

# Women in International Law Interest Group

## Note from the Co-Chairs

Dear WILIG Members,

It was very nice to see many of you at the ASIL Annual Meeting in Washington DC. We hope that you enjoyed the discussion with Gillian Triggs, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Commissioner for Protection at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the luncheon in her honor, the panel discussion with WILIG Scholarship Prize awardees Indira Rosenthal, Valerie Oosterveld, and Susana SáCouto, as well as Catherine O'Rourke, and the coffee networking hour for current and former WILIG mentors and mentees. Below, we provide information on WILIG's recent activities and upcoming opportunities. We hope you stay well and take advantage of these opportunities to engage with WILIG. We also request your thoughts and feedback for future activities.

We wish you all productive and enjoyable summers!

## WILIG Panel Activities

### Confronting Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan through International Law

WILIG held a Zoom Webinar event on March 8, 2023 [International Women's Day], which served as a platform for the voices of Afghan women since Taliban's return to power in August 2021. This event was co-sponsored by the Human Rights, Minorities in International Law, and International Criminal Law Interest Groups.

The event was moderated by Hannah R. Garry - Clinical Professor of Law, USC Gould School of Law and Founding Director of the Human Rights Clinic with the following speakers:

- Zubaida Akbar - Freedom Now, a leading women's rights and civil society activist from Afghanistan, she was one of the speakers at the UN Human Rights Council's Urgent Debate on the Situation of Women and Girls in Afghanistan;

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## Women in International Law Interest Group

### WILIG Officers

#### Co-Chairs

Meg deGuzman  
Yvonne Dutton

#### Mentoring Program Coordinator

Lucia Solano

#### Secretary

Suhong Yang

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- Karima E. Bennoune - Louis M. Simes Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law, former Special Rapporteur for Cultural Rights & author of “The International Obligation to Counter Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan”, Columbia Human Rights Law Review 2022;
- Horia Mosadiq - Director of Safety and Risk Mitigation Organization (SRMO), an Afghan human rights defender and journalist, former Executor Director of the Conflict Analysis Network, and researcher with Amnesty International for 10 years;
- Yalda Royan - Voice Amplified, a highly respected Afghan human rights defender and expert on Hazara rights, she was working as a consultant for the World Bank to respond to issues of gender-based violence in the public health sector when she was evacuated to the United States in August 2021. She recently addressed the Security Council on the situation of women in her country.

## Panel on Gender Persecution Policy

WILIG organized a webinar on Gender Persecution Policy on April 17, 2023. This session was co-sponsored by the Public International Law & Policy Group.

War-time abuses against women, girls, LGBTIQ persons are not new. They are as old as human history, appearing in modern international criminal law records as far back as World War II. Yet, beyond sexual violence, gender-based crimes are rarely documented when they happen and perpetrators are hardly ever held accountable for them. As a result, these crimes are often excluded from consideration by tribunals, and in effect, are left out of history. To address this, the OTP embarked on a year-long process to develop a new policy paper on the crime against humanity of persecution on the grounds of gender. This roundtable discussed the development of the policy paper, the legal substance and how it would guide the ICC OTP,

and the ways governments and civil society could utilize the text in national and local settings.

### Speakers:

- Ana Elena Abello Jiménez, Specialized Professional Grade/Rank 33, Special Jurisdiction of Peace (JEP) Colombia;
- Lisa Davis (moderator), Associate Professor of Law, CUNY Law School and Special Advisor on Gender Persecution to the ICC Prosecutor;
- Karim A.A. Khan, KC, International Criminal Court Prosecutor;
- Jessica Stern, US Special Envoy for the Advancement of the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons;
- Beth Van Schaack, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice.

## Panel on Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Africa

WILIG co-sponsored an event on Maternal, Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Africa with ASIL's Africa Interest Group. It took place via zoom on Friday, May 26, 2023.

The African continent has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world with 15,000 preventable deaths due to unsafe abortions and one in five adolescents becoming pregnant before the age of 19, according to the Center for Reproductive Rights. While induced abortion is medically safe when WHO-recommended methods are used by trained persons, the Guttmacher Institute reports that an estimated 93% of women of reproductive age in Africa live in countries with restrictive abortion laws. Considering Africa's reliance on international development aid from the United States and the recent Supreme Court reversal of *Roe v Wade*, this panel discussed what impact, if any, this may have had on maternal,

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## WILIG Annual Meeting Events

### Second Biennial WILIG Scholarship Prize Awarded

In 2021, WILIG created the biannual WILIG Scholarship Prize to highlight and promote excellence in international law scholarship involving women and girls, gender, and feminist approaches. The first scholarship was awarded to Irimi Papanciopolulu for her work on gender and the law of the sea at the WILIG Luncheon at the 2021 ASIL Annual Meeting.

On October 5, 2022, WILIG announced the winners of its scholarship prizes in three categories:

- Best article to Dr. Ramona Vijeyarasa: “Quantifying CEDAW: Concrete Tools for Enhancing Accountability for Women’s Rights” (Harvard Human Rights Journal, 2021);
- Best book to Professors Valerie Oosterveld, Indira Rosenthal, and Susana SaCouto (co-editors): “Gender and International Criminal Law” (OUP, 2022); and

- Honorable Mention in the book category to Professor Catherine O’Rourke: “Women’s Rights in Armed Conflict under International Law” (CUP, 2020).

The WILIG Scholarship Prize Committee was comprised of Prof. Yvonne Dutton, Prof. MJ Durkee, Prof. Chiara Georgetti, Prof. Alex Huneeus, and Prof. Laurence Boisson de Chazournes. The Committee reviewed many excellent submissions, both articles and books, on a broad array of topics pertaining to women and girls, including women’s rights, feminist approaches, and gender issues.

WILIG awarded its second biennial Scholarship Prize at the 2023 Annual Meeting, and the WILIG Business Meeting featured a panel presentation of this year’s WILIG Scholarship Prize awardees Indira Rosenthal, Valerie Oosterveld and Susana SáCouto (eds), discussing their book, *Gender and International Criminal Law* (OUP, 2022), and Catherine O’Rourke, discussing her book, *Women’s Rights in Armed Conflict under International Law* (CUP, 2020). The panel focused on whether and how feminist work, exemplified through the authors’ books, speaks to and permeates the ‘mainstream’ of international legal scholarship and practice. The panel reflected on how gender has become part of the mainstream of international law, how that mainstream sometimes misunderstands gender, and how gender is excluded from the mainstream in certain ways.

### Recent and Ongoing Activities —continued from page 2

sexual, and reproductive rights on girls and women in Africa.

Speakers:

- Linda Gibson (moderator), Nottingham Trent University
- Satang Nabaneh, University of Dayton Human Rights Center
- Charles Ngwena, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
- Onikepe Owolabi, IntraHealth International

These three panel events can be viewed on the WILIG website: <https://www.asil.org/community/women-international-law>. ■

### New WILIG Prominent Women in International Law Prize Awarded

At the 2023 Annual Meeting, WILIG awarded the Prominent Women in International Law award to Gillian Triggs, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Commissioner for Protection at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The award recognizes the work of women who use international law to advance women and women’s rights, break through the glass ceilings for women in international law, and promote women and women’s voices in the

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field. Gillian Triggs is a public international lawyer who has held various appointments in service to human rights and the refugee cause, including as President of the Australian Human Rights Commission. Gillian oversees UNHCR's protection work in support of millions of refugees, asylum-seekers, those who have been forcibly displaced within their own country and stateless.



As usual, the presentation was followed by a luncheon, which enabled members to connect with our guest of honor and each other. Please watch for an announcement in a few months soliciting nominations for next year's prize.



## Coffee Networking Hour

At the 2023 Annual Meeting, we hosted a Coffee Networking Hour for current and former WILIG Mentors and Mentees. It was a great success with around 30 attendees. We look forward to organizing another one at the Mid-Year Meeting. ■





## WILIG Mentoring Programs

### Mentoring Program

Through the Mentoring Program, now in its tenth year, WILIG is supporting the professional development of 299 mentees, with over 60 mentors across the globe, in Africa, Asia, North American, Europe, and Latin America. Mentoring is taking place virtually, with about five to six mentees for every mentor. Mentors and mentees meet online approximately once a month during the academic year to discuss topics of mutual interest and engage in activities designed to help junior women enter and be successful in the field of international law.

A graduation ceremony was held on June 28, 2023, featuring a conversation with Judge Hilary Charlesworth.

Applications for the 2023-24 Mentoring Program will be open soon. For more information about the mentoring program, please contact our Mentoring Program Coordinator, Lucia Solano, at [wiligmentorship@asil.org](mailto:wiligmentorship@asil.org).

### Summer Scholarship Mentoring Program

We launched a new Junior/Senior Summer Scholarship mentoring program in May 2023. The idea is to help younger academics and women interested in entering academia to secure mentoring and support as they pursue academic careers. WILIG matched all seven applicants with mentors this year and we hope to expand the program next summer. Although meeting logistics are up to each pair, they ideally meet once in June to discuss the paper concept, once in July to review an early draft, and once in August to review a more developed draft.

## Requests for Thoughts and Feedback

We would like to hear from you. What would you like to see WILIG do this year and beyond? Would you like to co-sponsor an event with WILIG involving women and international law at your law school, law firm, NGO, international organization or elsewhere? If so, please reach out to Meg or Yvonne (emails below).

If you are running an event that may be of interest to WILIG's membership, please contact Suhong Yang at [sy510@georgetown.edu](mailto:sy510@georgetown.edu) and we will share information about it with our members and in our next newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Best regards,

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