UN Human Rights Council in a Fractured World

Panellist and Moderators

Listed alphabetically by surname

Michał BALCERZAK is an Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science and Security Studies, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Szczecin, Poland.

Since 2022 he has served as a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Chair in 2024-2026, currently one of Vice-Chairs). He served as an ad hoc judge at the European Court of Human Rights (2018-2022) and was an alternate member of the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2012-2016).

Earlier in his career, he was a member of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (special procedure of the Human Rights Council, 2014-2021, chairperson of the Group 2018-2019). He took part in various intergovernmental expert activities within the Council of Europe, including at the Steering Committee on Human Rights (2004-2008), as well as several working groups drafting recommendations of the Committee of Ministers.

Robert GREY has served as Chancellor of the University of Warsaw since 2021. He previously served as the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Development and Cooperation. Before joining the University, he served as Undersecretary of State at Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for economic diplomacy and relations with the Americas and the Asia-Pacific region. At the United Nations in New York, he worked on partnerships supporting the Millennium Development Goals in their early years.

His career spans public service and the private sector, including venture capital, with a focus on building partnerships across government, business and academia. At the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy, he will discuss how universities can help strengthen trust in democratic institutions by fostering critical thinking, encouraging open debate and giving students a meaningful voice in decisions that affect them.

Mariana KATZAROVA started work as the first United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation on 1 May 2023, following her appointment by the Human Rights Council at its 52nd session in April 2023.

She is a human rights expert, with over two decades of experience as a journalist and human rights leader in the war zones of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (Security Council resolution 1244), Chechnya, and Ukraine. Her human rights experience includes heading Amnesty International's investigations of human rights in the Russian Federation.

Erisa KRYEZIU holds a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Communication and a Master's degree in Public Relations from the University of Tirana.

She has been working as a journalist at Citizens.al for the past eight years, covering social issues, human rights, gender equality, marginalized communities, disability rights, and environmental issues. She is also the Albania correspondent for Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa (OBCT).

She has also contributed to Citizens.al's work as a project coordinator on initiatives focusing on youth and media literacy. Her work incorporates innovative reporting techniques, including Mobile Journalism, with in-depth and investigative reporting.

Mary LAWLOR is an Adjunct Professor in the Centre for Social Innovation, School of Business, Trinity College Dublin where she takes a lead on Business and Human Rights.

Mary Lawlor served as UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders from 1st May 2020 to 1st May 2026.

In 2001 she founded Front Line Defenders which concentrates all its activities on human rights defenders at risk. The aim is to protect defenders of human rights and provide them with “round the clock” practical support so that they can continue their peaceful work to build civil and democratic societies.

Prior to Front Line Defenders, Mary was Director of the Irish Section of Amnesty International from 1988 to 2000. She became a Board member in 1975 and was elected Chair from 1983 to 1987.

Taysir MATHLOUTHI is an Advocacy and Policy expert specialising in the governance of AI and emerging technologies in conflict-affected settings.

Taysir is currently the Senior EU Advocacy Officer for Digital Rights and AI Governance at 7amleh, and a specialist in human rights and digital governance. Taysir has also worked with leading international and civil society organisations, including UNICEF and International Alert, where she contributed to policy research, advocacy campaigns, and public engagement on issues such as AI-driven disinformation, surveillance risks, and biased content moderation in conflict settings.

Her experience includes active engagement with EU and UN institutions, multistakeholder consultations, and platform accountability efforts.

Mona M’BIKAY has more than 25 years of extensive work experience in the fields of justice, democratic governance, and human rights.

She worked for the Swiss Government, UN agencies and has been the director of UPR Info since September 2017.

She provided technical assistance to various national stakeholders to support the implementation of programmes and projects to advance human rights and democratic governance in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

She holds a Law degree, a Master in International Studies, a Postgraduate Certificate in Conflict resolution skills and a Diploma in Sustainable Development and Human Rights.

Philip OBAJI has documented up to 100 cases of human rights abuses and exploitation by Russian paramilitaries deployed in West and Central Africa over the past seven years. He has investigated and reported gut-wrenching massacres, rape, torture and oppression of vulnerable villagers by mercenaries from the Wagner Group and its successor, the Africa Corps, in the Central African Republic (CAR) and in Mali, despite threats in an incredibly risky context including being held hostage by CAR rebels and detained by CAR soldiers who tortured him on the orders of Russian paramilitaries. Obaji, whose investigative work has been published by some of the world's most authoritative media, has received several recognitions for his work, including winning the 2022 Jaime Brunet International Human Rights Prize, the 2023 One World Media International Journalist of the Year award, the 2024 Homo Homini award, and the 2025 Knight International Journalism Award.

Dionysia PEPPA is a lawyer and digital rights specialist based in Paris and serving as Senior Legal and EU Policy Lead at SMEX, a Lebanese NGO working on the intersection of technology and human rights. She joined SMEX in 2023, following a Master's Degree in Data Law, Digital Administration and Open Government at Sorbonne University. Her work focuses on freedom of expression and digital rights, with a particular interest in content moderation and platform accountability.

Jerzy POMIANOWSKI has worked in international affairs for more than 35 years, serving as Deputy Foreign Minister of Poland, Director of the OECD-UNDP's Partnership for Democratic Governance, and Poland's Ambassador to Japan. In 2013, he led the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and has since served as its Executive Director.

Pomianowski began his career as a civil servant in 1990, just after the fall of communism, first at the Ministry of Education and then at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He oversaw the launch of Poland Aid (2006-2008) and served as Director General of the Polish Foreign Service (2005-2006). Before 1989, Pomianowski was an active member of Poland's democratic opposition. He was Chief Editor of the Independent Publishing House at the Warsaw University, his Alma Mater. In his free time, he serves as president of the European and Polish Aikido Federations.

Stefan PUTSILA is the founder of NEXTA, an independent media organization established in 2015 and based in Warsaw. During the 2020 protests in Belarus, NEXTA helped people share eyewitness reports, follow events and coordinate civic action through Telegram. Today, he leads NEXTA's editorial and production work, covering Belarus and international affairs. His current priorities include sustaining independent journalism in exile and developing AI tools to support the newsroom.

Katarzyna RYBKA-IWAŃSKA is Deputy Director of the Department for Strategic Communications and Countering Foreign Disinformation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland. A career diplomat, she is experienced in strategic planning, public diplomacy and international communications.

Before taking up her current position, she served as First Counsellor and Head of the Communications and Public Diplomacy Section at the Embassy of Poland in Washington, D.C. (2022–2026). Previously, she worked at the Embassy of Poland in Tel Aviv, including as Chargée d'Affaires a.i., and spent several years in the Ministry's Foreign Policy Planning Unit as well as the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, contributing to long-term foreign policy strategies and policy analysis.

Her work focuses on strengthening Poland's strategic communications, building resilience to foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), and developing effective responses to disinformation and emerging challenges to democratic societies. She is particularly engaged in advancing international cooperation and bringing together public institutions, media, academia and civil society to strengthen democratic resilience.

Wojciech SOLAK is the Director of the Centre for Democracy & Resilience at GLOBSEC and a researcher at King's College London. In his career, he has led and contributed to research initiatives for major international institutions, including the US Department of State, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the European Commission, and NATO. Additionally, he has collaborated with the OSCE on election observation and monitoring.

Anica STAMENKOVIĆ represents Okular, a youth organization from a small town in central Serbia. Anica is a youth activist advocating for a society in which young people are not merely observers, but equal participants in shaping policies and making decisions that directly affect their lives. Through her activism, she addresses issues of youth political and social participation, their representation in institutions, and the accountability of decision-makers towards younger generations. She believes that young people must not be reduced to statistics, treated as mere window dressing in public debates, or seen as a generation constantly promised a future while being denied the right to shape the present. She advocates for a louder, more organised, and politically conscious youth movement.

Liliana VIȚU started her career in 1999 as a BBC World Service correspondent in Moldova. When the Communists' Party lost power in 2009, she run to become the director of the News and Debates Department at the public TV channel "Moldova 1" to promote long overdue reforms at the public broadcaster. As Prime-minister Spokesperson from 2013 to 2015 she ran nationwide public communication campaigns on the EU-Moldova Association Agreement and visa free regime.

Her experience includes consulting in media development for the Thomson Reuters Foundation, UNDP Uzbekistan, OSCE Tajikistan and working as a Project Director for Internews in Kyrgyzstan. In 2011 she was the first journalist to be nominated by the US Embassy for the Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists, USA. In October 2023 Russia banned her from entering the country for fighting its propaganda and disinformation in her role at the Audiovisual Council.

From December 2021 to August 2026 she served as Chair of the Audiovisual Council, and then was appointed by Presidential decree Director of StratCom Centre.

Marcin WALECKI has over 30 years of international experience in democracy assistance and governance, having worked in around 50 countries. He joined the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) as Director of Programmes in November 2026. He has held senior roles with leading global institutions, including as Senior Country Director for the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Ukraine (2022–2025), Executive Director of the EUROPAEUM (2020–2022), and Head of the Democratization Department at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) (2014–2020).

He previously served as Executive Director of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) and as Senior Advisor on Political Finance for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). In Poland, he sits on the boards of the Institute of Public Affairs and the School of Leaders.

Dr Walecki holds an MA in Law (Hons, Class I) from the University of Warsaw and a DPhil in Politics from the University of Oxford. He is a former Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence and a Visiting Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. His work focuses on democratisation, political parties, and political corruption, areas in which he has written and lectured extensively.