



**Dr. Cecilia Jacob**

**THE HUMAN PROTECTION TRANSNATIONAL LEGAL ORDER:  
HUMANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ACCOUNTABILITY NORMS**

**MPIL Agora**

**20 December, 2023, 15:00-16:00, Room 014**

In recent years, we have witnessed a dramatic transformation in the accountability landscape, with new practices in mobilizing an array of accountability mechanisms as a direct response to deficits in the protection of populations. Transnational efforts to pursue accountability for international crimes committed by Russia since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are unprecedented. However, this ‘accountability turn’ in situations of mass atrocity and violent conflict did not emerge in a vacuum, and events in Ukraine illuminate a trend towards the growing remit of international accountability during hostilities. This paper maps the emergence of a transnational legal order (TLO) on human protection. It argues that the humanization of international law – the process of elevating individual human rights across all domains of international law – serves as an ontological anchor for legal efforts to address the deficits in the global politics of protection through accountability at the heart of this TLO.

In this presentation, I propose a wider conceptualisation of the interface between international relations and international law and examine new avenues for IR scholarship on the role of international norms in global ordering. It shows where a range of actors across the international justice ecosystem have exercised creative agency to leverage international law and norms in direct response to deficits within multilateralism. These efforts to ‘fill the gaps’ play a functional role in the regulatory governance of human protection at the global level. This dimension of global governance, I propose, is more fully captured through an IR engagement with the concept of transnational legal ordering. It also critically reflects on the effects of ‘atrocitizing’ or ‘criminalising’ human rights to advance protection.



**About the Speaker**

Cecilia Jacob is Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University. Her work focuses on civilian protection, mass atrocity prevention, and international human protection norms. Cecilia is editor of *Global Responsibility to Protect* and chairs the Asia-Pacific Working Group of Global Action Against Mass Atrocities (GAAMAC). Her books include *Child Security in Asia: The Impact of Armed Conflict in Cambodia and Myanmar*, and edited volumes *Civilian Protection in the Twenty-First Century: Governance and Responsibility in a Fragmented World* and *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect: A Future Agenda*. Cecilia has worked as a consultant for the UN Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect and has been a visiting fellow at the Institute for Ethics Law and Armed Conflict at the University of Oxford, and at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies at the City University of New York. She is currently an Australian Research Council Fellow and is completing a book manuscript titled *A Day of Reckoning: Human Protection in an Age of Accountability*.

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