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The Clooney Foundation for Justice Convenes Human Rights Leaders to Mark Official Launch of TrialWatch® Initiative

Clooney Foundation for Justice Partners with Microsoft, Columbia Law School, the American Bar Association, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to make justice systems more just

New York, April 25, 2019 – Today the Clooney Foundation for Justice (CFJ), together with partners Microsoft Corporation, Columbia Law School, the American Bar Association, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), are announcing the launch of its groundbreaking TrialWatch® initiative at an inaugural TrialWatch Conference and launch event.

“Courts around the world are increasingly being used to silence dissidents and target the vulnerable. But so far there has been no systematic response to this” said Amal Clooney, Co-President, Clooney Foundation for Justice. “The Clooney Foundation for Justice’s TrialWatch program is a global initiative to monitor trials, expose abuses, and advocate for victims, so that injustice can be addressed, one case at a time.”

TrialWatch is an initiative focused on monitoring and responding to trials around the world that pose a high risk of human rights violations. TrialWatch aims to be the first comprehensive global program scrutinizing criminal trials around the world. CFJ will recruit and train trial monitors, including non-lawyers, who can observe and report on criminal trials around the world, and use a specialised app to record the proceedings.

The Clooney Foundation for Justice will then work to expose injustice and rally support to secure justice for defendants whose rights have been violated. For each trial monitored, CFJ will work with an eminent legal expert to produce a Fairness Report assessing and grading the fairness of the trial against human rights standards, and, where necessary and possible, will be followed up with legal advocacy to assist a defendant in pursuing remedies in regional or international human rights courts. Ultimately, the data that is gathered will populate a global justice index that measures states’ performance in this area.

TrialWatch will focus on trials involving journalists, LGBTQ persons, women and girls, religious minorities, and human rights defenders. In recent months, TrialWatch monitors have observed proceedings in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. The cases have involved journalists being prosecuted under a wide variety of laws, including cyber laws,

administrative laws, and terrorism laws, in six countries. TrialWatch has covered a trial of individuals being prosecuted under anti-LGBTQ laws in sub-Saharan Africa and proceedings involving a journalist detained under India's National Security Act for criticizing the government on social media. TrialWatch monitors are also monitoring the trial of a lawyer in Eurasia, who is being prosecuted in connection with his work on behalf of human rights defenders and the trial of a journalist in Nigeria, who is being prosecuted for writing about internal government documents and refusing to reveal his source. Fairness reports are being produced to assess each of these trials, and many more trials will be monitored on an ongoing basis around the world.

CFJ has partnered with the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR) to develop an online training course for monitors. This course was developed by CFJ and approved by OHCHR.

“OHCHR is delighted to be partnering with the Clooney Foundation for Justice in TrialWatch, which will help deliver justice to some of the world's most vulnerable people. TrialWatch will help in ensuring that international fair trial standards are upheld and the voice of victims is heard. This is human rights advocacy in its purest form,” said United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet. “I am pleased that my Office has been able to help ensure that its online tools and materials adequately reflect international human rights norms and standards.”

CFJ has collaborated with [Microsoft](#) to develop a state-of-the-art application for TrialWatch monitors that captures and distills the information needed to make an assessment of the fairness of a trial and allows a monitor to capture multiple types of data in one place (e.g., a monitor's notes; answers to a uniform set of questions; documents; photo, audio, and video, etc.). The App also enables local language inputs, and uses Microsoft cloud, AI Cognitive Services technologies to transcribe and translate content into English, enabling legal experts to more quickly make their recommendations for action.

“This new technology will promote fairness in trials by making the world a witness to what happens inside courtrooms,” said Brad Smith, President of Microsoft. “The TrialWatch app we developed with the Clooney Foundation for Justice will help human rights advocates monitor trials and share this data instantly with experts around the world. This is a critical step in upholding justice where it often matters the most – when a defendant's freedom hinges on having a fair trial.”

CFJ has partnered with [Columbia Law School](#) to establish a clinical program in international fair trial rights, and a system for deploying law students to monitor and assist with the assessment of trials.

"The rule of law is the bedrock of just societies; it compels governments to safeguard human rights, and to act in an accountable and transparent manner," said Gillian Lester, Columbia Law School Dean and the Lucy G. Moses Professor of Law. "Our partnership with the Clooney Foundation for Justice will train law students as trial observers and deepen our international clinical offerings. Together, the TrialWatch initiative and Columbia Law School are actively advancing the rule of law and the fair administration of justice around the world."

And through its collaboration with the [American Bar Association](#) (ABA), TrialWatch is recruiting and deploying a global network of trial monitors.

“The American Bar Association Center for Human Rights has observed trials and provided pro bono assistance to vulnerable human rights defenders in 65 countries,” said Bob Carlson, President of the American Bar Association. “As threats against civil society and justice sector personnel are on the rise, the Clooney Foundation for Justice’s impressive commitment to increasing transparency and accountability in courtrooms around the world could not be more timely.”

At the launch event, CFJ Co-Presidents George and Amal Clooney, Brad Smith, President of Microsoft, Bob Carlson, President of the American Bar Association (ABA), Lee C. Bollinger, President of Columbia University, and Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will participate in a panel discussion about TrialWatch.

Anyone interested in becoming a trial monitor with TrialWatch should contact trialwatch@cfj.org. You can find the TrialWatch training course at www.trialwatchtraining.org.

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About the Clooney Foundation for Justice

The Clooney Foundation for Justice was established in late 2016 by George and Amal Clooney to advance justice in courtrooms, communities, and classrooms around the world. For more information on the Foundation and its work, please visit www.cfj.org.