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# Repro-Just

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**Advancing Reproductive Justice in International Criminal Law**

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UpRights

Reproductive violence remains an under-recognised and under-prosecuted category of gender-based violence (GBV) in international criminal law (ICL), despite its negative impact on bodily autonomy, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. While international human rights law (IHRL) has increasingly recognised reproductive autonomy as central to the enjoyment of various human rights, the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of gender-based crimes continue to inadequately acknowledge reproductive harms and attacks on reproductive autonomy. This project critically addresses these accountability gaps by developing a comprehensive, legally grounded and survivor-informed conceptualisation of 'reproductive violence' as a distinct category of GBV within ICL. Drawing on IHRL standards, and through critical engagement with international humanitarian law (IHL) and ICL, the research will propose a new interdisciplinary framework involving empirical qualitative research, stakeholder engagement, and intersectoral collaboration with an NGO. Adopting a gender-based, intersectional approach, the project advances reproductive justice in international law and directly supports key Sustainable Development Goals, particularly gender equality and the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Beyond its societal impact, the programme also includes targeted and concrete measures to support the career development of the researcher.

**Sustainable Development Goals**



Meet the Project

**If you had to explain your project to someone outside your field, how would you describe it in three sentences?**

My project examines the reproductive harms caused by gender-based crimes, which are acts involving sexual, reproductive, and other gender-based violence committed during armed conflict, attacks against the civilian populations, or genocide. Drawing upon international human rights law, the research seeks to conceptualise reproductive violence as a distinct category of gender-based violence, as a way to bring to light and address the unique harms to survivors' reproductive health and autonomy. Repro-Just aims to contribute to strengthening the implementation of existing norms protecting reproductive autonomy and to propose policy and normative reform, in an effort to tackle impunity and advance reproductive justice in international criminal law.

**What fascinates you most about the topic of your research project?**

The project addresses a historically neglected consequence of gender-based crimes, namely the impact on the reproductive autonomy and rights of the survivors, whether women, girls, men, boys, or LGBTQIA+ individuals. Reproductive violence can take different forms, such as forced abortion, forced contraception, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, and targeted attacks on reproductive healthcare facilities, each undermining survivors' right to bodily autonomy, to freely decide on whether and when to have children, and to meaningfully exercise their reproductive rights.

Repro-Just acknowledges that overlooking reproductive violence in armed conflict, atrocities and other crisis settings entails serious ripple effects, possibly leading to a lack of recognition of survivors' experiences, limited targeted humanitarian responses and prevention efforts, as well as shortcomings in accountability, justice and reparations. In light of this, the research not only analyses the international law governing reproductive violence but also explores legal and policy avenues to enhance the protection from violence targeting reproductive autonomy and its documentation, investigation, prosecution and adjudication.

What fascinates the most about this project is that, in order to do so, it combines desk research with cooperation and interaction with NGOs, actors involved in the documentation and investigation of international crimes, health workers, and, most importantly, survivors.

**How does your research contribute specifically to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals?**

The UN Sustainable Development Goals recognise sexual and reproductive health rights as essential to the well-being of all persons, gender equality, and broader economic and social development. Being grounded in reproductive justice in international law, the project contributes primarily to SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on the promotion of just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

While acknowledging that gender equality is foundational to the advancement of all 17 SDGs (UN Women, 2018), increased legal accountability for reproductive violence contributes to specific targets, namely ending violence and exploitation of women and girls (SDG target 5.2) and ensuring equal access to justice for all (SDG target 16.3). Moreover, the elaboration of policy and normative reform proposals to recognise and address reproductive violence as an international crime supports efforts to end discrimination and exploitation of women and girls (SDG target 5.1), and eliminate harmful practices, such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation (SDG target 5.3).

Lastly, through targeted actions intended for students and civil society, Repro-Just indirectly contributes to promoting a greater awareness on gender-based violence, including reproductive violence, for all (SDG 4.7).