



INTERNATIONAL LAW ASSOCIATION - QATARI BRANCH -

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Syrian Crisis and International Law

An International Conference
Doha, 25 – 26 February 2014
College of Law, Qatar University

Introduction

The College of Law, Qatar University and the Qatari Branch of the International Law Association are co-organizing an international conference focusing on 'The Syrian Crisis and International Law'. The conference is scheduled to take place on the 25th and 26th of February 2014, in Doha (Qatar). Invited speakers will include academics, diplomats, activists and legal practitioners who will discuss different aspects of International Law applicable to the Syrian crisis. The conference aims to not only revisit the tragic events that have occurred but also, most importantly, to think ahead in the quest for peace and justice. The overall objective is to exchange ideas and suggestions on the future of the rule of law in Syria.

Background

The crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic started in March 2011 with small-scale protests confined to a few cities. The protests were violently suppressed by the Government, leading to nationwide demonstrations and subsequently to a non-international armed conflict. Furthermore

recent developments raise the question of whether the conflict should be characterized as an international armed conflict instead. Owing to the failure to respond to the emerging crisis in a timely fashion, the conflict deepened and widened and new States and non-State actors became involved.

Syria remains a battlefield where tens of thousands of lives have been lost, millions of Syrians have been internally displaced and thousands others found refuge in neighboring countries. There is strong evidence of gross violations of human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Syria is another devastating example of international law as a crisis discipline: a field of study in which international lawyers tend to focus on ongoing crises for the development of international law.

Panel Sessions

The Conference will have four Panel Sessions in order to offer a holistic approach. The four Panels will thematically address Public International Law, International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, International Criminal Law and, lastly, the Syrian crisis in the International World Order. Interested participants are kindly requested to submit papers falling within the following general questions/issues.

A. Public International Law Panel

The inability of the UN Security Council to effectively address the Syrian crisis challenges once more the tenets of the contemporary system of collective security. Is the collective security system, as it stands, responsive to the needs of the international community? Do the humanitarian intervention or the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) constitute lawful and/or legitimate alternatives? Moreover, what is the applicability of the rules on the use of force and what are the State responsibility challenges in light of the role of the various States and non-State actors involved in the Syrian context (government forces, pro-government forces, anti-government armed groups)?

B. International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law Panel

The Syrian crisis furnishes strong evidence of gross and massive violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Still, international lawyers bear the responsibility to map and highlight the respective violations. Second, we should be in position to envisage how international humanitarian law and international human rights law may provide relief and serve justice to the victims. Do the victims of human rights abuses in Syria have viable options on the national and international level? How will the Syrian people exercise their right to truth and reparation in the future? How should the international community address the internal displacement of millions of Syrians and the thousands of refugees in the neighboring States? What are the relevant international obligations of the neighboring States? Finally, is there a shared responsibility on the international community to minimize the risks of a serious threat to regional and international peace and security?

C. International Criminal Law Panel

The Commission of Inquiry on Syria stated that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Government and affiliated militia as well as anti-Government armed groups committed core international crimes, violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In this respect what is the best way forward in order to ensure individual accountability and serve peace? What could be the role of the International Criminal Court? What other alternatives should we explore regarding criminal liability? Are there any best practices that could be followed as far as the national justice system and the establishment of a hybrid or international *ad hoc* tribunal are concerned? Further, are there any specific challenges arising in the context of the substantive international criminal law? For example, what is the current legal framework on the use of chemical weapons as a core international crime?

D. The Syrian Crisis and International World Order Panel

The Syrian crisis has not only posed a serious challenge to the interpretation and application of international laws, especially in the apparent discrepancies between enforcing international treaties and upholding the UN Charter, but it has also generated a critical debate on the shifting of sovereignty within the international world order expressed in the perceived decline of U.S. global supremacy and hegemony. While the Syrian crisis does not constitute the primary reason for this presumed shift, it has become the stage on which the rivalry for new global and regional balance of power has unfolded. In this regard, the fundamental question then becomes: Is there a real shift in the global order of power, and if so, how does this shift affect and impact the internal dynamics of the Syrian crisis? Moreover, what is the role of sectarian and ethno-geopolitics in fueling and sustaining the crisis? Finally, what are the implications of the potential change in the international order on the question of international law in the context of Syria?

Submission details

Interested participants should submit an abstract (800 words maximum) summarizing their argument and ideas that they intend to develop in their presentation. Abstracts should be sent to Dr Yaser Khalaileh (khalaileh@qu.edu.qa) or to Dr Adamantia Rachovitsa (rachovitsa@qu.edu.qa) by the **30th of December 2013**.

Please note that the invited speakers should submit their paper (or at least a work-in-progress version of their paper) until the **1st of February 2013**. Papers will be circulated beforehand to all participants to the Conference in an effort to engage in a productive discussion of pressing international law issues.

Publication of the papers

The speakers will be invited to submit their papers to be published in the International Review of Law. The [International Review of Law](#) has agreed to publish a selected number of the papers presented in the Conference subject to its peer-review process.

The International Law Review is an open-access, peer-reviewed, bilingual journal of law published by QScience.com. From its base in the Middle East, the journal aims to bring perspectives from around the world to developments in the law.

Conference Committee

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- 2) Dr Yaser Khalaileh (e-mail: khalaileh@qu.edu.qa)
- 3) Dr Adamantia Rachovitsa (e-mail: rachovitsa@qu.edu.qa)
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