

Research Handbook on Human Rights in Times of Crisis

Human rights law and practice are operating in increasingly adverse environments globally. Across a range of settings, crises and sustained conditions of stress are reshaping the contexts in which human rights norms are invoked, contested and applied. This Research Handbook will explore how human rights norms can nevertheless bring about change under such conditions, and how human rights obligations can be made meaningful in environments marked by political resistance, institutional fragility, conflict and structural harm.

The volume will address contemporary challenges in the human rights landscape, including democratic erosion, strategic non-compliance with regional court and UN decisions, migration and national security as sites of intense political contestation, conflicts in which traditional supervision models are strained, institutional withdrawal or disengagement, and large-scale harms such as climate change and systemic discrimination. We are particularly interested in innovative and original contributions that engage with under-explored ideas, mechanisms and forms of practice.

For example, the Research Handbook will consider issues such as

- Responses to political contestation and backlash
- Responses to strategic non-compliance and legal resistance
- Financial and economic leverage (sanctions, frozen assets, funding architectures)
- Innovative strategies for human rights protection in migration, national security, climate, gender, race, and socio-economic contexts
- Change in conflict settings (including Gaza, Syria, Sudan, Iran, and other contexts where supervision models are strained)
- Post-conflict and transitional innovation
- Institutional redesign (domestic and supranational)

We welcome contributions from a wide range of perspectives and professional backgrounds, including scholars, judges, diplomats, current and former government officials, prosecutors, NGO leaders, strategic litigators, funders, investigative specialists, and others working in related fields. The Research Handbook aims to bring academic and practitioner perspectives into productive conversation.

We are open to doctrinal, empirical, socio-legal, and interdisciplinary contributions. In addition to standard-length academic chapters of approximately 8,000–10,000 words, we also welcome proposals for shorter analytical interventions and scholar-practitioner co-authored pieces of approximately 4,000–5,000 words.

Submissions

If you are interested in contributing, please send an abstract of 300–500 words to p.leach@mdx.ac.uk and anne.heinisch@ugent.be by 15 July 2026.

Abstracts should set out the proposed topic, the central argument or intervention, and the contribution the chapter would make to the overall theme of the volume. We also welcome informal enquiries in advance from prospective contributors who would like to discuss possible ideas.

Contributors whose proposals are accepted will be invited to submit their full chapter by March 2027. The Research Handbook is scheduled for publication in 2028 by Edward Elgar Publishing as part of its Research Handbooks in Human Rights series.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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