

Human Rights Accountability of Non-Universally Recognised States and State-Like Entities

Call for abstracts

Date and venue: 16 May 2024, Utrecht University

Confirmed keynote speaker: Professor Jure Vidmar, Maastricht University

Organisers: Kushtrim Istrefi, Luca Pasquet, Lucas Roorda and Cedric Ryngaert (Utrecht Centre for Accountability and Liability Law)

The Utrecht Centre for Accountability and Liability Law (Ucall) is pleased to invite scholars and practitioners to submit abstracts for the upcoming workshop on 'Human Rights Accountability of Non-Universally Recognised States and State-Like Entities'.

The aim of the workshop is to explore the accountability for human rights violations of non-universally recognized States (e.g. Taiwan, Kosovo, Palestine), entities that exercise control in disputed territories (TRNC, Transdnistria), as well as sui generis subjects (e.g. Holy See) when they exercise state-like powers. Given the doubts surrounding these actors' international legal status, it is not always clear what human rights obligations they hold, what secondary rules of State responsibility apply to them and how other international actors, including international organizations, should engage with them on issues of accountability. In its [Report](#) of October 2022, for instance, the High Level Reflection Group of the Council of Europe defined the 'areas of conflict' such as Transnistria as 'black holes that shut out the light of accountability'.

The workshop aims at clarifying the human rights obligations and responsibility rules applicable to State-like entities and non-universally recognized States, as well as the role that international institutions play or should play to address human rights violations committed by these actors.

It also intends to delve into the strategic use of legal subjectivity by international actors, and its consequences for human rights accountability. Invoking or avoiding statehood may be two opposite strategies to escape accountability. An entity may decide to shield itself behind state prerogatives (e.g., immunity) or instead to hide in the grey area produced by the indeterminacy of the "non-state actor" category. Sometimes, it may try to do both. The Holy See is a case in point. On the one hand, it has invoked state immunity before national and international courts in a number of cases concerning children sex abuse. On the other, its 'sui generis' nature gives rise to more than one doubt concerning the applicability of State responsibility rules concerning the attribution of acts committed by Catholic priests to the Holy See. In other instances, international law's formalistic approach to statehood may make it difficult for non-universally recognized States, such as Palestine or Kosovo to join international organisations. Consequently, this may hinder the ability of international institutions to monitor human rights in non-universally recognized States and hold them accountable.

Besides mapping the strategic use of legal subjectivity and discussing its consequences, the workshop more generally aims at addressing the question of whether the current doctrine of international subjectivity is adequate to provide accountability for the acts of State-like entities.

Submission of abstracts

The organisers invite submissions on any of the above issues related to the aims of the workshop. Authors should submit an abstract (of no more than 300 words) and a short bio (or no more than 200 words) to Ms Louisa Handel-Mazzetti (l.m.handel-mazzetti@uu.nl) by 15 December 2023.

Funding

The organizers will provide funding for accommodation expenses to the selected participants. Early-career researchers are particularly encouraged to apply.

Publication Opportunity

After the workshop, authors will be invited to submit a full paper for consideration to be published as a special issue with a peer reviewed journal.