



**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
**Human Rights Week 2026**  
Symposium

« Towards a Sustainable Global Health »

University of Geneva, Tuesday 10 November 2026

Whilst Article 25 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) recognises health as a fundamental right of every individual, this right is now increasingly understood as an inclusive and global right. This concept encompasses not only access to adequate and prompt healthcare, but also a range of “underlying determinants of health”<sup>1</sup> In this context, the contemporary and future challenges relating to the right to health appear to be both diverse and particularly intricate.

For over a decade, the impact of the Anthropocene on the global ecosystem has been the subject of significant research in the field of health. The concept of *planetary health* has consequently established an interdisciplinary domain of research. It focuses on the analysis of how environmental changes, caused by human activity, are damaging human health on a global scale. The issue at hand is not merely one of adapting to a changing ecological context; rather, it involves the implementation of transformative, cross-sectoral practices to protect the environment and, by extension, human health.

In recent years, the study of pandemics has provided a particularly fertile field in which to conduct research for the health-related humanities and social sciences. Numerous publications have ignited debates and reflections on legal, political, socio-cultural, economic, discursive and biomedical issues, thereby highlighting the intricacies and multidimensional tensions characteristic of these global health crises.

Nevertheless, this new paradigm is already being met with critical scepticism. While the notion of “planetary” in the context of health is intended to be inclusive a priori, the issue of equity remains central and challenging. Indeed, the implementation of a renovated theoretical framework is unlikely to yield substantial outcomes in the field without concomitant transformations in both epistemological practices and socio-political objectives. In the absence of such changes, the scope of adopting a *planetary health* approach remains limited.

Moreover, contemporary political developments are engendering unprecedented challenges to the governance of global health. Of particular concern is the propagation of anti-scientific rhetoric and practices, which are becoming increasingly pervasive, even within democratic societies. The adoption of these trends by the political establishment has the potential to result in a substantial diminution of investment in the global health sphere. Such dynamics risk exacerbating inequalities in access to healthcare and undermining the progress made in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> SPECIAL RAPPEUR ON THE RIGHT TO HEALTH, « Defining the right to physical and mental health », <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-health/about-right-health-and-human-rights>>

the right to health over recent decades. In the absence of sufficient resources, there is thus a risk of increased inefficiency or even structural weakening in global health governance.

In order to structure the discussion around this year's theme, the Steering Committee for Human Rights Week 2026 has identified five main themes:

- 1) Sustainability
- 2) Inclusivity
- 3) Universality
- 4) Right to health
- 5) Scientific integrity

Proposals submitted to the Scientific Committee for the 2026 edition must relate to one or more of these thematic areas.

### **Eligibility criteria**

Participation in the call for papers is limited to individuals who are currently enrolled in a PhD programme (from the second year of their PhD onwards) or who have successfully defended their PhD thesis within the last five years.

### **Deadlines**

Interested parties are invited to submit a proposal of no more than 500 words, in French or English, along with a short biographical note of no more than 100 words and five keywords, to Dr Jacopo Adda ([jacopo.adda@unige.ch](mailto:jacopo.adda@unige.ch)) by 5.00 pm (Geneva time) on **20 July 2026**. Those whose proposals are selected will be notified around mid-August 2025.

Those whose proposals are to be selected will be notified by mid-August 2025.

The final papers, of approximately 8,000 words (including footnotes), must be submitted by **15 October 2026** and can be submitted in French or English.

Submissions that are considered, following a thorough revision process, to conform to the requisite academic standard, will be disseminated through the *Droits humains, démocratie et gouvernance* series of the *GSI Working Papers*. This publication, which is subject to a rigorous peer-review process, is accessible online and freely available on the Global Studies Institute (GSI) website.

### **Format**

The academic conference will take place in person at the University of Geneva on Tuesday 10 November 2026, during Human Rights Week.

### **Financial support**

The travel expenses of those whose proposals are selected may be covered upon request (public transport only).

## **Selected bibliography**

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DE CASTANEDA RUIZ, LUIS RAFAEL ET AL., « One Health and planetary health research: leveraging differences to grow together », *The Lancet. Planetary health*, vol. 7, n° 2, 2023, pp. e109–e111.

DECOTEAU CLAIRE LAURIER, *Emergency. COVID-19 and the Uneven Valuation of Life*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2024.

HAINES ANDY, FRUMKIN HOWARD, *Planetary Health. Safeguarding Human Health and the Environment in the Anthropocene*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021.

HÄRTING HEIKE, MEEK HEATHER (EDS.), *Planetary Health Humanities and Pandemics*, Routledge, New York and London, 2024.

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INGEGNOLI VITTORIO, LOMBARDO FRANCESCO, LA TORRE GIUSEPPE (EDS.), *Environmental Alteration Leads to Human Disease. A Planetary Health Approach*, Springer, Cham, 2022.

KING NANCY M. P., HENDERSON GAIL E., CHURCHILL LARRY R., *Bioethics Reenvisioned. A Path towards Health Justice*, University of North Carolina Press, Westchester, 2022.

NIR EYAL, SAMIA HURST, OLE F. NORHEIM, DANIEL WIKLER (EDS.), *Inequalities in Health. Concepts, Measures, and Ethics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2013.

SLAMA RÉMY, *Le mal du dehors. L'influence de l'environnement sur la santé*, Éditions Quæ, Versailles, 2017.

WELCH TANA JEAN, *Advancing Medical Posthumanism Through Twenty-First Century American Poetry*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2024.

WOLFF JONATHAN, *The Human Right to Health*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York and London, 2012.