

2025 YEAR-END UPDATE



WAR CRIMES RESEARCH OFFICE

As 2025 draws to a close, we take a moment to celebrate the impact and progress of the War Crimes Research Office (WCRO) over the past year. From advancing accountability for atrocity crimes to empowering the next generation of legal professionals, WCRO has continued to play a vital role in promoting justice.

In a year marked by growing demands for accountability, our commitment to supporting tribunals, strengthening transitional justice processes, and providing transformative opportunities for students has never been more important. Join us as we look back on the milestones that defined 2025 and the work that drives us forward.

Legal and technical assistance, in-depth research and advocacy

Through partnerships and collaborations, our team continued to provide 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.

Supporting Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace

- This year, the WCRO continued its collaboration with the Laboratorio de Justicia y Política Criminal (LJPC), a Colombia-based non-profit organization, to implement a multi-year project entitled ***Enhancing the Impact of Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) through a Holistic Transitional Justice Approach***.
- The project has four key objectives: 1) strengthening the capacity of the JEP to redress atrocity crimes committed during the Colombian conflict; 2) ensuring the SJP's cases reflect a holistic approach, including crimes directed against women and girls; 3) enhancing victim participation in SJP processes; and 4) bolstering current efforts to ensure that victims and perpetrators have access to competent and independent legal representation.



- WCRO staff traveled twice to Bogotá in 2025 for meetings with key partners. The September visit was particularly significant, aligning with the JEP's historic release of its first restorative justice sentences in landmark cases against former FARC combatants and ex-military officers — a pivotal moment for transitional justice in Colombia



- In November, the WCRO hosted a panel on the *SJP's contributions to transitional justice* moderated by WCRO Director Susana SáCouto. The panel featured LJPC founding partners Juanita Durán Vélez and Miguel Emilio la Rota, as well as SJP Magistrate Julieta Lemaitre Ripoll and LJPC lawyer Valentina Diaz Moya. The panelists shared insights on the inner workings of the SJP as well as the tribunal's progress on the various Macro-Cases it is trying, including recent judgments released in Macro-Cases 001 and 003.

Advancing the Draft Crimes Against Humanity Treaty: WCRO's Role in Global Advocacy

- This year, the WCRO contributed to the American Branch of the International Law Association's efforts to strengthen the proposed treaty on crimes against humanity. As part of the ABILA Study Group, the WCRO provided expert input on two critical issues—the definition and scope of persecution and the articulation of modes of liability—to help ensure the treaty reflects the most up-to-date international standards, reinforcing global efforts to prevent and punish the gravest crimes.
- In October, the WCRO co-sponsored AU's International Law Review 2025 Symposium on Crimes Against Humanity, Atrocity, and Genocide Prevention: From Norms to Obligation, along with Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. WCRO Director SáCouto served as a panelist on the "Domestic and International Strategies for Atrocity Prevention" panel.





- In December, WCRO Director SáCouto participated in a Workshop on Civil Society and the Crimes Against Humanity Treaty in The Hague, where she spoke on proposals to amend the draft statute related to reproductive violence.



- Also in December, WCRO Director SáCouto moderated a side event during the 23rd session of the ICC Assembly of States Parties titled

The Latin American Experience in Gender Justice and Its Contribution to the Crimes Against Humanity Treaty Initiative. The discussion showcased groundbreaking efforts in Latin America to prosecute gender-based crimes under international law in domestic courts—and explored how these experiences can inform global debates on the treaty as negotiations move forward.

Pursuing Accountability for Irregular Armed Groups

- The WCRO entered a new partnership with C4ADS and the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative as part of a consortium led by C4ADS on a project aimed at exploring accountability options for crimes committed by irregular armed groups. This collaborative effort seeks to develop innovative strategies and legal frameworks to address serious crimes perpetrated by non-state actors, strengthening mechanisms for justice and accountability in complex conflict settings.

Promoting accountability for conflict-based sexual violence and other gender-based atrocity crimes

Throughout 2025, the WCRO continued to lead and engage in initiatives aimed at promoting accountability for gender-based crimes. These efforts included:

Advocacy before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights: the Celia Edith Ramos Durand y Familiares vs. República del Perú case

- WCRO Director SáCouto, in collaboration with Washington College of Law (WCL) Human Rights Academy Co-Director Claudia Martin and Human Rights Specialist Helena Rodriguez, presented an Amicus Brief to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of *Celia Edith Ramos Durand y Familiares vs. República del Perú*. The case concerns the death of Ms. Ramos Durand as a consequence of a non-consensual sterilization performed under Peru's "National Reproductive Health and Family Planning Program," implemented between 1996 and 2000.

Conversations on accountability for conflict related sexual violence and other gender-based crimes

- *New York State Bar Association Presidential Summit on Conflict Related-Sexual Violence*



- In January, WCRO Director SáCouto joined fellow panelists at the New York State Bar Association's Annual Meeting to address the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. The panel addressed the legal and human ramifications of sexual atrocity crimes, prosecution of such crimes, and the vital need for greater accountability and support systems for victims.

- *Human Rights Brief Symposium on Vulnerability in the Law*

- In February, WCRO Director Susana SáCouto served as a panelist at the Human Rights Brief Spring Symposium on Vulnerability in the Law, hosted by the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of



Law. WCRO Director SáCouto spoke on the panel "Prosecuting Gender-Based Crimes as International Crimes: Challenges and Opportunities," alongside Lindsay Freeman, Director of Technology, Law & Policy at the Human Rights Center, UC Berkeley School of Law, with moderation by WCL JD student, Amal Rass. The discussion focused on the advances and continuing challenges in the investigation and prosecution of gender-based crimes as international crimes, including the growing role of digital evidence in these cases.

• *Hostage-Taking, Torture, and Women: Perspectives Under International Law*



- In March, in honor of international women’s day, the Kovler project against torture hosted the panel hostage-taking, torture, and women: perspectives under international law.” WCRO Director Susana SáCouto joined the panel to share insights on advances and challenges in the investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence in the context of abductions and hostage taking.

• *25th Anniversary of the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal*



- Later in March, WCRO Director SáCouto served as a guest speaker for an event entitled “Justice Beyond Borders: Advancing the Women’s Tribunal’s Legacy to Prosecute War Crimes Against Women.” The event, held in New York City, honored the legacy of the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery, reflecting on the Tribunal’s ongoing relevance to the fight for justice and reparations for conflict-related sexual violence.

- *ABA Session on Women, Peace, and Security*



- On July 16, 2025, WCRO Director Susana SáCouto served as a panelist alongside Patricia Elias (Former Senior Gender Advisor for the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States) and Sahana Dharmapuri (Vice President, Our Secure Future; Vice President, PAX sapiens Foundation). The discussion examined the legacy and implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, highlighting the central role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and security efforts.

- *4th Discussion Roundtable on Strategic Litigation on Gender-Based Violence in Latin America*

- On October 30 and 31, the WCRO joined the Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law to host the 4th Discussion Roundtable on Strategic Litigation on Gender-Based Violence in Latin America (ReLEG). The Roundtable fostered reflection, collaboration, and knowledge exchange among ReLeG members, partner organizations, and experts from across Latin America. It served as a platform to share research findings, introduce new tools and protocols, and discuss strategies to strengthen national and regional efforts against gender-based violence, addressing both ongoing challenges and emerging issues in the region.



• *Panel of Sexual Violence in El Salvador*

- In December, WCRO Director Susana SáCouto participated in the hybrid Spanish-language event “Lo contamos para que no vuelva a pasar,” focused on conflict-related sexual violence during El Salvador’s armed conflict. The conversation brought together regional experts and partners to reflect on survivor-centered pathways to truth, accountability, and non-repetition.



Lo contamos para que no vuelva a pasar
Violencia sexual en el conflicto armado en El Salvador

Martes 11 de diciembre
Evento híbrido: 2629 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20008 | Online via Zoom
12:00 pm Washington DC / 11:00 am San Salvador
RSVP: www.bit.ly/locontamos-sv

PANELISTAS:
Leonor Arteaga
Directora de Programa, DPLF
David Morales
Jefe de Justicia Transicional, Cristosal
Susana SaCouto
Directora War Crime Research Office, Washington College of Law, American University
Clara Sandoval
Directora de Programas, GSF
Delia Sánchez
Responsable del Estudio Global, GSF

GLOBAL SURVIVORS FUND
FOR AND WITH SURVIVORS OF
CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

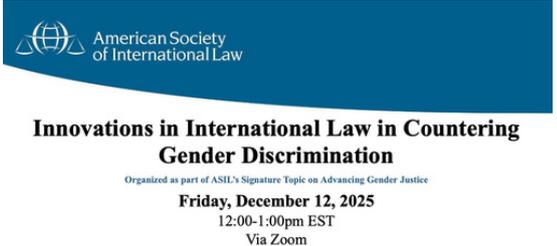
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dplf | Fundación para el Debido Proceso

• *American Society of International Law (ASIL) Panel on Innovations in International Law in Countering Gender Discrimination*

- Also in December, WCRO Director Susana SáCouto served as a panelist on Innovations in International Law in Countering Gender Discrimination, organized as part of ASIL’s Signature Topic on Advancing Gender Justice.

The discussion explored how international law is shaping new responses to gender discrimination amid growing challenges to women’s and LGBTQIA+ rights. SáCouto highlighted innovative approaches emerging in Latin America to strengthen gender-responsive accountability.



American Society of International Law

Innovations in International Law in Countering Gender Discrimination
Organized as part of ASIL’s Signature Topic on Advancing Gender Justice
Friday, December 12, 2025
12:00-1:00pm EST
Via Zoom

Public education and outreach

The WCRO continued to advance public education on international criminal law and human rights issues through its War Crimes Speaker Series and other initiatives, including:

Mass Atrocities in Sudan

- On April 7th, the WCRO hosted a panel discussion entitled “Mass Atrocities in Sudan: How to Give Effect to the U.S. Determination of Genocide and End the Conflict?” co-sponsored by WCL’s Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the NYU SPS Center for Global Affairs, the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, and the American Society of International Law. The event explored the implications of the

United States’s determination of genocide in Sudan. WCRO Director SáCouto co-moderated the panel, which offered critical insight and in-depth analyses of potential mechanisms of accountability for those responsible for the atrocities.



Career Power Hour

- On October 16th, WCRO Director SáCouto moderated a Career Panel sponsored by the WCRO and Office of Career & Professional Development. The session featured WCRO alumni council members sharing their career journeys, valuable advice, and tips on



navigating the human rights, international humanitarian law and international criminal law field. Panelists included: Vy Nguyen (JD '15), Tara Vassefi (JD '16), Azma Kadri Keeler (JD '15), Mina Trudeau (JD '12), and Ben Crawford (JD '24). The event provided an excellent opportunity for students to engage with alumni and learn firsthand about their day-to-day work and legal career paths.

American Society for Criminology Presidential Panel: Intersections of Justice, Law, and Policy in Latin America: Emerging Opportunities to Tackle Serious and Organized Crime

- WCRO Director SáCouto delivered a presentation on “Balancing Global and Local Justice: The International Criminal Court and Latin American Domestic Efforts” at the Presidential Panel on Intersections of Justice, Law and Policy in Latin America: Emerging Opportunities to Tackle Serious/Organized Crime Session of the 80th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology.



Experiential education opportunities

Throughout 2025, the War Crimes Research Office (WCRO) provided students with unique opportunities to deepen their understanding of international criminal law and engage in impactful projects that promote accountability for atrocity crimes. These experiences not only helped students develop essential legal and advocacy skills, but also enabled them to build valuable professional connections crucial for careers in international criminal law and justice.

- ***19th Annual Summer Law Program in The Hague***

- One of the standout offerings was the **19th Annual Summer Law Program in The Hague**, held from May 26th to June 20th in The Hague, Netherlands. The program offered students from WCL and other U.S. law schools the unique opportunity to engage directly with leading practitioners, courts, and tribunals shaping the future of international justice and counterterrorism.
- The program, which is a long-standing collaboration between WCL's War Crimes Research Office and the T.M.C. Asser Institute, welcomed 37 students – 31 from WCL and 6 from other law schools, including University of Huston, University of California-Davis, University of Oxford, Washington University of St. Louis, Hamline University, and University of Tulsa.



- During the program, WCRO Director SáCouto moderated a career panel with WCL alums Eric Iverson JD '06, Anand Shah JD '09 and Emma Brandon JD'17, as well as acting Academic Director at Asser Christophe Paulussen.



- ***Other opportunities: Research Assistants, International Criminal Law Practicum, and Independent Studies***

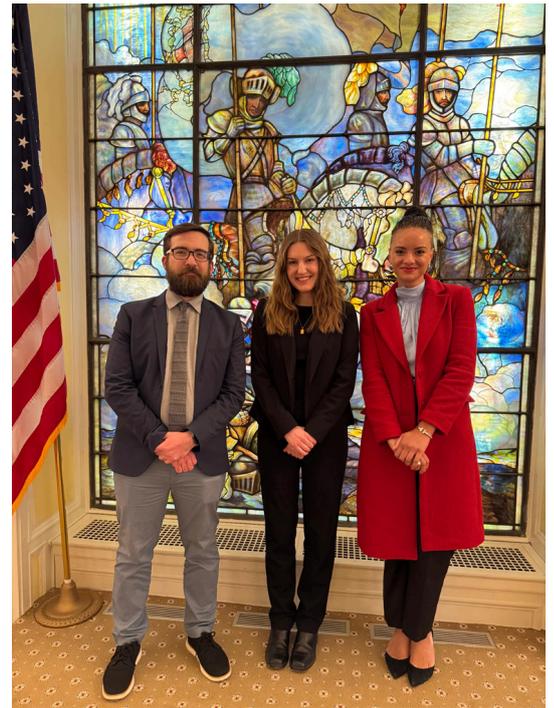
- 20 students supported the WCRO's confidential and public research projects and programming.



- As part of the International Criminal Law Practicum taught by WCRO Director Susana SáCouto, four students joined her for the American Branch's International Law Weekend (ILW) conference in New York City in October. The two-and-a-half-day event, focused on *Crisis as Catalyst in International Law*, featured over 30 panels and brought together many of the world's leading international lawyers and diplomats. Students actively participated by attending sessions on the draft Crimes Against Humanity treaty, taking notes, and seizing valuable opportunities to network with practitioners and experts in the field

• [IHL MootCourt Competitions](#)

From March 21–23, 2025, AUWCL students Paige Carter, Olivia Kaempf, and Tim Streit represented American University Washington College of Law at the 12th Annual Clara Barton International Humanitarian Law Competition, earning an impressive second-place finish. Hosted by the American Red Cross, this premier simulation-based competition challenges participants to apply international humanitarian law (IHL) in real-world crisis scenarios through immersive role-playing exercises. The AUWCL team showcased exceptional advocacy and legal expertise, with Olivia Kaempf receiving the Best Oral Advocate award. The team also earned Honorable Mention for Best Application Brief.



Prior to Clara Barton, the team represented AUWCL at the Jean-Pictet International Humanitarian Law Competition, held February 22–March 1, 2025, in Indonesia. The Jean-Pictet Competition is a globally recognized event that immerses participants in real-world applications of IHL through intensive role-playing exercises. The team was selected and coached by WCRO Director Susana SáCouto, along with Jean-Pictet alumni Amal Rass (3L) and Jack Kirk, JD '24.

• [Volunteer Opportunities](#)

More than 30 students and alumni volunteered on WCRO projects, including cite-checking and 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](#).

Kosovo Specialist Chambers update: 24 October – 12 November 2025

ON NOVEMBER 23, 2025 / BY RYAN MEISTER / IN KOSOVO SPECIALIST CHAMBERS
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4 November 2025: Upon request by the Thaçi defense, the Trial Panel found that the Special Prosecutor's Office had not provided detailed notice to the Defense of some material and evidence in its possession. (Via Kosovo Specialist Chambers Update). This is a violation of Rule 102(3). However, the Panel found these disclosures were made without ...

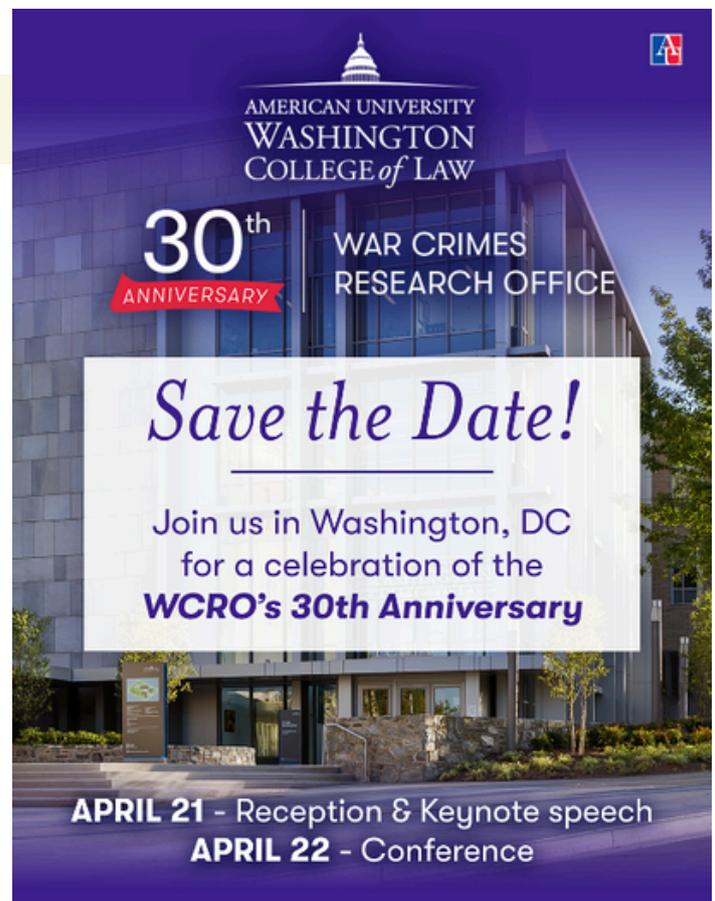
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WCRO Alumni Council Updates

- **Christian M. De Vos** has joined CUNY School of Law as a Visiting Assistant Professor. He previously taught in CUNY's Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic, lecturing and supervising student projects. Before joining CUNY's faculty, Christian was the Research and Investigations Director at Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), where he managed all aspects of PHR's research and helped oversee its rapid response initiatives.
- **Ben Crawford** has taken a position as in-house counsel for Tenstreet. He is also the chairperson and founder of the Clara Barton Commission for the American Red Cross IHL Program, and an LL.M. candidate at Georgetown University Law Center pursuing his Master of Laws in National Security Law with a specialization in International Human Rights Law.

WCRO 30th Anniversary

In 2026, the War Crimes Research Office will mark its **30th Anniversary** with a special celebration in Washington, DC! For three decades, WCRO has been at the forefront of advancing accountability for atrocity crimes, supporting international and hybrid courts, and shaping the future of international justice. This milestone is not just a look back—it's a chance to honor our impact and envision what's next. Stay tuned for event details and registration information—don't miss this historic celebration!



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

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