rights.

Ashwanee’s reflections often return to the extent to which HRDA alumni engage with human rights systems both regionally and within their own countries. She sees alumni not simply as professionals but as reliable sources of insight and support, embodying a practice of mutual assistance reminiscent of *Ubuntu*—an ethic that stresses shared humanity and collective responsibility for one another’s rights and dignity. She emphasises that HRDA’s tailored focus on the human rights needs of the African continent is reflected in how alumni contribute to regional bodies, government institutions, civil society and cross-border advocacy efforts. For her, this sustained network of experts reinforces the African human rights system’s functioning and speaks to the programme’s enduring legacy.

Ashwanee’s own work reflects a career spent building connections between local knowledge, institutional frameworks and community-centred practice.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Deputy Director, Africa Division***

**Human Rights Watch | Pretoria (South Africa)**

# Goran Miletić (Serbia)

*At a ‘now what?’ point in my career, the programme offered a meaningful step rather than easy answers.*

By the time Goran joined the European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA), he had already built a solid professional career. What drew him to the Programme was not the promise of advancement but the possibility of reflection at a moment of transition—a chance to pause, reassess direction and think more critically about the kind of impact he wanted his work to have.

ERMA helped sharpen Goran’s thinking, broaden his perspective and situate his experience within a wider global and interdisciplinary context. He found particular

value in the intellectual openness of the Programme and in engaging with peers from different regions and professional backgrounds.

Goran has worked in a global role as Senior Advisor to the Executive Director of Civil Rights Defenders, an international NGO that works to defend and strengthen civil and political rights globally, especially in repressive regions; his responsibilities have extended well beyond his earlier regional focus on the Balkans. While his current work at the Balkans Forward Foundation operates at a broader strategic level, Goran remains closely connected to the region through frequent travel and ongoing professional ties. The Global Campus experience continues to inform how he approaches leadership, advisory work and collaboration across cultures and institutions.

Goran remains a strong supporter of alumni engagement and knowledge-sharing. He believes the Programme’s lasting value lies not only in what participants gain individually, but in the relationships and shared understanding that endure long after graduation—particularly when alumni connect through personal exchange rather than formal channels. For him, the Global Campus remains an important reference point in a career shaped by curiosity and critical thinking.



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2007

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Founder & CEO***

**Balkans Forward Foundation |  
Sweden / Serbia**

# Charlotte van der Werf (The Netherlands)

*Understanding a region means listening to the people who live its realities, not only analysing it from afar.*

Charlotte describes the Arab Master’s in Human Rights and Democracy (ArMA) as a formative experience that shaped both her professional path and personal outlook. Studying within a cohort predominantly from the MENA/SWANA-region is what Charlotte considered to be one of ArMA’s greatest strengths, coming from Europe herself. The Programme offered her a deeply regional perspective and lasting connections with peers from conflict-affected contexts, grounding academic learning in lived experience.

Charlotte has since built a career as a diplomat with the Dutch government, specialising in Middle Eastern affairs. Currently based in New



The Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2019

York, she works at the United Nations on files including Gaza, Yemen, Syria and Western Sahara. Her ArMA education, combined with the personal connections she formed during the Programme, continues to inform her work, providing nuance, empathy and contextual awareness in complex diplomatic discussions.

One experience that stands out for her is her work in Beirut with the NGO 26 Letters, which provided informal education to Syrian refugee children. During a period marked by Lebanon’s financial crisis, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut port explosion, Charlotte led a project that enabled remote education and humanitarian assistance. This hands-on engagement reinforced for her the tangible impact of human rights work beyond policy spaces.

Charlotte places strong value on the Global Campus community, which has remained a source of support and inspiration throughout her career. In New York, as she navigates the complexities of the multilateral system, she draws motivation from the work of human rights defenders from the region—including Global Campus graduates.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*First Secretary*

**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the UN | New York City (USA)**

# Mariola Çeku (Albania)

*ERMA inspired a lifelong commitment to ensuring that human rights remain the language and legacy of diplomacy.*

For Mariola, the European Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) served not just as advanced study but as a practical compass shaping her diplomatic approach to complex global challenges. ERMA broadened her grasp of transitional justice, democratisation, EU integration and the protection of fundamental freedoms—grounding her work in both principle and practice and preparing her to skillfully navigate diplomatic, security and human rights. Since graduating, Mariola’s career has been a direct extension of these values.



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2019

At Albania’s Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, she has worked across areas including public diplomacy, diaspora affairs and, most recently, security issues and cyber diplomacy—a portfolio that reflects the evolving interface of rights, technology and international cooperation. In her current role in the Directorate of NATO Affairs, she brings a human-rights lens to discussions on hybrid threats, digital freedoms and resilience, recognising that the security of democratic institutions depends on informed, empowered societies.

Mariola applies human rights as operational principles, advocating for policy that fosters trust and protects individual dignity within international relations. She has also engaged with diverse professional networks such as the European Digital Diplomacy Exchange Network (EDDE) and GLOBSEC’s *CEEHer initiative*, where she has highlighted the empowerment of women in international affairs and the importance of inclusive diplomacy in a field historically dominated by men. Regionally, Mariola has supported cooperation in the Western Balkans and contributed to efforts that strengthen youth participation in democratic processes and interethnic dialogue, underscoring her belief that diplomatic practice gains legitimacy when grounded in respect for human rights and broader societal engagement.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Desk Officer**

**Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Directory of NATO | Tirana (Albania)**

# Saidou Bah (The Gambia)

*Human rights education is not a luxury—it is a necessity.*

Saidou’s commitment to human rights was shaped early on by The Gambia’s political transformation from dictatorship to democracy—a shift that made questions of justice, accountability and institutional reform deeply personal. To strengthen his practical engagement with stronger academic grounding, he joined the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES), the most accessible option for him at the time. The Programme broadened his understanding of international human rights law and how rights-based approaches can support societies in transition.

After completing the Programme, Saidou returned home and joined the National Human Rights Commission, first as an intern and then in



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2023

a growing role combining investigation and human rights education.

His work included documenting serious violations such as police brutality and sexual and gender-based violence, while also leading trainings for youth representatives, community leaders and security actors to strengthen awareness and accountability. In his view, these efforts matter most when they translate into real safeguards for people—preventing harm, strengthening trust, and helping communities navigate difficult cases with dignity.

Saidou has since resumed service with the Gambia Armed Forces to fulfil a two-year bond linked to his Master’s studies, temporarily stepping away from his role at the Commission. In this capacity, he continues to engage on human rights issues, as the armed forces undergo reforms following 22 years of dictatorship and serious abuses by security actors.

Saidou sees human rights professionals as essential not only in civil society but also within state institutions undergoing transformation. Beyond his formal responsibilities, he encourages young Gambians and fellow Africans to pursue human rights work, including by guiding potential applicants to Global Campus programmes.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Instructor/Trainer & Admin Officer***

**Gambia Armed Forces | (The Gambia)**

# Coral Cordero Ramírez (Dominican Republic)

*Public policy becomes transformative when it is grounded in human rights and shaped through collaboration.*

For Coral, the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) was a decisive foundation for her professional journey at the intersection of public policy and human rights. The Programme’s interdisciplinary approach, strong regional lens and emphasis on applied human rights provided her with both critical perspective and practical tools to address the complex social challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean. During the Programme, Coral focused on issues that continue to shape her work today, including gender equality, environmental justice, human mobility, LGBTQ+ rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2024

Following graduation, she joined the Ministry of Education of the Dominican Republic, where she currently works within the Directorate of International and Interinstitutional Relations. In this role, she contributes to the implementation of the National Human Rights Mainstreaming Policy, supporting coordination between public institutions, civil society and international partners to align the education sector with human rights standards and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Coral's work has also involved close collaboration with UNESCO, particularly on initiatives related to human rights education and institutional capacity-building. These experiences have reinforced for her the importance of participatory processes, intersectoral dialogue and context-sensitive approaches—principles deeply embedded in the LATMA experience.

Beyond academic training, Coral values the strong sense of community fostered by the Programme. The connections built with peers across the region, many engaged in grassroots activism and advocacy for marginalised groups, continue to inspire her work. She carries forward this spirit of solidarity and shared purpose in her daily efforts to support more inclusive, just and sustainable public policies.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*International Cooperation Analyst*

**Ministry of Education | Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic)**

# Prof Karin Lukas (Austria)

*Human rights must be practical —they need to serve people and connect disciplines, not sit apart from them.*

As a member of the second cohort of the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), Karin experienced the Programme at a formative moment—a time she recalls with humour as one where “we felt a bit like guinea pigs” but also with deep appreciation for its intellectual ambition. Studying under committed scholars such as late Prof Antonio Papisca, EMA became a foundational experience that shaped how she understands the complexity of democracy, human rights and institutional change.

What stayed with Karin most was the Programme’s interdisciplinary nature and peer learning. Engaging with classmates from different professional and regional



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 1999

backgrounds sharpened her awareness that human rights challenges cannot be addressed through legal tools alone, but require dialogue across disciplines—from social policy to governance and economics.

Following EMA, Karin worked at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute, where research was closely linked to applied policy work—an experience that reinforced her conviction that human rights must be operational, not purely theoretical. She later joined the Council of Europe, contributing to committees that shaped the implementation of economic and social rights across Europe and deepening her engagement with human rights monitoring systems.

Today, at Central European University, Karin continues to research and teach on international human rights law, with a particular focus on monitoring mechanisms and institutional accountability. Reflecting on decades of work, she is cautious about grand claims of “impact” but firmly believes in the power of human rights education to shift mindsets—especially in a time when even basic rights are once again under pressure. For her, the task remains clear: to keep human rights connected, practical and relevant, and to continue contributing to the field, even when the context makes it difficult.

Current role, affiliation and location

*Professor of Law & Principal Investigator*  
**Central European University | Vienna (Austria)**

## Alumni recognition



- On 10 December 2024, the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria (GC Africa) awarded the 2024 Vera Chirwa Award to Lindiwe Khumalo (left), Acting Executive Secretary of the Pan African Parliament.

**Lindiwe Khumalo** is a Malawian-born human rights advocate and governance expert currently serves as Acting Executive Secretary of the Pan-African Parliament, a key position within the legislative body of the African Union that supports democratic oversight, continental policy dialogue and human rights engagement among member states.

In December 2024, she was honoured with the Vera Chirwa Award, an award given to HRDA alumni who have made an outstanding contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights in Africa. This recognition reflects her longstanding impact within regional governance structures and her leadership in strengthening human rights and democratic processes through her work with the African Union and its organs.

“ HRDA leadership has had the tremendous ability to build an enduring community of cohorts that stick together like brothers and sisters. ”

Lindiwe Khumalo  
(HRDA, cohort 2010)  
*Acting Executive Secretary of the Pan-African Parliament (Johannesburg, South Africa)*

# Rokhsar Sadat (Afghanistan)

*It's not just a degree – it's a foundation that transformed my direction, sharpened my purpose and continues to guide every step I take.*

Coming from Afghanistan and having witnessed the systematic exclusion of girls and women from public life, Rokhsar joined the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) with a deeply personal sense of urgency. The Programme offered her more than academic grounding: it helped her understand the roots of injustice, sharpen her critical thinking and strengthen her confidence to challenge systems that normalise discrimination. During her studies, Rokhsar found inspiration in the guidance of professors and practitioners who connected theory with real-world struggles.



Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2023

The CES programme strengthened her skills, expanded her network, and connected her to a community committed to justice even in the most difficult contexts. As an alumna, she co-ordinated an educational support initiative helping Afghan girls and young women continue learning despite being denied access to formal education. The programme offered online training and mentorship—covering university applications, academic writing and English preparation—and attracted hundreds of applicants from inside Afghanistan and the diaspora, helping participants build skills, confidence and pathways to further study.

Her academic journey has continued to evolve. Recognising that long-term change requires engaging not only with human rights principles but also with the legal and economic systems that shape power, Rokhsar completed a second Master's degree in Business Law at Universitas Gadjah Mada, with a focus on the growing field of Business and Human Rights. She is currently pursuing a PhD (SJD) in Legal Studies at Central European University. Her research focuses on strengthening corporate accountability through legal instruments, specifically regarding workforce conditions, to ensure that labour rights and human dignity are not only recognised in principle but strictly protected in practice.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*PhD student*

**Central European University | Vienna (Austria)**

# Francisco Javier Urizar Pérez (Guatemala)

*LATMA taught me that human rights can be transformative only when they move beyond formal litigation and challenge the structures that produce injustice.*

Francisco discovered the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) at a turning point in his career. Although he already had solid experience in human rights litigation—most notably at the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala, working on cases of forced disappearances, genocide and discrimination—he felt that high-quality academic programmes in human rights were limited in Guatemala. Encountering the call for applications almost by chance, he applied in 2016 and was soon preparing to relocate to Buenos Aires.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2017

The move marked a profound shift in how Francisco understood human rights work. LATMA expanded his perspective beyond a formal, NGO-driven approach, exposing him to a diverse regional network of activists deeply committed to rights advocacy—even without funding. This experience reshaped his understanding of activism and introduced him to public policy tools that he found more transformative than court rulings alone. He began to see human rights as a means to produce sustainable structural change, not only legal victories that could later be overturned.

After returning to Guatemala, Francisco joined a team of attorneys representing the State, where he applied his training to promote a rights-based defense strategy focused on acknowledging responsibility and advancing reform rather than defending the indefensible.

Since 2019, Francisco has worked at the Constitutional Court of Guatemala, where he leads publications and initiated the development of an annotated Constitution integrating jurisprudence from the Inter-American Court. This pioneering work continues to shape constitutional litigation, academic debate and legal practice in Guatemala and beyond.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Investigative Lawyer & Publication Editor*

**Instituto de Justicia Constitucional,  
Corte de Constitucionalidad de  
Guatemala | Guatemala City**

# Dr Jean Linis-Dinco (The Philippines)

*The programme gave me a way in—and a way to bring others in, too.*

Jean's work sits at the intersection of human rights and technology, driven by a commitment to challenge systems that enable inequality, surveillance and state violence. Originally from the Philippines, she has built a path that combines rigorous research with a clear advocacy purpose: ensuring that digital spaces and emerging technologies serve people, not power.

Jean joined the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) at just 22 years old. As the youngest in a cohort of around 35 students—many with far more professional experience—she remembers how daunting it felt to move abroad and navigate an unfamiliar environment.

Yet that initial uncertainty quickly became a turning point. Through supportive classmates, professors and staff at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP) at Mahidol University, Jean found not only a learning community, but a network that would continue to shape her career long after graduation.

The APMA experience expanded Jean's horizons in a lasting way. It strengthened her ability to break down complex problems, recognise patterns across systems and connect the dots between policy, technology and lived realities. Just as importantly, it gave her confidence to step into new spaces within the human rights field—to speak up, ask sharper questions, seek support when needed and offer it in return.

Jean later completed a PhD in Cybersecurity (2023) at the University of New South Wales in Canberra, where her research examined how propaganda and disinformation can be weaponised by governments, including in contexts of mass violence and persecution.

Today, she continues to contribute to regional and global efforts to resist digital authoritarianism, including as a member of the ASEAN Regional Coalition to #StopDigitalDictatorship. Across these roles, Jean carries forward what the Programme helped her build early on: the skills, networks and mindset to enter unfamiliar rooms—and to help open those rooms for others too.

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Current role and affiliation

*Digital Rights Advisor*

**Manushya Foundation**

Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2017

# Emilija Davidović (Serbia)

*What keeps me in this field is not certainty or stability but the responsibility to keep showing up for people whose rights are most easily overlooked.*

For Emilija, the European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) marked a decisive shift in her trajectory, giving her what she describes as “the wings” to enter the human rights sector with confidence, clarity and purpose. As the only Serbian participant in her cohort, studying in Sarajevo also became a powerful way to confront the region’s past, engage with difference and imagine more constructive relationships across the Balkans.

Following ERMA, Emilija began her professional path with an internship at NGO Atina in Serbia, working with survivors of trafficking



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2018

and gender-based violence through research and advocacy. This experience confirmed Emilija’s commitment to the non-profit sector. While she later explored roles in academia and the corporate sector, she consistently returned to civil society, where she found both meaning and impact.

Her work has since spanned multiple areas of human rights. She spent several years working on migration and asylum, including with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in the Balkans and Central and Southeast Europe. Working directly with refugees and internally displaced people—many living with visible and invisible disabilities—deeply shaped her understanding of vulnerability, resilience and intersectionality. Currently working at Caritas Serbia, Emilija focuses on the rights of persons with disabilities, supporting local organisations—often in rural areas—that deliver essential services and advocacy.

Emilija values ERMA for its human dimension. Living and studying in Sarajevo, visiting places such as the Srebrenica Memorial and sharing daily life with peers from across the former Yugoslavia left a lasting mark. She sees the Programme as a rare space in the Balkans where difficult histories can be acknowledged, diversity respected and solidarity actively practised.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Project Coordinator*

**Caritas Srbije | Belgrade (Serbia)**

# Inge Jacobs (Belgium)

*Human rights work in business is about making it simple, credible and actionable—so people can bring it to life in their day-to-day decisions.*

As a member of one of the earliest cohorts of the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), Inge has witnessed the Programme grow into a truly global community—and has remained closely connected to its evolution and impact over the years. EMA offered her more than academic grounding: it provided a foundation linking human rights to wider societal issues, including sustainability and business practices—areas that continue to shape her professional focus today.

The EMA programme strengthened both her



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 1999

analytical approach and her ability to communicate human rights in ways that resonate beyond expert circles.

Inge’s career reflects this bridge between advocacy and implementation. After years working in NGOs across different contexts, she transitioned into the private sector, where she has spent over a decade helping embed sustainability and human rights into supply chains and internal decision-making. Based in Chicago, she describes her current work as a practical mission: building the capacity of colleagues to ask the right questions—not only about price and quality but also about the sustainability risks behind the products they source.

Inge applies that same human rights lens to sustainability work in global supply chains—helping colleagues move from good intentions to practical action. By building the capabilities of sourcing teams and “opening the eyes” of buyers to the realities behind what they purchase, she works to ensure that sustainability is treated with the same seriousness as price and quality.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Global Sustainable Sourcing Lead***

**Mars Food and Nutrition, a business segment of Mars, Inc. | Chicago, IL (USA)**

# Kostiantyn Liabuk (Ukraine)

*Human rights apply everywhere —whether it's at a border crossing, a courtroom or a boardroom.*

Kostiantyn's professional journey began in law, with two years as an in-house lawyer. It was a solid start, but he soon felt drawn toward work that placed people and protection at the centre. After completing the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES), he moved into humanitarian legal assistance, supporting refugees through UN aid efforts in Ukraine. His work was far from desk-bound: he defended asylum seekers in courts and before state authorities, spent time at the Ukraine–Poland border, visited detention centres, conducted interviews and helped assess asylum eligibility for people arriving from many different parts of the world.



Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2016

Later, Kostiantyn moved to Estonia and enrolled at the Estonian School of Diplomacy. This marked the beginning of a new direction: shifting toward financial crime prevention and anti-money laundering. While it might seem like a major change, for him it remained closely connected to the same values—accountability, integrity and the protection of rights through stronger systems.

Today, Kostiantyn works with Deloitte. Although his role falls within a corporate environment, he is clear that his principles remain central to his professional identity. He emphasises that contemporary corporate cultures are increasingly institutionalising fundamental human rights through formal internal mechanisms and policies. Practices such as promoting a healthy workplace culture, preventing coercion and proactively supporting well-being and mental health are increasingly treated as core responsibilities within organisations. Kostiantyn highlights that his own experience reflects this shift: neither his team nor his clients have ever pressured him to compromise his principles.

His story is a reminder that human rights careers do not follow a single path, and that core principles—dignity, accountability and justice—can travel with you no matter where you end up.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Senior Consultant, Financial Crime**

**Deloitte | Toronto (Canada)**

# Prof Satang Nabaneh (The Gambia)

*What I did not anticipate was the breadth of opportunities that would unfold after completing the programme.*

Satang's commitment to human rights advocacy began long before her academic career.

Growing up in The Gambia, she was already active as a child rights advocate, challenging entrenched norms and insisting on visibility in spaces where young voices were often dismissed. That conviction—the importance of speaking up and creating room for others—has remained a defining thread throughout her work. Pursuing the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) was a long-held aspiration. Drawn by the Programme's pan-African focus and interdisciplinary approach, Satang joined the HRDA cohort in 2012. As the youngest participant in her class, the experience

deepened her understanding of how law, culture and power intersect, while strengthening her belief in early engagement and advocacy. Beyond academic training, HRDA opened access to a continent-wide network of scholars, practitioners and institutions that continues to shape her work. Upon returning to The Gambia, Satang became the first HRDA alumna appointed as a Lecturer at the University of The Gambia's Faculty of Law, using teaching as a platform to connect legal education with lived realities.

Satang's career has since expanded across research, public scholarship and institutional engagement. She is affiliated faculty at the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, and a Research Fellow with the Chr. Michelsen Institute and the Centre on Law and Social Transformation at the University of Bergen. Her work has contributed to major publications on constitutional reform, sexual harassment, harmful practices and female genital mutilation.

Satang also co-founded *Think Young Women*, a feminist organisation that launched The Gambia's first girls' mentorship programme, supporting young women and girls to understand and claim their rights. She currently works at the University of Dayton Human Rights Center, continuing to bridge scholarship and practice in her human rights work.



Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) | Cohort 2012

Current role, affiliation and location

***Professor of Law & Director of Programmes***

**Human Rights Center at the University of Dayton | Dayton, OH (USA)**

## Alumni in action



**“ArMA was truly a turning point in my life. It did more than expand my academic and professional toolkit; it reshaped my sense of what is possible and gave me the confidence to dream bigger and keep pushing boundaries as a dedicated human rights defender.”**

Reem Abdelmagied (ArMA, cohort 2023)  
 Member of the Technical Secretariat and  
 Senior Researcher at the National Committee  
 for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration  
 & Trafficking in Persons (Cairo, Egypt)

**Reem Abdelmagied** participated as part of the Egyptian delegation in the Meeting of the Working Group on the Smuggling of Migrants, organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna on 9–10 October 2025, within the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

On behalf of the Head of Delegation, Reem delivered Egypt’s statement highlighting national efforts

to combat migrant smuggling, including the legislative framework and measures to reduce the smuggling of unaccompanied children. She also addressed the growing challenges posed by digital technologies. The statement called for stronger international and regional judicial cooperation to prosecute perpetrators and exchange digital evidence, including through adapted cybercrime cooperation frameworks and a regional mechanism for rapid and secure evidence sharing.

# Oleksandr Kyselov (Ukraine)

*Learning to write and think rigorously about human rights transformed how I engage with debates on conflict, migration and democratic futures.*

For Oleksandr, the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) provided a crucial bridge between academic learning and real-world engagement. He particularly valued the Programme’s emphasis on practical skills—especially academic writing in English—which became essential in professional environments where clarity, speed and precision matter. CES also strengthened his understanding of European human rights institutions and mechanisms, which he sees as particularly relevant for Ukraine’s long-term democratic and legal trajectory.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2021

Oleksandr's thesis explored the right to housing in relation to internal displacement, a topic that reflected the realities of Ukraine even before the full-scale invasion. After completing the Programme, he returned to Ukraine and worked with an NGO monitoring human rights conditions near the contact line, gaining first-hand experience of how rights are affected in conflict-affected areas. He later received a scholarship to continue his studies in Sweden, where he shifted his focus toward migration and mobility, including the social and political dynamics surrounding displacement and integration.

Today, Oleksandr works as a research assistant at the Department of Government of the University of Uppsala, contributing to research on migration policies and the rights of irregular migrants across Europe. Alongside his academic work, he remains engaged in public and political discussions related to Ukraine, security and internationalism, drawing on both lived experience and research to support more grounded conversations on rights, solidarity and empowerment. He underlines the importance of including perspectives that come from the country itself when speaking about Ukraine—especially when international audiences try to make sense of war, displacement and democratic resilience from afar.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Research Assistant**

**Uppsala University | Uppsala (Sweden)**

# Eskedar Bekele (Ethiopia)

*I will not be silenced.*

Eskedar entered the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) with a legal background and a clear determination to deepen her work on equal rights, women’s rights and children’s rights. Raised and educated in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, she was seeking an advanced space for critical learning that could strengthen both her professional practice and her long-term commitment to human rights advocacy. The Programme became a turning point, deepening her academic grounding and sharpening her understanding of how human rights norms operate within complex social and political contexts.

Her path into the HRDA was shaped by determination and meaningful connections, including support from fellow Global Campus



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) | Cohort 2006

alumni—one of whom would later become her husband.

After graduating, Eskedar built a career spanning national and international settings. She began working within Ethiopia’s judicial system before moving into international organisations focused on programme management, development and human rights. Over time, her work increasingly centred on women’s rights, an area that had always been central to her commitment. She later spent several years in Geneva, strengthening her engagement with international human rights mechanisms, before relocating to New York with her family.

Eskedar’s advocacy has required resilience. Promoting women’s rights in a deeply patriarchal and religiously conservative context, she has faced resistance, threats and online abuse, often linked to misconceptions around feminism. Despite this, she has remained vocal and committed to raising awareness and challenging harmful narratives.

Eskedar’s research includes early work on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls in Ethiopia, as well as studies on disappeared girls and broader patterns of violence linked to digital spaces and misinformation. While now based in New York, Eskedar continues to engage with developments in Ethiopia through advocacy, research and public dialogue, and also works in AI—particularly on women in AI governance (WiAIG).

# Nouran El Hawary (Egypt)

*ArMA gave me the space to step back, question what I was doing and understand the politics behind the work.*

When Nouran joined the Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA), she was already working as a Human Rights and Advocacy Officer in Cairo with organisations such as Humanity & Inclusion (formerly Handicap International) and Médecins du Monde. But, she describes that stage of her career with honesty: she had strong motivation and field exposure, yet she was still looking for a deeper framework to understand the systems and power dynamics shaping human rights work. ArMA became that foundation.

Studying in Beirut was meaningful not only academically but politically and personally. Nouran was drawn to ArMA’s regional focus



The Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2019

and the chance to engage with human rights from within the MENA context. She particularly valued the Programme’s critical approach, which encouraged students to question institutions and assumptions rather than treating them as fixed or neutral.

A key part of her experience was the second semester in Morocco, which deepened her comparative perspective and supported her preference for ethnographic methods rooted in her background in sociology, history and social anthropology. The fieldwork period strengthened her ability to work across contexts—including navigating language and daily life in an environment that was both connected to her identity and new in practice.

After ArMA, Nouran returned to Egypt and later began a PhD in New Zealand, building on the foundations of her Master’s research. Her current work focuses on refugees of Arab descent resettled in Dunedin, exploring well-being through feminist and everyday-life approaches that challenge narrow definitions of integration. For Nouran, ArMA was not just a degree—it helped shape how she asks questions, listens and produces knowledge that stays close to lived experience.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*PhD Student & Academic Tutor*

**University of Otago | Dunedin (New Zealand)**

# Dr Jorge Melgarejo Raggini (Paraguay)

*In Paraguay, human rights are at times seen as something ‘separate’ from the rest of the legal system—and changing that takes patience and persistence.*

For Jorge, joining the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) opened a new chapter. He had already started working at the Human Rights Directorate of Paraguay’s Supreme Court of Justice, but he knew his academic grounding in human rights was still limited—something he also saw reflected in Paraguay’s wider legal education landscape. The Programme gave him the solid foundation he was looking for and broadened his perspective through its interdisciplinary approach and the diversity of the cohort. As a lawyer, he found it

especially valuable to engage with classmates from different professional backgrounds, which helped him rethink how human rights can be applied beyond a strictly legal lens.

After graduating, Jorge returned to the Supreme Court with a clear mission: turning human rights principles into practical tools inside institutions. He went on to coordinate work on access to justice for vulnerable groups—including indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and older persons—while also supporting human rights education and training for judges and justice actors across the country. For him, this work required more than producing documents: it meant going into the field, building dialogue and making rights feel concrete and usable.

After nearly a decade at the Supreme Court, Jorge now serves as Academic Director at the legal research centre CEDEP. From there, he continues to work on strengthening education and integrating human rights across disciplines—whether through academic programmes, capacity-building or contributions such as the National Access to Justice Plan. For Jorge, the work remains long-term and often challenging, but the goal is clear: making human rights feel less abstract, and more like what they are meant to be—part of everyday law, institutions and public life.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2016

Current role and affiliation

**Academic Director**

**Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Economía y Política (CEDEP) | Asunción (Paraguay)**

# Ena Bavčić (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

*I came in as an activist and left with the tools to engage more critically and effectively.*

Coming from Sarajevo with a background in social work and activism, Ena joined the European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) looking for something she had not found before: an educational space that felt more critical, more engaging and more intellectually alive. What she encountered was an experience that pushed her to think comparatively, reflect philosophically on human rights and build friendships that came with a real sense of belonging to the Global Campus community. After graduating, Ena began shaping her path in human rights through volunteering and professional roles



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2013

supporting LGBTQ+ rights and wider civic freedoms, including with Civil Rights Defenders. The Programme’s grounding in legal and philosophical frameworks strengthened her ability to advocate with clarity and confidence—not only through values but through solid arguments and strategy.

Over time, her work expanded across different forms of rights-based action. Ena was involved in key moments of activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including organising the country’s first Pride March—a landmark event in the Western Balkans—and supporting human rights defenders, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly in a complex political climate.

Ena’s career has continued to evolve, moving from civic space monitoring into digital rights and cybersecurity. Ena has contributed to research and publications on gender-based cyber violence in the Western Balkans, exploring how discrimination and harassment increasingly take shape online. She currently coordinates advocacy for media freedom and journalists’ rights at the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom in Brussels, supporting frontline journalists facing growing pressure and shrinking space to work safely.

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor*

**European Centre for Press and Media Freedom | Brussels (Belgium)**

# Iasmin Ait Youssef (Italy/Morocco)

*Working with unaccompanied minors means listening beyond procedures and seeing the person before the case.*

With a background in international law obtained in Italy, Iasmin pursued the Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) in Beirut to deepen her understanding of human rights violations in the MENA/SWANA region, particularly in North Africa. Studying the region from within strengthened both her regional expertise and her professional confidence. Iasmin’s Master’s thesis examined the situation of unaccompanied minors deported from Europe to Morocco, research that laid the foundation for her current work at the European Union Agency for Asylum. There, as a Registration

Expert, she supports asylum procedures for people from a range of countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, and pays particular attention to the protection needs of unaccompanied minors as part of her broader responsibilities.

The ArMA programme equipped her with cultural sensitivity, specialised interviewing skills and a strong international protection framework—competences that distinguish her in a highly technical professional environment. Living in Beirut during the 2019 Lebanese uprising further deepened her understanding of social movements, political change and the realities behind academic concepts. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic that limited her stay in the region after graduation, ArMA strengthened her academic profile through intensive research and writing.

Today, Iasmin continues to work closely with vulnerable asylum seekers, guided by a commitment to empathy, direct engagement and systemic change. Her work reflects a conviction that protection systems are most effective when grounded in both legal rigour and human connection.



The Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2020

Current role, affiliation and location

*Access to Asylum Procedures Expert*

**European Union Agency for Asylum | Trieste (Italy)**

# Swasti Karmacharya (Nepal)

*APMA helped me move from doing child protection work to truly understanding child rights —and to finding the direction I wanted to commit to.*

Swasti joined the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) during a period still shaped by COVID-19 restrictions. Despite the challenges of partly remote learning, she remembers the Programme for its strong commitment to meaningful engagement—both online and in person—and for the community it created among students. Meeting peers from different countries, disciplines and lived experiences became one of the most formative parts of her year, expanding how she understood human rights work and her own place within it.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2021

Before APMA, Swasti had some practical exposure to child protection, but she felt she lacked the deeper knowledge and confidence to define a clear professional path. Through coursework, discussions and the thesis process, she developed a stronger theoretical grounding and discovered a lasting interest in child rights. The research experience strengthened her skills and clarified the kind of work she wanted to pursue long-term.

After graduating, Swasti joined the Baan Dek Foundation as a Partnerships Officer and now works as a Research and Monitoring Coordinator, supporting migrant workers and children living in construction site camps in Thailand. While her role goes beyond child rights alone, she applies her APMA training by engaging companies on human rights due diligence—training staff and promoting more sustainable practices that improve protections for workers and families.

Swasti continues to value the alumni community as a space for connection and learning, and she remains encouraged by the growing attention to business and human rights in Thailand. For her, change is built through trust, dialogue and long-term commitment—skills and perspectives that APMA helped strengthen from the start.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Research, Monitoring and Program Quality Coordinator**

**Baan Dek Foundation | Bangkok (Thailand)**

# Alumni recognition



Last Chance for Justice, by Marina Şupac (CES, cohort 2014–15; 2019 UCL/Chevening alumna), was broadcast on BBC Our World in February 2021. The 23–30-minute documentary chronicles Uzbek artist Khadicha Askarova's tireless campaign for justice for her husband, Azimjan Askarov, a Kyrgyz human rights journalist and activist sentenced to life imprisonment in 2010 after Kyrgyzstan's ethnic violence against Uzbeks.

**Marina Şupac** (Shupac) is an award-winning Moldovan journalist, self-shooting documentary filmmaker, communication expert and human rights practitioner. A graduate of the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (GC Caucasus), she blends investigative journalism with visual storytelling to spotlight injustice, memory and resilience in post-Soviet contexts. Her filmmaking includes *Independence Street* (2024), *Postcard for my Grandma* (2022, premiered at Female Freedom Film Festival Berlin/Chernivtsi) and *Last Chance for Justice* (2021, BBC/Chevening University College London project).

As a former cultural reporter at NewsMaker.md, Marina advocates for free expression and minority rights, with her GC theses on speech restrictions in the post-Soviet region (2015).

Awards include One World Media Awards (2020, Student & Short Film categories for *Last Chance for Justice*) and a Special Mention at One World Prague Human Rights Film Festival. In 2023, she participated in MOLDOX Lab Inspiration and mentored workshops (2025). Based in Moldova, Marina continues shaping regional human rights discourse through film and activism.

# Fatma Ahmed (Somalia)

*I came to the EMA programme ready to absorb everything—to learn, question and carry it back into the realities I care about.*

Growing up as a migrant child, Fatma Ahmed developed an early awareness of how identity, opportunity and political systems intersect. That perspective shaped her path from Somalia to Sweden and later to the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) in Venice, where her commitment to democratic governance in Africa became more sharply defined. What began with some hesitation soon became a formative experience. Democratisation emerged as the lens through which Fatma wanted to engage with Africa’s political futures, particularly in contexts where democratic models have struggled to deliver meaningful change. Her thesis on piracy

in Somalia strengthened her policy expertise and helped open doors to multilateral work, including an EU fellowship at the United Nations in New York.

Fatma’s professional trajectory bridges policy and practice. She worked with NGOs supporting survivors of gender-based violence and with consultancy firms where her deep understanding of African political contexts was highly valued. A pivotal chapter followed at UNDP in Addis Ababa, where she supported political transitions across the continent. She later served as Deputy Chief of Party during the establishment of the IGAD Center of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Horn and East Africa. She also contributed to high-level research such as UNDP’s *Soldiers and Citizens* and briefed the African Union’s Peace and Security Council.

Today, Fatma is a Programme Specialist with UNDP’s Regional Bureau for Africa, working on governance, peace and political transitions. She coordinates the Africa Facility to Support Inclusive Transitions and contributes to initiatives on digital governance, AI and resource governance, while remaining grounded in local realities. Alongside this work, she is deeply committed to mentorship, supporting young African women navigating international institutions and helping sustain the next generation of leaders.



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2013

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Project Specialist***

**UNDP | Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)**

# Vito Todeschini (Italy)

*EMA was where my professional path in human rights began—but also where I learned to question my assumptions and to stay critical of the systems we work within.*

For Vito, the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) was a defining experience where academic growth and personal change went hand in hand. It was his first sustained exposure to an international learning environment, shaped by diverse legal traditions, cultures and lived realities.

EMA became a springboard into the professional field. Through the opportunities and network linked to the Programme, Vito secured early experiences that shaped his



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2012

trajectory, including an internship with the International Commission of Jurists. He later served in a Tunisia-based role focused on Libya, supporting lawyers, judges and prosecutors to better engage with international human rights standards and mechanisms—tools that are often not fully integrated into formal legal education in fragile contexts.

Today, at Amnesty International Vito supports advocacy and campaigns with legal expertise and help ensure that public positions are grounded in rigorous analysis. He advises colleagues and contributes to recommendations to international mechanisms, including the United Nations. He has also supported Amnesty’s engagement in national law reform processes, including consultations that helped strengthen the incorporation of international crimes into domestic legislation.

Across different assignments and environments, Vito consistently highlights the importance of self-awareness in human rights work. He speaks about the privilege embedded in international careers and the need for “self-problematisation”: questioning assumptions, recognising power imbalances and engaging with critical approaches to law. For him, meaningful human rights practice requires humility, nuance and constant reflection—not only on what is achieved but also on how justice is pursued, and for whom.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Legal Advisor***

**Amnesty International | Paris (France)**

# Visala Annamalai (India)

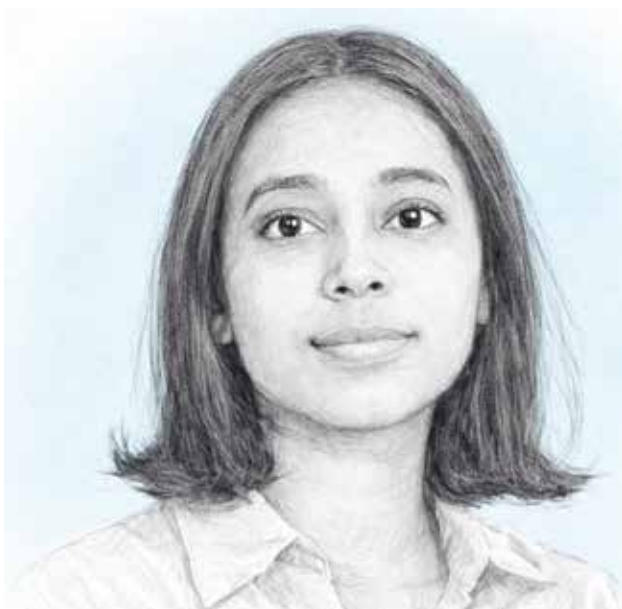
*APMA taught me to operationalise human rights principles through a co-design lens, ensuring solutions are both community-driven, inclusive and systemic.*

For Visala, the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) was a key step in her development, strengthening her values and preparing her for international work in human rights and development. With one semester in Thailand and one in Nepal, APMA offered a rare combination of academic rigour and field exposure, grounded in real world contexts. What stood out most was its practical approach: field visits, applied research and campaign projects that created space to connect classroom

learning with on-the-ground realities, supported by close guidance from professors throughout the year.

The Programme served as a launchpad, enabling her to translate her expertise into meaningful contributions within the international development arena. She began her career at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Bangkok and has since worked with multiple UN agencies and international organisations across different geographies. The networks and relationships built through APMA and the Global Campus continue to support her work, offering collaboration and connection long after graduation.

On a personal level, APMA reinforced Visala’s commitment to rights-based development that is grounded in lived realities and shaped with, not just for, affected communities. Today, she works as a development professional specialising in human rights, gender, human mobility and communications at the intersection of climate. In her current role with Climate Resilience for All, she manages programmes in Asia that focus on bringing financial and non-financial solutions to women and vulnerable communities on the frontlines of extreme heat.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2019

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Programme Manager*

**Climate Resilience for All |  
Washington, D.C. (USA)**

# Razmik Martirosyan (Armenia)

*For me, freedom of expression is not only a journalistic principle—it is a human rights issue that shapes the space we all live in.*

Razmik is a journalist, communications specialist and researcher whose academic work focuses on freedom of expression, media ethics, information rights and the impact of generative artificial intelligence on journalism. With a professional background grounded in journalism and civic engagement, he joined the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) to align his scholarly interests with one of the most pressing human rights challenges of our time: freedom of expression—a theme that runs consistently through both his professional and academic work.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2022

The CES programme deepened Razmik’s understanding of the legal, political, and social dimensions of media freedom in the Caucasus and beyond. Studying human rights in a regional context strengthened his ability to analyse the constraints and opportunities shaping independent media, while also connecting him to a global network of scholars and practitioners working with rights-based approaches to information rights, the rule of law and democratic participation.

Building on the foundations established at CES, Razmik continued his academic engagement with freedom of expression through a Lane Kirkland Scholarship at the University of Wrocław in Poland. In parallel, he launched an interview series in collaboration with the Global Campus, amplifying diverse perspectives on critical human rights issues and fostering informed public dialogue.

His work bridges journalism, research and advocacy, reflecting the understanding that safeguarding freedom of expression requires both rigorous analysis and sustained, inclusive conversation. Razmik is currently a doctoral student in Sociology at the Graduate School for Social Research (GSSR), Polish Academy of Sciences, where his research examines the impact of generative artificial intelligence on journalism.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Journalist / Head of Internal Communications**

**168.am / Union of Journalists of Armenia | Yerevan (Armenia)**

# Ricardo José Miranda Rivero (Bolivia)

*LATMA was catalytic: it gave me the technical grounding and the regional lens to bring a human rights perspective into institutions, negotiations and moments of crisis.*

Ricardo joined the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) as part of its first cohort, at a time when his career in public service was already taking shape. Before the Programme, he had an emerging interest in human rights but mostly through the lens of legislative work—supporting law revision processes within Bolivia’s Plurinational Legislative Assembly.

After LATMA, his trajectory expanded quickly into the heart of state human rights policy. Ricardo joined the Ministry of Justice, where he



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2012

worked across human rights, forced disappearances and drafting state reports to treaty bodies and later became General Director of Justice and Fundamental Rights.

He later served at the Ombudsman’s Office, including during a period marked by deep political tensions and serious allegations of human rights violations. For Ricardo, working on accountability and reparations in a country shaped by long authoritarian legacies was not abstract: it meant engaging with painful cases, including enforced disappearances, and witnessing the human cost of institutional failure.

His experience at national level also opened the door to multilateral diplomacy. Ricardo joined Bolivia’s Permanent Mission to the UN, covering Security Council files from Yemen and Iraq to Libya and Myanmar, as well as International Courts and Residual Tribunals. He later returned to Bolivia to continue supporting international engagement through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, coordinating work across Bolivia’s UN missions and contributing to legal and political processes on human rights. Today, with UN Women in Bolivia, he is supporting the development of the country’s first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security—bringing together technical expertise, policy practice and a sustained commitment to rights-based statebuilding.

Current role and affiliation

**Peacebuilding Fund Project Coordinator**  
**UN Women Bolivia | La Paz (Bolivia)**

# Dr Katarina Månsson (Sweden)

*Human rights are not a separate ‘pillar’—they are the foundation of governance, peace and development.*

For Katarina the European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) was a formative experience that reshaped how she understands the role of human rights in public life. What made the difference was not just the academic content, but the Programme’s ability to connect policy, practice and people—showing that human rights are not an abstract discipline but an enabling framework for building fairer societies and stronger institutions. Its interdisciplinary approach, paired with a strong emphasis on real-world application, helped her grasp the “essence” of human rights in a way that later became central to her work: as a tool to design and influence

sound policies, and to strengthen governance, not simply to “judge” it.

After EMA, Katarina deepened her expertise through doctoral research at the University of Galway, focusing on human rights integration in peace operations in Kosovo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It reinforced a thread that runs through her work: keeping human rights connected to the realities of statebuilding, security, development and accountability.

Since 2008, Katarina has worked within the United Nations system. She speaks with humility about “impact”, but remains clear on what matters: contributing to mindshifts, supporting better decision-making and ensuring human dignity stays visible in institutions that can easily become procedural or political. In her experience, human rights are still too often perceived as purely legalistic, rather than as a framework that strengthens other fields.

This is also why she believes alumni engagement matters. In difficult times—when rights are under pressure globally and trust in democratic systems is fragile—she sees “giving back” not as an optional extra but as a practical necessity. Staying connected, sharing experiences across regions and helping younger professionals navigate the field are all part of sustaining the human rights ecosystem.

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Special Assistant to the ASG for Human Rights  
OHCHR, UN HQ | New York (USA)***



The European Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA) | Cohort 2000

## Areen Eideh (Palestine)

*We need to keep raising awareness and building resilience, even when the structures around us are fragile.*

Coming from Palestine and navigating the daily realities of life under occupation, Areen approached the Arab Master's in Human Rights and Democracy (ArMA) as more than an academic step. It became a personal and professional turning point, offering an interdisciplinary space where theory and practice came together in ways directly relevant to humanitarian and development work in the region.

Through ArMA, Areen strengthened her understanding of legal frameworks, project management and field-based human rights advocacy. Remote internship opportunities opened pathways into professional practice, leading her to work across Palestine, Lebanon and the wider MENA/SWANA region.



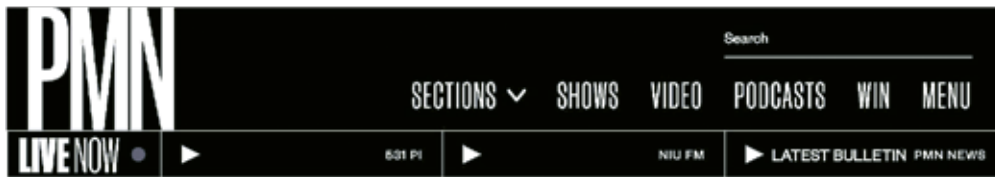
The Arab Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2021

Throughout her career, Areen has maintained a strong grassroots orientation, working over the years with young women and men to strengthen their awareness and understanding of their human rights, including sexual and reproductive health rights. Her work has focused on addressing stigma while promoting access to information, psychosocial support and dignity.

Areen's work has also included responding to periods of heightened violence, combining advocacy with practical support for affected communities. Alongside this, she contributed to initiatives on women's economic empowerment, supporting female graduates through leadership development and awareness-raising around labour and economic rights. While some projects were disrupted by funding instability, these experiences reinforced her understanding of both the potential and precarity of development work in conflict-affected contexts.

Today, Areen remains committed to supporting her community while engaging in broader regional and graduates networks. As a member of the ArMA Alumni Board, she is dedicated to mentoring emerging human rights defenders and sustaining spaces for collective learning. Her trajectory reflects a form of leadership shaped by resilience, adaptability and a belief that when knowledge is grounded in context, it can remain a powerful tool for justice.

# Alumni in action



PACIFIC REGION

## Born for this: Fa’afāfine, matai, and now MP?

From international diplomacy to grassroots unity, Falesaopule is rewriting the rules in Sāmoa.



Falesaopule will focus on peace and security within their district and leverage existing networks for economic development. Photo/Supplied

Renate Rivers

A 20-year dream is coming true for one prominent Sāmoan fa’afāfine, who is contesting a key Sava’i seat in next month’s general election.

PUBLISHED  
29 July 2025, 10:46pm

TOP STORIES

03:45:57 PACIFIC REGION

“There’s no law stopping us from contesting.”

**Falesaopule Seimale’ula Vaialia Iosua** (a.k.a. Vaia) ran as an independent candidate for the Gagaifomauga 2 seat in Samoa’s general election on 29 August 2025. In the campaign, they prioritised peace, security and economic growth, finishing second behind the winner. Vaia is a prominent Samoan fa’afafine—a culturally recognised third gender identity describing people assigned male at birth who embody feminine roles and are deeply integrated into community life. Rooted in traditions that value service and social contribution, Vaia embraces this identity with pride and resilience. Despite facing online criticism, they focus on promoting unity and strengthening communities, including supporting reconciliation efforts in

Gagaifomauga 2 after more than 30 years of discord.

A respected leader, Vaia holds matai chiefly status, a traditional Samoan title conferred through family and village processes. This reflects their strong grassroots engagement, including managing a farm on Upolu that employs 20 young men, many supporting families in Savai’i. With over 20 years of experience in government, international agencies such as UNOCHA, and diplomacy, Vaia combines community leadership with international expertise.

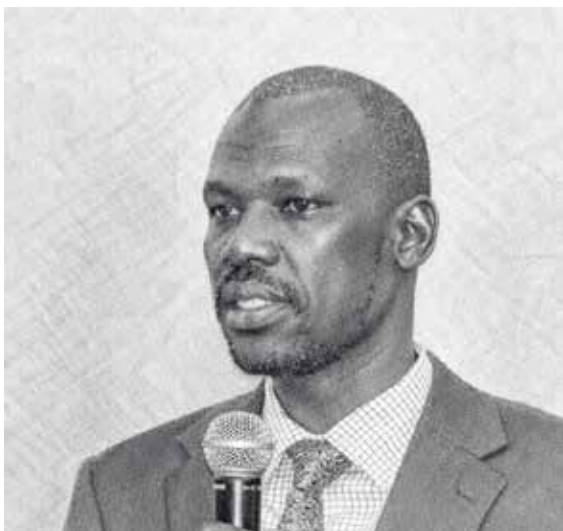
Falesaopule Vaialia Iosua (APMA, cohort 2017) currently operate as a farmer and business owner, focusing on agriculture and leveraging international development networks for growth.

# Dr Joseph Geng Akech (South Sudan)

*HRDA is a family, a network and a pathfinder—you graduate with skills and relationships that stay with you for life.*

Joseph has long been driven by a commitment to justice, equality and human rights—shaped by his upbringing and strengthened through his decision to pursue a law degree. When the opportunity came to apply to the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA), it felt like a natural next step. He had already admired the Programme through professional encounters with alumni in development spaces.

After completing HRDA, Joseph went on to doctoral studies and later joined academia as an Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Juba, teaching and contributing to the country’s growing legal and human rights discourse.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) | Cohort 2018

His expertise soon translated into public service. Joseph served both as Minister of Youth and Sports and Minister of Justice of South Sudan, advancing rights-based approaches to legal reform and constitutional processes. His leadership has included engagement with transitional justice legislation and efforts to strengthen legal frameworks within the country.

Over more than a decade, Joseph’s contributions have extended beyond formal roles. Senior government officials frequently seek his advice on human rights, constitutional design and governance, reflecting the respect he has earned across institutions. He also continues to contribute to scholarship and public discourse, with research and policy pieces on constitutional law and transitional justice that inform both national debates and broader civil society understanding.

Looking back, Joseph speaks with pride about contributing to South Sudan’s constitutional and legal development, and about serving his community through teaching and public service. For him, HRDA remains not only a qualification but a lifechanging programme that equipped him to serve his society with both technical expertise and principled leadership: "One cannot graduate from HRDA and remain the same".

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Assistant Professor*

**School of Law, University of Juba |  
Juba (South Sudan)**

# Óscar David Montero De La Rosa

(Colombia)

*Human rights cannot be separated from territory, culture and life itself—for us, defending land and identity is defending humanity.*

Óscar is a leader, victim and survivor of the Kankuamo Indigenous People from the Sierra Nevada of Gonawindúa in northern Colombia. Grounded in his community’s cultural and spiritual heritage, he has dedicated his path to defending indigenous peoples’ rights to life, territory and autonomy, while insisting that peace must be built with justice, memory and dignity. The Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) offered him a space to connect academic frameworks with the lived realities of indigenous communities. The Programme strengthened his perspective on

collective rights, structural discrimination and peacebuilding, and reinforced his commitment to protecting not only human rights but also the rights of Mother Earth.

His Master’s thesis examined the implementation of the Ethnic Chapter of Colombia’s 2016 Peace Agreement, focusing on the challenges faced by indigenous victims. Recognised among the strongest theses of his cohort, it later became a reference point in his professional work.

Today, Óscar serves in the Cauca Territorial Work Group of the Unit for the Search of Persons Reported as Disappeared, Colombia’s autonomous, humanitarian and extrajudicial state entity created after the Peace Agreement to search for and help locate people who disappeared in the context of the armed conflict. He supports families searching for truth and contributing to healing in affected territories. In parallel, he is continuing his academic journey through doctoral studies in Education, Interculturality and Territory at the University of Magdalena, deepening his commitment to producing knowledge rooted in Indigenous experience. Alongside this, Óscar has remained active in indigenous advocacy, public dialogue and academic work.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LATMA) | Cohort 2022

Current role and affiliation

***Territorial Coordinator***

**Unit for the Search of Persons Reported as Disappeared (UBPD) | Cauca (Colombia)**

# Lyn Eid (Lebanon)

*ARMA taught me that passion, when paired with perseverance, can overcome even the most daunting challenges.*

For Lyn Eid, joining the Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) in Beirut was not simply a career step—it was a decision driven by a long-held dream. She had always wanted to work as a Human Rights Officer with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), but she knew she needed to strengthen her academic grounding in the field. With a solid background in programme management and development, ArMA became the bridge between experience and purpose.

Lyn joined the very first cohort launched at Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut, after the first three pilot editions were hosted in Venice. Just one week before the Programme began in



The Arab Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights (ArMA) | Cohort 2018

September 2017, she learned that she was expecting a child—a moment that reshaped the year ahead. Choosing to continue, she embarked on an intense academic journey, balancing pregnancy, professional responsibilities and rigorous coursework, supported by her family and a cohort that quickly became a close community. Her classmates even nicknamed her child the “ARMA baby”—a name that stayed with her family long after graduation.

The most challenging phase of the Programme came in its final weeks, which coincided with the birth of Lyn’s child shortly before her thesis deadline. Navigating new motherhood alongside demanding academic requirements, she showed remarkable resilience, completing her research and submitting her thesis on time. She graduated on 19 July 2018, a milestone she describes as the proudest moment of her life.

Three years later, Lyn achieved the goal that had inspired her journey: she joined OHCHR’s Regional Office in Beirut as a Human Rights Officer, leading capacity-building activities on human rights mechanisms across the MENA region. Today, her story comes full circle—she now lectures in the same ArMA programme that shaped her, mentoring a new generation of committed human rights defenders.

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Current role, affiliation and location

**Human Rights Officer, Capacity Building Programme**

**UN OHCHR | Beirut (Lebanon)**

# Saittawut Yutthaworakool (Thailand)

*APMA helped me bridge research and practice—and gave me the confidence to create spaces where knowledge can resist injustice and drive social change.*

Saittawut (also known as Matt) joined the Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) seeking stronger tools to engage with complex human rights challenges in the region. He describes the Programme as a rare learning environment: rigorous, international and multidisciplinary, shaped by the diversity of faculty and classmates and the opportunity to approach human rights from multiple perspectives.

After APMA, Saittawut built a career that moves

between research, training, teaching and advocacy across Southeast Asia. He has worked as a policy analyst, trainer and lecturer, applying the academic research and facilitation skills developed during APMA to support policy dialogue and rights-based practice in real-world settings.

A key step in his journey was co-founding JALAN Civic Lab, a regional social impact organisation focused on civic engagement, climate justice, digital rights and equitable futures for youth in Southeast Asia. There he designs youth-focused initiatives addressing intersecting challenges, from migrant worker rights to inclusive digital governance. His work includes policy analysis and thought leadership on issues such as cybercrime, labour trafficking and people-centred digital governance frameworks in ASEAN countries.

For Saittawut, APMA reinforced a personal commitment to combining research and activism and also to building platforms where marginalised perspectives can be heard, protected and translated into meaningful change.



Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia-Pacific (APMA) | Cohort 2021

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Current role, affiliation and location

*Co-founder & Executive Director*

**JALAN Civic Lab | Bangkok  
(Thailand)**

# Lamija Kovačević (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

*In a time when human rights feel increasingly emptied out, ERMA gave me a community that is willing to speak up, have difficult conversations and still believe that something can be done.*

Lamija completed the European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) at a moment when many young professionals in the region face a difficult question: how to stay committed to human rights work while navigating shrinking civic space, limited opportunities and growing public fatigue around democratic values.

After graduating, Lamija received a scholarship as the best student of her ERMA cohort, which



The European Regional Master’s Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe (ERMA) | Cohort 2023

led to a six-month internship at the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). She describes this as an important first step into institutional work—and one that helped her transition from the academic environment into a professional setting with greater confidence and direction.

Lamija is now working at Mediacentar Sarajevo, an NGO known for supporting independent journalism and strengthening media freedom in BiH. She contributes to evidence-based research and analysis that documents trends, informs public debate and supports advocacy in a challenging media environment. Her work includes national and regional studies with international partners on how major digital platforms shape journalism and media sustainability. She is also involved in regional research on women in the media sector, supporting efforts to strengthen protections against discrimination and harassment.

A recurring theme in Lamija's experience is how often ERMA's community reappears in professional life. From the EU Delegation to her current organisation, she has encountered fellow graduates whose presence brings an immediate sense of shared reference points—both in how they approach the work and in the values they carry into it.

Current role, affiliation and location

**Media Researcher**

**Mediacentar Sarajevo | Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**

# Mamikon Hovsepyan (Armenia)

*I already knew advocacy from the inside—but the programme gave me the structure to make it sharper, more strategic and more effective.*

Mamikon joined the Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) with years of advocacy experience already behind him. While he had learned human rights through practice, he wanted to strengthen his work with deeper academic knowledge—especially around international human rights law, conventions and institutions such as the UN and European mechanisms.

At the same time, Mamikon continued working part-time with Pink Armenia, the NGO where he

remains active today. The Programme helped him organise and deepen his understanding beyond what he had gained through NGO work alone, strengthening his analytical approach and making his advocacy more precise. An internship experience also gave him insight into policy processes and engagement with decision-makers, reinforcing the importance of connecting civil society work with institutional spaces.

After graduation, Mamikon returned to advocacy with stronger tools and greater credibility. He contributed to strengthening Pink Armenia's lobbying and reporting work, including submissions to UN mechanisms. His work also expanded regionally through coalitions on LGBT+ rights, and he now serves as a board member and co-chair of ILGA Europe, supporting collaboration and coordination beyond Armenia.

Mamikon has encouraged peers and colleagues to apply to Global Campus programmes, helping grow the alumni community in Armenia. While time limits his ability to engage fully in alumni activities, he sees the network as an important space for cooperation across borders—and a way to inspire new professionals working for equality and dignity in challenging environments.



Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in the Caucasus (CES) | Cohort 2014

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Current role, affiliation and location

***Communications Director (Former Executive Director)***

**Pink Armenia | Yerevan (Armenia)**

# Alumni recognition



**"Robin Pierro joins ELF at a pivotal moment for the organisation and the wider environmental justice sector, as communities across the UK face mounting environmental challenges and an increasingly complex policy landscape. [...] Robin brings an impressive track record of leadership across the social justice sector, alongside a deep commitment to environmental justice. The Board looks forward to working with Robin as she focuses on expanding ELF's reach and increasing its impact."**

Environmental Law Foundation's website, 8 January 2026

**“ Since graduating, the programme has played a pivotal role in accelerating my career. I spent over six years at the Fund for Global Human Rights, ultimately serving as Global Director of Communications and Marketing. I’ve since held senior roles in human rights, philanthropy and consultancy.**

**The tools, relationships and perspectives I gained through my time with the Global Campus have continued to inform my work and remain foundational to my leadership today.**

**”**

Robin Pierro (EMA, cohort 2016)  
CEO at Environmental Law Foundation (London, UK)

## Alumni speaking

**“ I’ll never forget what I studied and experienced during my ERMA period, since human rights have always been a major topic and a source of inspiration for my personal interests and my professional work: from the tragic fate of Alexei Navalny in Russia to the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement in Iran. ”**

Sergio Paini (ERMA, cohort 2003)  
*Istanbul Bureau Chief, RAI (Italy’s national public broadcasting company)*

**“ The GC alumni community is more than just a professional network—it’s a support system, a place to turn to for advice and solidarity when navigating tough or fast-changing sectors. ”**

Giulia Fagotto (ArMA, cohort 2015)  
*Migration and Entrepreneurship Expert at Enabel (Belgian agency for international cooperation)*

**“ EMA gave me the space to develop a focus on disability rights that later translated into concrete policies and programmes shaping inclusive urban development worldwide. ”**

Federico Batista Poitier (EMA, cohort 2016)  
*Manager of Policies and Programs on Accessibility at United Cities and Local Governments (Barcelona, Spain)*

**“ I retrained and now work as a University Careers Adviser, where I specialise in advising students wanting to pursue a career in the field of human rights and social impact. I get huge fulfilment in building up the next generation of human rights activists and researchers. ”**

Niamh Walsh (EMA, cohort 2000)  
*Careers adviser, Oxford University Careers Service (Oxford, UK)*

# P.S. Why the work still matters

*I am from the second EMA cohort (1999). When I started the Programme, I had been a free-time activist against apartheid and for the rights of migrants for several years. So my ‘humble’ aim in doing the EMA was to work professionally to seek justice. Ambitious? Unrealistic? Possibly self-aggrandising? Yes.*

*With the benefit of hindsight, I can say that I embarked on human rights work, after over a decade doing something else, not realising that it would be exhausting and possibly traumatising, at times. At the same time, as an EMA graduate, I could feel that my classmates were living a similar reality, whether they were with the UN, the ICRC or a university somewhere. I can’t find the words to capture the sense of community and belonging amongst my cohort. It was not one gigantic love-in, to be sure, but the shared values were there. That in itself has been priceless, as has been the sense of belonging. So EMA changed my life enormously for the better by providing purpose and community.*

*But the question remains: what impact does it all have in the world? Has anyone’s life improved through greater respect of their human rights, due to our work as ‘Masterini’? Based on my experience, the answer is ‘yes’ — and I am sure others in my cohort have had much greater impact than me. My own path was less than linear. From being a tutor in the EMA itself, to working in a human rights training and research institute, to many years in the field with the OSCE and EU as human rights advisor or officer, from Bosnia to Georgia, Kosovo, briefly Ukraine and now Moldova.*

*When I try to find that elusive ‘impact’ in the work, images spring to mind. Let me share one.*

*It is 2004. I see a tiny baby in a cradle in a Roma household in Kosovo. I assume the baby is a doll, and the toddler pushing the cradle is playing. But the ‘doll’ is an infant and the family, whose living conditions were terrible, had already lost two children to, inter alia, poor air quality. We did all we could to press the duty-bearers to respect the rights of all minorities and apply the principle of non-discrimination in the allocation of resources. We were taking notes on all this, and they knew it. I would love to tell you that their conditions in that municipality improved quickly and radically: that is not the case. But the Roma family saw that we saw and we cared, and the authorities knew this situation would be reported, not to their advantage. Not transformative, but when multiplied by hundreds of field officers from NGOs, IGOs and more, it nudges the powerful. The slow wheel of change turns.*

*Moral of the story: change toward better respect for human dignity is not always rapid, nor instantly visible. Don’t let that discourage you. Why not? Because if the world looks away, turning a blind eye, things will surely be much worse. It’s not everything, but it is something. That is my EMA.*

Robin Clapp

**Human Rights, Gender and Civil Society Advisor  
and National Contingent Leader**

**European Union Partnership Mission  
in the Republic of Moldova**

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## *Together for Human Rights*

The Global Campus Alumni (GCA) unites graduates from the eight regional Master's Programmes of the Global Campus of Human Rights into one inclusive network. As the umbrella body for these regional alumni groups, it connects over 4,600 experts, activists, academics and practitioners worldwide.

GCA fosters knowledge-sharing, professional growth and collaboration under its motto "together for human rights." Automatic membership upon graduation enables alumni to access events, mentorship, research opportunities and regional initiatives. It is headquartered in Venice, Italy.

The Global Campus Alumni is part of the **Global Campus of Human Rights ETS**

Alumni Stories  
March 2026, Issue I

Editor  
Manuela Pegoraro

*This publication is the result of the work of many members of the wide GC network. For all these diverse voices to come together in a coherent report, we have been supported by AI tools for editing and translation purposes. Despite our best efforts, it may contain inaccuracies, for which we apologise.*

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