

## From WashU Law to A Global Treaty: The 2025 Spring Symposium

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As a former Managing Editor—and the co-organizer of *Global's* 2025 Spring Symposium, “From Academic Offering to Global Treaty: Negotiating a Convention on Crimes Against Humanity,”—I am thrilled for this issue of the *Global Studies Law Review* to be published. Further, as an alum, I am proud to represent *Global's* Class of 2025 by continuing a necessary conversation in a world filled with conflicts that keep devastating society's most vulnerable members.

Crimes against humanity are atrocities that disregard borders, affect society at large, and occur every day worldwide. Complicating matters, unlike the other primary categories of international crimes—genocide and war crimes—crimes against humanity lack a specific legal instrument. Filling this gap is essential if perpetrators are to be held accountable, victims are to receive justice, and further crimes are to be prevented.

Focusing on this gap in international law, the 2025 Spring Symposium explored how legal and institutional measures might address these crimes. The contributions collected in this issue examine this subject in depth. Rather than revisiting those arguments, this piece highlights the distinct historical and institutional significance of the Treaty on Crimes Against Humanity for Washington University School of Law (‘WashU Law’) and the *Washington University Global Studies Law Review*.

The long process of developing a treaty began at WashU Law in 2008 with the formation of a seven-person steering committee that consulted over 250 world-leading academics, practitioners, and policymakers. That committee—led by WashU Law's Prof. Leila Sadat, and with generous support from the Whitney R. Harris Institute and our own Prof. Stephen “Cash” Nickerson—recognized the need for a global convention on this issue and drafted a model treaty: *The Proposed Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity*.

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That model treaty inspired the International Law Commission (ILC) to develop a set of draft articles, published in 2019. Titled the “*Draft Articles on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity*,” these ILC articles gained momentum and sparked ongoing debates in the UN Sixth (Legal) Committee. On December 4, 2024, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 79/122, officially initiating a formal treaty negotiation process.

Now, efforts towards a treaty continues. Nearly twenty years after the steering committee began its work in Saint Louis, Missouri, the UN has set forth a five-year plan with Preparatory Committee meetings in 2026 and 2027, a Plenipotentiary Conference in 2028 and 2029, and—hopefully—adoption of the treaty at the conclusion of negotiations.

Even in the short time since we hosted the Symposium, significant progress has been made. The UN is ready to begin Preparatory Committee meetings, marking the formal initiation of treaty negotiations. However, as this five-year plan edges forward, crimes against humanity continue to occur every day.

That reality underscores why these atrocities must remain an essential and visible part of international legal discourse. I am honored to contribute to this issue alongside many other prominent voices in international law, advancing the ongoing conversations about these crimes.

In closing, thank you to Editor-in-Chief Adesola Orogade and the current *Global* team for inviting me to write this introduction, to my co-facilitators who made the Symposium a thrilling success, to Professor MJ Durkee for her leadership as *Global*'s faculty advisor, and to Dean Stefanie Lindquist for her support of our incredible journal.

But most importantly, thank you to the contributors and practitioners across the world who continue to fight against Crimes Against Humanity, and whose efforts will lead to a binding international treaty.