

2023 Year-End Update

[Make a Gift](#)

As we approach the close of 2023, it is with gratitude and reflection that we share the latest insights and accomplishments from the [War Crimes Research Office \(WCRO\)](#). The past year has presented us with new challenges, as new conflicts emerge and ongoing conflicts evolve. In the face of these challenges, the WCRO has continued to serve as a critical resource for tribunals and organizations dedicated to combating impunity for atrocity crimes and to offer students unparalleled opportunities to engage in projects that advance accountability for these crimes.

Legal and technical assistance, in-depth research and advocacy:

Through partnerships and collaborations, our team has been tirelessly engaged in comprehensive research and analysis, and providing specialized legal and technical assistance to mechanisms charged with investigating and prosecuting atrocity crimes, as well as civil society organizations representing victims in atrocity crime cases.



- Throughout 2023, the WCRO partnered with the Laboratorio de Justicia y Política Criminal (LJPC), a Colombian nongovernmental organization, on a new project entitled *Enhancing the Impact of Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) through a Holistic Transitional Justice Approach*.

- In November, the WCRO hosted a series of meetings in Washington with colleagues from SJP and LJPC. The meetings culminated with a panel moderated by WCRO Director Susana SáCouto and featuring SJP President Roberto Carlos Vidal Lopez and Vice President Belkis Florentina Izquierdo, with comments by LJPC Director Gina Cabarcas.



- In July, WCRO Director Susana SáCouto and Assistant Director Natalie Coburn submitted, in collaboration with the Due Process of Law Foundation, an amicus curiae brief in support of the families of the victims of the “El Mozote”, in which nearly 1,000 civilians (of which more than 550 were children) were killed by the Salvadoran Army in and around the village of El Mozote, in the Morazán Department of El Salvador, in December of 1981. The brief provided an analysis of victims’ rights in the case, which is now before the Court of Instruction in San Francisco Gotera in the Morazán Department of El Salvador.

Promoting accountability for gender-based atrocity crimes:

Throughout the year, the WCRO organized and participated in various initiatives designed to promote accountability for gender-based crimes, including:

- On March 23 and 24, 2023, the WCRO co-hosted the Third Workshop on Strategic Litigation on Gender-Based Violence in Latin America (3ra Mesa de Discusión sobre Litigio Estratégico en Materia de Violencia de Género en América Latina) with the Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Academy) and the Latin American Network for Gender-based Strategic Litigation ([ReLeG](#)) at WCL. This conference, funded by UN Women and supported by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), convened 44 Latin American legal professionals who work to promote accountability for sexual violence and other forms of gender violence. The event included ReLeG members from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, El Salvador, Mexico and Venezuela, as well as legal professionals from Brazil, Nicaragua, and Uruguay.



- In March, WCRO Director Susana SáCouto participated in three different panels at the 2023 American Society of International Law (ASIL) 117th Annual Meeting, where served as: 1) moderator of a panel entitled “A Hopeful Conversation: Overcoming impunity for sexual and gender based violence”; 2) speaker at “Women in International Law Interest Group (WILIG)” Business Meeting, where she was awarded the WILIG Scholarship Prize for the book [Gender and International Criminal Law](#) with co-editors Valerie Oosterveld and Indira Rosenthal, and 3) a panelist in the Closing Plenary entitled “Pursuing Global Accountability for Atrocity Crimes: Needs, Challenges and the Path Forward” with US Ambassador for Global Criminal Justice, Beth Van Schaack, among others.



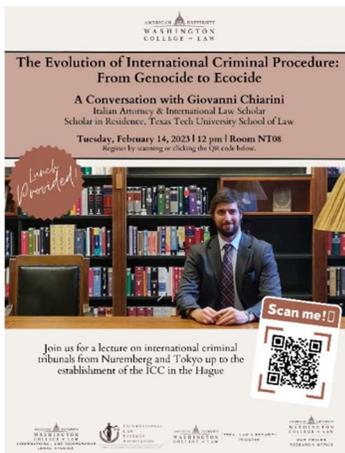
Public education and outreach:

Through its [War Crimes Speaker Series](#), the WCRO featured conversations about justice efforts around the world, including:



- A dialogue on “How the ‘Laws of War’ Apply to the Conflict Between Israel and Hamas.” In collaboration with the LL.M. Board and the Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the WCRO hosted an event that addressed the application of international humanitarian law (IHL) to the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel. The event was moderated by WCRO Director Susana SáCouto and featured Professor and IHL expert Robert Goldman.

- A Conversation with the ICC Registrar, where the WCRO and Academy of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law hosted ICC Registrar Osvaldo Zavala Giler. WCRO Director Susana SáCouto moderated the event, with introductory remarks provided by Academy Co-Director Claudia Martin. The event focused on the opportunities and challenges currently faced by the ICC.



- A panel on “The Evolution of International Criminal Procedure: From Genocide to Ecocide” with Giovanni Chiarini, an Italian Attorney, International Law Scholar, and Scholar in Residence at Texas Tech University School of Law, who presented a lecture on international criminal tribunals from Nuremberg and Tokyo up to the establishment of the ICC in the Hague. The event was sponsored alongside the Tech, Law and Security Program (TLS), the Office of International and Comparative Legal Studies (ICLS), and the International Law Student Association (ILSA).

- A discussion by current and former WCL students from Myanmar, Thi Thi Han and Alex Kaung Myet Ahkar, on the situation in Myanmar and recent developments in justice and accountability efforts there.



And WCRO staff participated in:



- An interview with WCRO Director Susana SáCouto by WCL's International Comparative & Legal Studies Program on ICC Case: Prosecutor v. Ongwen. The interview can be found [here](#).
- A panel on “Careers in International Law”, where WCRO Director Susana SáCouto joined WCL

faculty members Padideh Ala'i, Susan Frank, Ken Anderson and Janie Chuang to discuss pathways in International Business, National Security, War Crimes, Human Trafficking and International Arbitration. The event, co-sponsored by the Office of Career and Professional Development, the ABA International Section, and the International and Comparative Legal Studies program, aimed to show students what international practice means in today's world and where to find internships and jobs to gain experience.



Experiential education opportunities:

Throughout the year, the WCRO offered students unique opportunities to learn about and engage in projects promoting accountability for atrocity crimes, and helped students build essential legal and advocacy skills and establish connections critical to practicing in the fields of international criminal law and international justice, including:



- The [17th Annual Summer Law Program in The Hague](#), which provides students from WCL and other U.S. law schools an opportunity to learn about international criminal law and counterterrorism issues among the practitioners, courts, and tribunals that are making history today.

24 in The Hague, The Netherlands. The program,



The program, based on a long-term partnership between the War Crimes Research Office of Washington College of Law and the T.M.C. Asser Institute, was held in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, and drew 30 students, 24 from WCL and 6 from



other law schools including George Washington University, Columbia University, and University of Missouri in the United States, and Coventry University in England. The program's primary focus was the comprehensive study of international criminal law and the contemporary legal framework pertaining to counterterrorism in the 21st century.

- **Opportunities to engage in and support the WCRO's confidential and public research projects and programming through research assistant positions, the [International Criminal Law Practicum](#), and Independent Studies:** 13 students supported the WCRO's confidential and public research projects and programming.

- **IHL Moot Court Competitions:** [Ben Crawford](#), [Karen Reitan](#), and [Maura Schray](#) were selected and coached by the WCRO to represent WCL in the *2023 Clara Barton International Humanitarian Law Competition* and the *40th Edition of the Jean Pictet Competition*. The team were semi-finalists at the Clara Barton Competition and were recognized with an award for the high quality of their application brief.

- **Volunteer Opportunities:** More than 20 students and alumni volunteered on WCRO projects, including writing posts on news and jurisprudential developments coming out of international and other tribunals tasked with trying grave crimes for the [International Criminal Law Updates blog](#).



WCRO Alumni Council Updates:



- We are thrilled to announce that [Asma Kadri Keeler \(JD '16\)](#) joined the Alumni Advisory Council. Asma Kadri Keeler is currently Reproductive Rights Policy Counsel at the New York Civil Liberties Union. She has previously worked as a staff lawyer at the ACLU in Wisconsin and Colorado and clerked for Justice Thomas P. Mann at the Fairfax Circuit Court.

As we close out 2023, please consider joining us in our fight against impunity for atrocity crimes by making a [tax-deductible contribution](#) to the WCRO. Justice takes time. Your gift will support our continued work to assist practitioners on the ground, prepare the next generation of lawyers to join the fight for international justice, and enable public debate of critical issues in the field of international criminal law. If you would like to support our efforts to advance justice for atrocity crimes in Latin America, please consider making a contribution to the Fabiola Letelier Fund [here](#).

We thank you for your support and wish you a wonderful holiday season.

