



## **Global Strategic Litigation Council for Refugee Rights Launch Announcement**

A group of legal experts and advocates today launched the Global Strategic Litigation Council for Refugee Rights. The Council forms at a time when the rights of people on the move – including more than 20.7 million refugees – are under attack around the world. With a founding membership of twenty-eight groups and individuals drawn from every world region, the Council will serve as a hub for activists seeking to use strategic litigation and related legal advocacy to advance the protection of refugee rights and the consistent and progressive development of international law worldwide. The Council is the first of its kind to undertake coordinated transnational legal advocacy on the rights of refugees or other migrants.

Through the work of the Council, activists and academic experts working around the world will identify areas of opportunity for strategic litigation efforts and then help lawyers bringing cases that touch on these themes.

“We seek global recognition of refugee rights, built through coordinated lawsuits in national and regional courts,” said T. Alexander Aleinikoff, University Professor at the New School and former United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees. The New School’s Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee.

“A collaboration like this will help litigators amplify the transnational impact of cases on their docket,” said Roshni Shanker, Executive Director, Migration & Asylum Project (M.A.P), “and provide a practical avenue for harmonizing legal arguments across courts and tribunals and support the development of international standards.” M.A.P, an India-based refugee law center, is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee.

Initially, the group will focus on promoting the right of refugees to formal legal status, absent in so much of the world’s refugee-hosting countries, and the right to be free from immigration detention, a practice that has become widespread around the world.

“Our litigators in Mexico have been leaders in the fight to end immigration detention,” said Alejandra Macías Delgado, Executive Director, Asylum Access Mexico, “building a working network across borders will help us demonstrate to States that this widespread and punitive practice flies in the face of basic human rights law.” Asylum Access is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee.

“We are regularly in Kenyan courts pushing against the lack of formal recognition of refugees,” said Dr. Annette Mbogoh, Executive Director, Kituo Cha Sheria, “the Council offers a way for us to push in a globally-coordinated fashion for States to affirmatively grant legal status and lawful stay to refugees.” Kituo Cha Sheria is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee. The community that emerges through the Council will strengthen civil society’s leadership, and reflect core commitments to both refugee leadership and the leadership of refugee-rights organizations across the Global South.



“We are committed to pushing to have refugees at the table in efforts to push back on State failure to respect and promote refugee rights,” said Lublanc Prieto, President, Refugiados Unidos, “refugee leadership should be a key feature of affirmative litigation strategies.” Refugiados Unidos is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee.

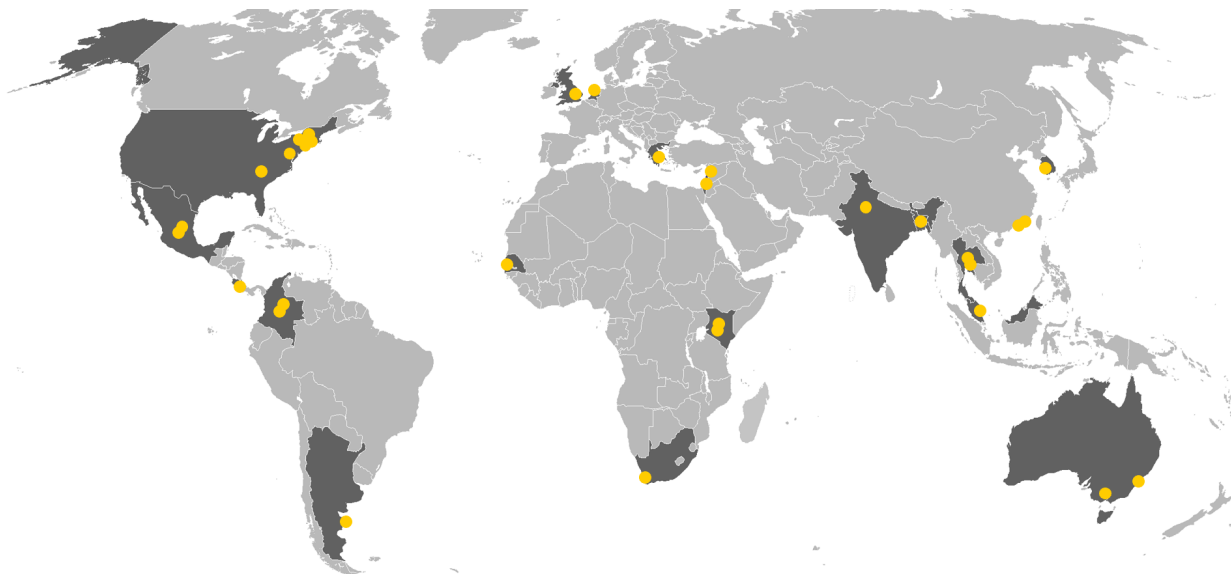
The Council will also serve as a hub for peer mentorship and exchange of best practices across world regions.

“We have long seen how global collaborations can energize humanitarian work,” said Jessica Therkelsen, Director of Legal Protection, HIAS, “the Council will create a space for synergy on legal advocacy, so sorely lacking until now.” HIAS is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee.

“We know that governments copy each other and that rights abusive practices migrate around the globe,” said Ian M. Kysel, Visiting Assistant Professor of Law at Cornell Law School, “the Council gives civil society a way to respond that through legal strategies crossing countries and regions.” Cornell Law School’s Migration and Human Rights Program is a founding member of the Council’s Steering Committee.

The Council is led by a Steering Committee comprised of Asylum Access, the Cornell Law School Migration and Human Rights Program, HIAS, Kituo Cha Sheria, the Migration and Asylum Project, Refugiados Unidos, and the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility at the New School. A full list of founding Council members is below. The group is supported by a Secretariat jointly housed at Cornell University and the New School University.

*Founding Council Membership* (Steering Committee members denoted in blue)



<u>Asylum Access</u> (Thailand, Malaysia, Mexico)	<u>Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)</u> (Bangladesh)	<u>Center for Estudios Legales y Sociales</u> (CELS) (Argentina)	<u>Cornell Law Migration &amp; Human Rights Program</u> (United States)
<u>Cristosal</u> (El Salvador)	<u>Center for Law, Justice and Society</u> – <u>Dejusticia</u> (Colombia)	<u>FRONT-LEX</u> (Netherlands)	<u>Global Legal Action Network (GLAN)</u> (United Kingdom)
<u>HIAS</u> (United States, Greece)	<u>International Detention Coalition</u> (IDC) (Australia)	<u>Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migracion (IMUMI)</u> (Mexico)	<u>International Refugee Assistance Program</u> (IRAP) (United States)
<u>Justice Center Hong Kong</u> (Hong Kong)	<u>Kituo Cha Sheria</u> (Kenya)	<u>Korean Refugee Rights Network / Duroo</u> (South Korea)	<u>Lebanese Center for Human Rights</u> (CLDH) (Lebanon)
<u>Migration and Asylum Project</u> (M.A.P) (India)	<u>Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)</u> (Senegal)	<u>Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI)</u> (United States)	<u>Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK)</u> (Kenya)
<u>Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA)</u> (Australia)	<u>Refugee Rights Litigation Project</u> (RRLP) (Thailand)	<u>Refugiados Unidos</u> (Colombia)	<u>Zolberg Institute on Migration &amp; Mobility</u> (United States)
Fatima KHAN (South Africa)	Kirsteen LAU (Hong Kong)	Itamar MANN (Israel)	Shana TABAK (United States)