

Second Annual Roundtable on Strategic Litigation and International Refugee Protection: Trends and Best Practices

Friday, 20 June 2014 | 9:00-13:00

Geneva, Switzerland

UNHCR HQ Room MBT-04 (Basement) | Lunch Provided

In the last decade, refugees around the world have increasingly looked to the courts to improve their access to fundamental rights and freedoms. Please join us for a second annual roundtable session highlighting specific ways that NGOs and UNHCR can work together to advance strategic litigation as a tool for refugee protection. Together we will share good practices and discuss ways strategic litigation can advance legal standards and help refugees increase access to rights and protection.

9:00 – 9:15 Introduction

Cornelis Wouters, UNHCR and Rachel Levitan, HIAS

9:15 – 10:30 Session 1: Learning from Experience How Litigation Shapes Refugee Rights Over Time

Facilitator: Rachel Levitan, HIAS

Panelists: Yonatan Berman, University of Oxford, Hotline for Refugees & Migrants, Israel
David Manne, Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre, Australia
Solomon Masitsa, Kituo Cha Sheria, Kenya
Mark Daly, Daly & Associates, Hong Kong

Focusing on contexts where strategic litigation has played a high profile role as a tool for refugee protection, this session will focus on the complexities associated with this work, including: enforcing legal victories when public sentiment opposes refugee protection; responding to efforts by government to “legislate away” good decisions; determining how and when UNHCR can add value to litigation; and determining how to follow up on losses.

10:30 – 11:30 Session 2: Litigation in New Environments / How to Start A Litigation Program

Facilitator: Jessica Therkelsen, Asylum Access

Panelists: Martin Jones, Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights
Sadhia Rafi, Dutch Refugee Council
Bryan Barbour, Japan Association for Refugees
Laura Bingham, Open Society Foundations

Panelists will focus on how and why they have begun to engage in strategic litigation as a protection tool for refugees, addressing the country-based and institutional challenges in taking it on. They will also share the role that UNHCR does, should and can play in supporting strategic litigation.

11:30 – 12:15 Regional Breakouts over Working Lunch

Breakout groups representing East Africa, MENA, the Americas, Europe and Asia will discuss how to maximize their network and engage UNHCR at the local, national and international level. UNHCR representatives from each regional bureau will be invited to join in the constructive conversation.

12:15 – 12:45 Conclusions and Recommendations from Breakout Groups

12:45 – 13:00 Observations and Next Steps