

2023 - 2024



*Annual
Report*



2023 - 2024

Message from the GHRC Board

As GHRC continued our core asylum and expert declarations work, the 2023-24 academic year brought growth and maturation in many other projects. Our compassionate release team took off, completing more than 20 client letters over the course of the year. Continuity of care resources were shared with several legal partners, and groundwork for a new specialty care referral program (PRHL) was established. Emory PHR also remained active on campus, hosting lunchtime talks, field trips, discussions on current events, and a movie screening. This past year has proven GHRC to be both a steady partner in the asylum health community and a creative leader in tackling emerging local challenges.

Mission Statement

Initially developed with a focus on assisting those seeking asylum, the Georgia Human Rights Clinic was founded as a means to connect with others who share this common goal. As students within the Emory University School of Medicine, we accessed a broad network of students, public health advocates involved in the Rollins School of Public Health Atlanta Asylum Network, and healthcare providers to assemble a motivated team. We partnered with local law firms and advocacy groups to begin conducting asylum evaluations for asylum seekers and have formed collaborations with over one dozen non-profit organizations throughout Georgia. Today, we are officially the Emory chapter of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and work with physicians from various medical backgrounds to provide services including in-person and virtual asylum evaluations.

Asylum Clinic

Our Asylum Clinic is composed of providers trained in physical and psychiatric forensic asylum evaluations. We receive referrals from our community partners, provide a one-time evaluation to document evidence of trauma/torture, and subsequently write an affidavit to accompany the client's case.

Expert Declarations

Expert Declarations are legal documents written by medical providers on behalf of clients in immigrant detention. GHRC receives medical records for review on behalf of people currently in detention suffering from physical or mental health conditions. The GHRC medical team then uses records provided by the detention center to document cases of medical neglect and mismanagement to facilitate the release of the clients due to unmet medical needs.

PHR VS. GHRC?

We are an official asylum clinic with the national Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) organization, meaning we complete asylum affidavits as requested through the PHR official referral process. Emory PHR is the Emory component of the Georgia Human Rights Clinic (GHRC), with GHRC referring to a coalition of groups working in the immigration space within Georgia.

Continuity of Care Coordination

A [database](#) of free and/or affordable medical care and social services to clients of our community partners, specifically focusing on asylum seekers, those recently released from immigrant detention and people without documentation.

Compassionate Release

Much like the expert declarations program, this program reviews medical records of incarcerated individuals to craft compassionate release documentation, advocating for the release of medically vulnerable incarcerated individuals. This program differs from other programs in that it functions in the broader carceral space rather than immigration specific processes and detention.

4

legal clinics
using our
Continuity of
Care database

20

**Compassionate
Release Letters**
in partnership
with the Medical
Justice Alliance

8

expert declarations
with the Southern
Poverty Law Center
(SPLC)

9

**medical
evaluations** for
asylum seekers

2

roundtables on
Detention & Mental
Health Evaluations
with UCSF

Eudora Olsen; UCSF - Internal Medicine

Amritha Gourisankar; UMinnesota - Med/Peds

Ore Orakunle; Harvard - Internal Medicine

Surabhi Beriwal; URochester - Ophthalmology

MATCH 2024



Advice for students: "Identify mentors who are doing work that inspires you and reach out to them. Continue reading and educating yourself on the political landscape where you practice and how policy and voting impact healthcare."

- Eudora Olsen; President '22-23

How PHR has shaped your future plans: "In the future I hope to partner with community organizations doing advocacy and support their efforts. My particular interest is in intimate partner violence/gender based violence so I hope to combine those interests to work with groups supporting migrant families who have faced violence in a trauma-informed way."

- Amritha Gourisankar; President '23-24



How GHRC influenced your specialty choice: "I wanted a career where I would have the flexibility and support to continue to work in this space, and where it would be seamless in its execution in my clinical practice. Internal Medicine offered that opportunity to me and much more."

- Ore Olakunle; Director of Social Support Services & Advocacy '23-24



Why PHR: "I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to work closely with community partners to advocate for individuals in detention to receive healthcare. Especially during busy exam weeks or rotations, I took a lot of pride in either helping to coordinate or write medical expert declarations. This work reminded me of why I chose to go to medical school and how the opportunities I will have to help people in the community will only grow once I become a doctor."

- Surabhi Beriwal; President '23-24



Medical Mismanagement in Southern US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Detention Facilities: A Thematic Analysis of Secondary Medical Records

Amy Zeidan, Harrison Goodall, Andrew Sieben, Praveen Parmar, Elizabeth Burner

Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 30 Jan 2023, [doi: 10.1007/s10903-023-01451-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-023-01451-y)

Abstract:

Detention facilities in the southern US hold a large percentage of individuals detained in the US and have amassed numerous reports of medical mismanagement. The purpose of this study was to evaluate expert declarations of individuals residing in these facilities to assess the appropriateness of medical care provided. We analyzed 38 medical expert declarations from individuals in detention from 2020 to 2021. A thematic analysis was conducted to explore the management of medical conditions. Major themes include inadequate workup, management and treatment of medical conditions, psychiatric conditions, and medical symptoms. Subthemes identified include incorrect workup, failure to refer to a specialist, incorrect medications and/or treatments, missed or incorrect diagnoses, and exacerbation of chronic conditions. This study supports growing evidence of medical mismanagement and neglect of individuals while in immigration detention. Enhanced oversight and accountability around medical care in these facilities is critical to ensure the quality of medical care delivered meets the standard of care.

bold = Emory GHRC/PHR authors

A call for increased transparency and accountability of health care outcomes in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers

Authors: Eudora Olsen MD MPH, Amy Zeidan MD

Presented at: Georgia Immigration Collaborative, March 2022

Summary:

We are facing a physical and mental health crisis in the immigration detention centers in Georgia, which rank as some of the worst in the nation for human rights violations. PHR conducted several studies to better understand the extent of medical negligence and physical and mental harm to those who are detained in Georgia. This talk outlined the findings from these studies in order to spark action among medical-legal partnerships.



The State of Health in Georgia's Immigration Detention Centers

Authors: Eudora Olsen MD MPH, Amy Zeidan MD

Presented at: Georgia Immigration Collaborative, March 2022

Summary:

We are facing a physical and mental health crisis in the immigration detention centers in Georgia, which rank as some of the worst in the nation for human rights violations. PHR conducted several studies to better understand the extent of medical negligence and physical and mental harm to those who are detained in Georgia. This talk outlined the findings from these studies in order to spark action among medical-legal partnerships.

Medical Student-Led Human Rights Clinics: the Georgia Human Rights Clinic

Authors: Amritha Gourisanker MD, MPH, Amy Zeidan MD

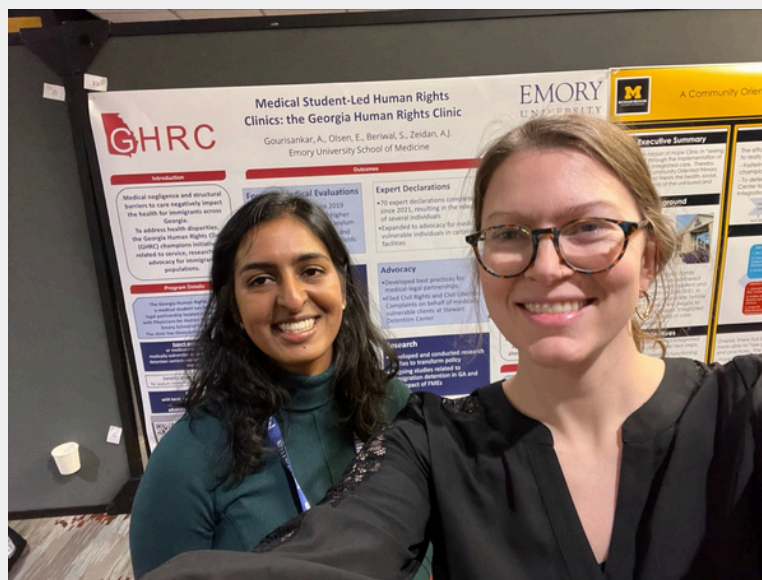
Presented at: Gold Humanism Conference 2023

Summary:

We describe the operations and success of the Georgia Human Rights Clinic (GHRC) and its contributions to service, research and advocacy for the communities served. Our aim is for attending student leaders to take and implement our clinic's operational model at their local settings to support structurally vulnerable immigrant populations.

Project Description:

The Georgia Human Rights Clinic is a medical student run medical-legal partnership located in Atlanta, GA, with Physicians for Human Rights and Emory School of Medicine. The clinic has three primary areas of focus, 1) forensic medical evaluations (FME) for asylum seekers, 2) the expert declarations program, providing medical chart review for medically vulnerable individuals in detention and other carceral facilities in the South, and 3) advocacy for a variety of human rights issues faced by justice-involved populations and asylum seekers. These clinic roles are carried out in collaboration with local, state, and national legal and community-based organizations.



Dr. Gourisanker (left) and Dr. Zeidan (right) with their poster

Student-Created Health Services Database and Implementation at Immigration Legal Clinics

Authors: Isaree Pitaktong, Cynthia Ramazani, Oreoluwa E. Olakunle MD, Amritha Gourisankar MD MPH, Olutola Ebunlomo MBA, Amy Zeidan MD

Presented at: North American Refugee Health Conference 2024

Summary:

Background: Newly arrived migrants face specific barriers to accessing healthcare. The Georgia Human Rights Clinic (GHRC), a medical student run medical-legal partnership, coordinates forensic medical evaluations for asylum seekers in Georgia. In response to a growing need for connecting clients with medical resources, the GHRC developed a separate Continuity of Care program to serve legal partners.

Methods: In phase 1 of the program, students developed a database of Georgia-wide, low-cost, clinical resources, categorized by Georgia charitable care network (GCCN) clinics, non-GCCN clinics, and federally qualified healthcare centers. This database included information from the clinic's website and was verified telephonically. Phase II involved transforming the database into a user-friendly website for students and partners to access. In phase III, the website and care coordination were piloted at legal events.

Results: A total of 176 locations were identified, with 112 confirmed telephonically and included in the database. The website and care coordination were implemented at four legal clinics between September 2023 and February 2024. In total, 12 primary care and 6 subspecialty care appointments were scheduled for clients. Barriers to care coordination highlighted the need for 1) clinics that provide care to individuals lacking documentation, proof of residence, or income, 2) language interpretation services, and 3) geographically convenient clinics.

Conclusions: The Continuity of Care program was successful at connecting clients with unmet medical needs to medical resources and can serve as a model for similar clinics. This program leveraged community collaborations, legal partnerships, and social work programs for comprehensive care coordination.

Advocating for Detained Individuals in Georgia

Authors: Surabhi Beriwal MD, Amy Zeidan MD

Presented at: Grady Internal Medicine Noon Conference, March 2023

Summary:

A substantial proportion of Georgians have been incarcerated or detained, and there are many instances of inadequate care being provided. Medical-legal partnership can provide an effective avenue for release of medically vulnerable individuals and more generally, can be used for ongoing advocacy efforts for populations impacted. Our Expert Declarations program provides a model that can be replicated at other institutions. Importantly, continued advocacy toward structural changes is needed going forward and expansion of similar programs can contribute to these efforts.



Medical-legal partnership to advocate for detained individuals in Georgia

Authors: Surabhi Beriwal MD, Harrison Goodall MPH MD, Nicole Lue MD, Victoria Fonzi, Arielle Lawson MBE, Ruby Ladd, William Weber MD, Amy Zeidan MD

Presented at: National Medical Association Annual Conference, July 2023

Awards: 2nd place, 2023 Georges Benjamin Research Award

Summary:

A substantial proportion of Georgians have been incarcerated or detained, and there are many instances of inadequate care being provided. Medical-legal partnership can provide an effective avenue for release of medically vulnerable individuals and more generally, can be used for ongoing advocacy efforts for populations impacted. Our Expert Declarations program provides a model that can be replicated at other institutions. Importantly, continued advocacy toward structural changes is needed going forward and expansion of similar programs can contribute to these efforts.

Healthcare in US Immigration Detention: Preliminary Scoping Review Results

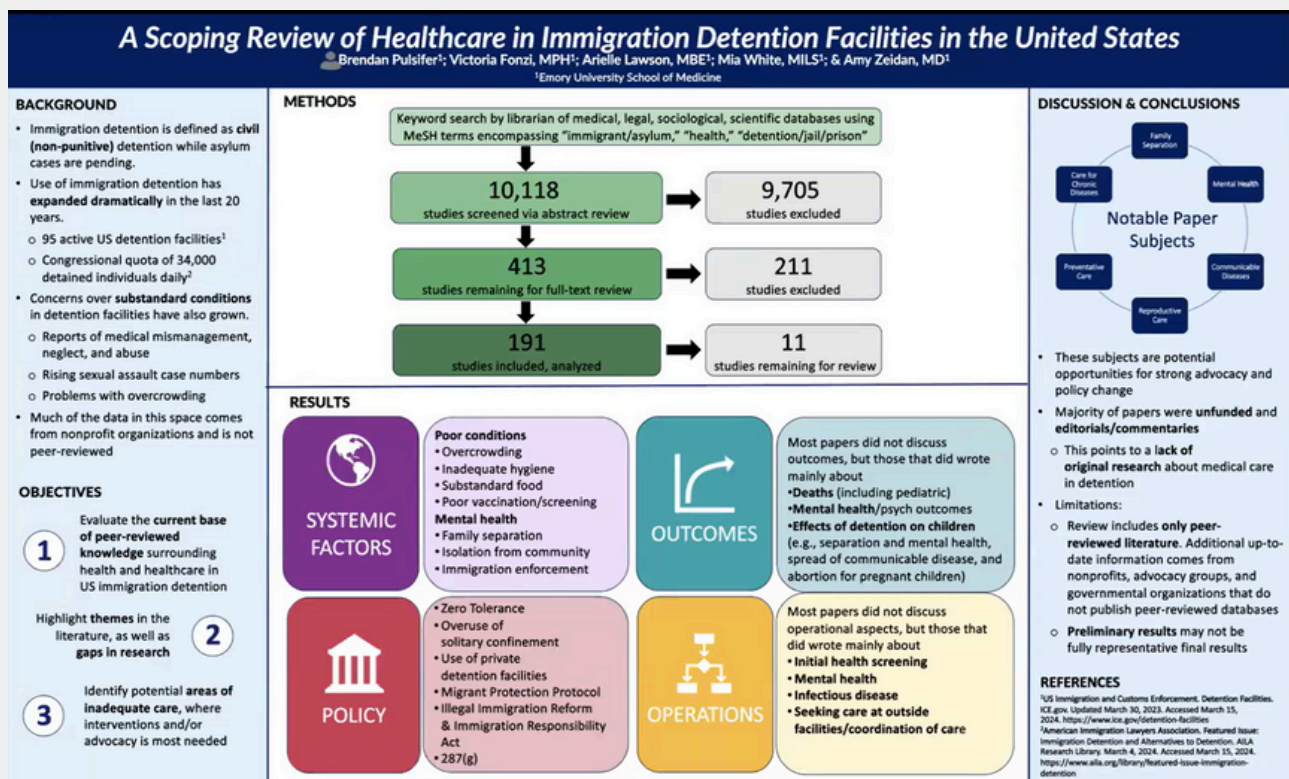
Authors: Victoria Fonzi MPH, Arielle Lawson MBE, Brendan Pulsifer

Presented at: American Public Health Association Conference 2023;

Emory Department of Medicine Health Equity Day 2024

Summary:

As the use of immigration detention has grown, so have concerns about substandard conditions and inadequate healthcare. We conducted a scoping review of health, law, and social sciences databases to characterize existing peer-reviewed knowledge on health in immigration detention. From an initial review of 10,129 abstracts and subsequent full-text review of 286 articles, four themes of current knowledge were identified: (1) infectious diseases, including COVID-19, in detention; (2) mental health in detention; (3) effects of detention on children; (4) practice implications for healthcare providers in detention facilities.



Emory Arts & Social Justice Fellows Showcase

As part of the fall 2023 cohort of the Emory Arts and Social Justice Fellows Program, Dr. Amy Zeidan partnered with local artist Kelly Taylor Mitchell to co-teach her public health course, “Immigration as a Social and Structural Determinant of Health.” Throughout the semester, they explored the use of screen-printing as a tool for activism and how to utilize art for public health interventions. This work was shared at a showcase on December 5th, preceded by an “Activation on the Belt Line” a few days prior where attendees could make their own prints.



Photography credit to:

Terence Rushin (IG: [@photorushin](#))

Emory Arts & Social Justice Fellows Program (IG: [@emoryasj](#))

End-of-Year Picnic

We hosted an End-of-Year picnic for our graduating M4s to celebrate their contributions to our work at GHRC and wish them well as they move on to become physicians!



**MEDICAL
JUSTICE
ALLIANCE**
PROTECTING THE RIGHT
TO MEDICAL CARE FOR
EVERY PERSON INCARCERATED



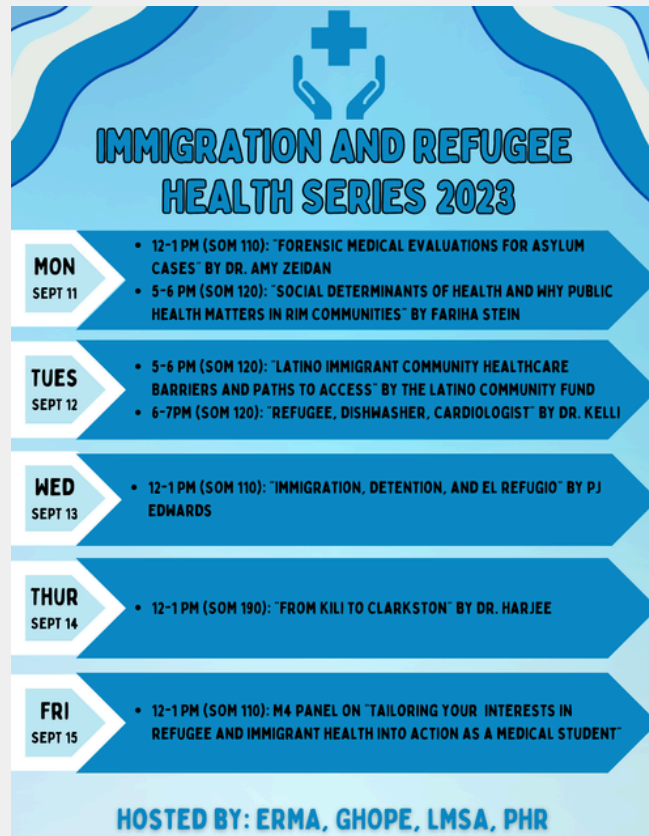
NISHI KUMAR
HEAD OF MEDICAL LEGAL PROJECTS

October 2023 LTT with Nishi Kumar from the Medical Justice Alliance

To learn more about medical advocacy for justice-involved populations, we hosted Nishi Kumar, the Head of Medical Legal Projects at the Medical Justice Alliance, to talk about her experience with mass incarceration and healthcare. Nishi shared her expertise about how medical-legal partnerships can support medically vulnerable incarcerated populations.

Immigration & Refugee Health Week 2023

PHR was a hosting organization for our annual Immigration and Refugee Health Week, where we organize in-person lectures and Zoom seminars about different topics in refugee and immigrant health including medical and legal perspectives, personal experiences, and research applications. We also discuss opportunities for involvement with local organizations that engage with the refugee and immigrant populations. We worked in collaboration with Emory Refugee Medical Alliance (ERMA), Global Health Office of Pediatrics at Emory (GHOPE), and Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA).



IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE HEALTH SERIES 2023

MON SEPT 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-1 PM (SOM 110): "FORENSIC MEDICAL EVALUATIONS FOR ASYLUM CASES" BY DR. AMY ZEIDAN 5-6 PM (SOM 120): "SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND WHY PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS IN RIM COMMUNITIES" BY FARIHA STEIN
TUES SEPT 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-6 PM (SOM 120): "LATINO IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE BARRIERS AND PATHS TO ACCESS" BY THE LATINO COMMUNITY FUND 6-7PM (SOM 120): "REFUGEE, DISHWASHER, CARDIOLOGIST" BY DR. KELLI
WED SEPT 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-1 PM (SOM 110): "IMMIGRATION, DETENTION, AND EL REFUGIO" BY PJ EDWARDS
THUR SEPT 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-1 PM (SOM 190): "FROM KILI TO CLARKSTON" BY DR. HARJEE
FRI SEPT 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-1 PM (SOM 110): M4 PANEL ON "TAILORING YOUR INTERESTS IN REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT HEALTH INTO ACTION AS A MEDICAL STUDENT"

HOSTED BY: ERMA, GHOPE, LMSA, PHR



PHR Social Outing to the Yehimi Cambrón Exhibit at Oglethorpe University

Georgia is one of the most restrictive and unwelcoming states for undocumented students and immigrants. Yehimi Cambrón is a local undocumented artist and recent Paul & Daisy Soros Fellow with murals across Atlanta, notably in Decatur, Hapeville, and at the Home Depot Backyard at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. A group of students took a trip to this exhibit, held at Oglethorpe's university museum, to learn more about the undocumented experience in the South.

Volunteer Trips to Stewart Detention Center with El Refugio

For the first time, we organized two trips of Emory SOM students & residents to visit with folks in ICE detention at Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, GA through El Refugio's Visitation Program. We visited with people hoping to connect with friendly faces outside Stewart. You can read more about our reflections on the experience on our Instagram.



PHR Holiday Clothing Drive for El Refugio

In the spirit of the season, PHR hosted a Holiday Donation Drive for El Refugio, a Georgia non-profit that accompanies immigrants at Stewart Detention Center and their loved ones through hospitality, visitation, support, and advocacy. One of El Refugio's many roles involve putting together backpacks of clothing for people facing deportation. Many of those detained at Stewart are our age, and so anything they can collect closer to their age range is helpful. We collected over 30 items of clothing!

Emory Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) x 

Holiday Clothing Drive

Support immigrants at Stewart Detention Center and their families

Donate through Fri 12/15/23
Collection box by SOM Kaldi's

gently used:

- jeans
- casual pants
- sweatshirts
- light jackets
- t-shirts
- casual tops
- sneakers or walking shoes
- backpacks or duffels w/ working zipper

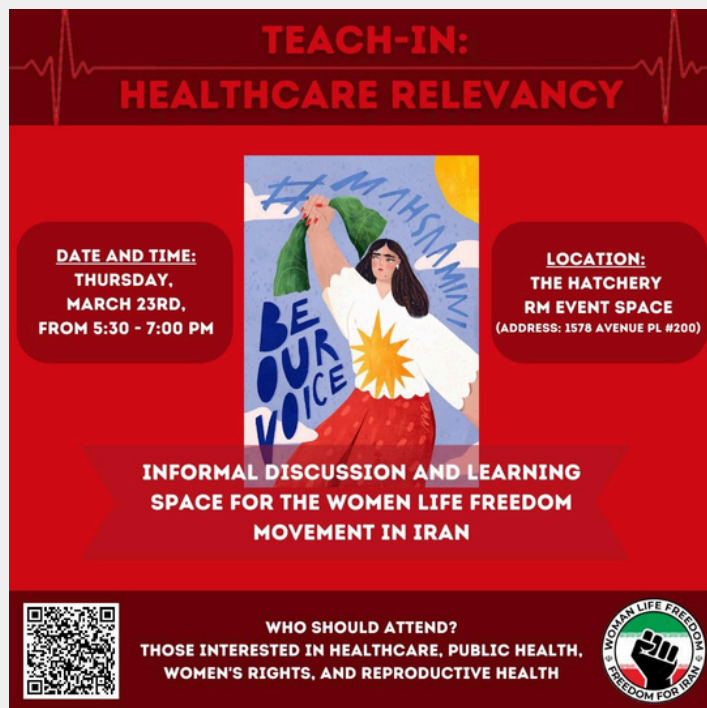
new:

- socks
- underwear
- sports bra (no metal clasps)

Other ways to support:

Donate directly! Target Registry

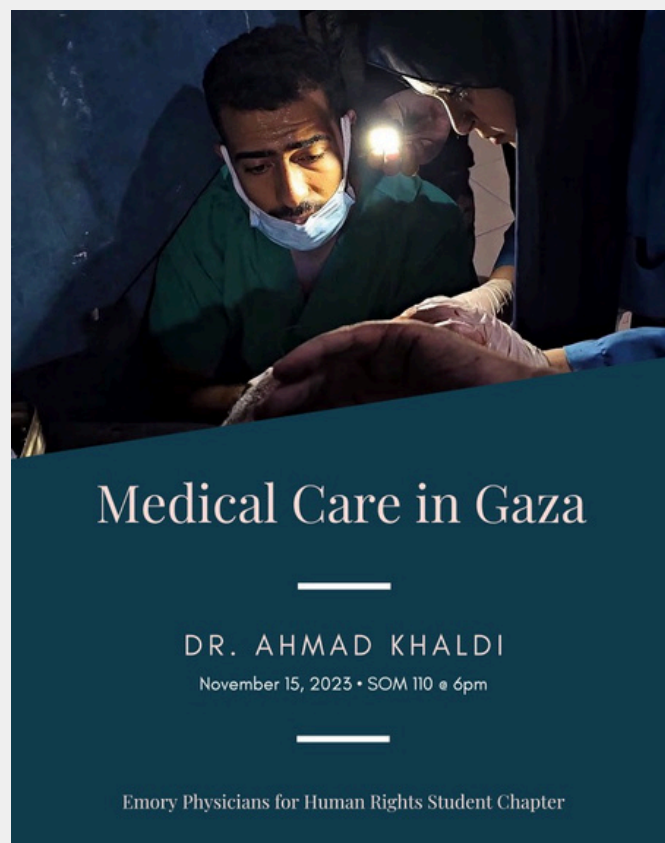


Women Life Freedom Movement Teach-In

PHR collaborated with student organizations at the EUSOM, Rollins School of Public Health, and the Emory Undergraduate College to host an event focused on the story of Mahsa Amini who died in police custody in Iran after being arrested for a dressing violation and what this means for trauma-informed care for victims of torture, women's rights, and the women life freedom movement in Iran and globally.

Medical Care in Gaza with Dr. Ahmad Kaldi

PHR hosted Dr. Ahmad Kaldi in November to talk about his experience as a board-certified neurosurgeon working in Gaza through the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), which provides free medical care to thousands of injured and ill children yearly who lack local access to care within their health system. The title of his talk was "Short Term vs Long Term: The Challenge of Medical Missions vs. Program Building."





Movie Screening of "The Swimmers"

PHR hosted a movie screening of "The Swimmers", on Wednesday, May 24th, 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at the School of Medicine.

About the film: From war-torn Syria to the 2016 Rio Olympics, two young sisters embark on a risky voyage, putting their hearts and their swimming skills to heroic use.

Panel on the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza

In light of the ongoing war in Gaza, PHR hosted a panel on "Responsibilities for Healthcare Professionals in the Face of Humanitarian Emergencies: Learning from Gaza."

Our invited speakers were Dr. Elizabeth Berger, a psychiatrist, Rep. Ruwa Romman, a Georgia State Representative, and Dr. Shatha Elnakib, a professor/scientist, speaking from the medical, legislative, and public health perspectives.



EDUCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



Medical student & healthcare providers can complete **an online training curriculum from the Asylum Medicine Training Initiative** to learn how to perform forensic evaluations. This free, asynchronous training program takes 5-7 hours to complete and can be found [here](#).

Emory School of Medicine now offers an **M4 elective on “Advocacy for Individuals Detained/Incarcerated”** taught by Drs. Amy Zeidan and Mark Spencer, with the inaugural cohort including some of our PHR M4s!

Through the [Art Social Justice Fellowship](#), Dr. Amy Zeidan taught **“BSHES 560R: Immigration as a Social Determinant of Health”** for Rollins MPH students, in collaboration with local artist [Kelly Taylor Mitchell](#).

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Those seeking opportunities are encouraged to join the Society for Asylum Medicine (SAM), which has an active email listserv and posts opportunities on its website:

<https://asylummedicine.com/>

- Twitter: [@GHRClinic](#)
- Instagram: [@georgiahumanrightsclinic](#)
- Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/ghrclinic>

Other amazing organizations and partners:

- [El Refugio](#)
- [The Center for Victims of Torture Georgia](#)
- [The Georgia Immigration Collaborative \(GIC\)](#)
- [Project South](#)
- [Tahirih Justice Center](#)
- [Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network \(GAIN\)](#)
- [Southern Poverty Law Center \(SPLC\)](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#)
- [Inspiritus](#)
- [Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights \(GLAHR\)](#)

Subscribe to the Physicians for Human Rights national organization emails [here](#)!

Sign up for emails from the PHR Student Advisory Board [here](#)!

A very special thanks to all the students that were a part of our 2023-2024 team and made all the work we do with our community partners and in the medical school possible.

Presidents:

Amritha Gourisankar &
Surabhi Beriwal

Scribe:

Isaree Pitaktong

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Ore Olakunle

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