

# Centre for Critical International Law lecture series

**Second Annual Lecture**  
**Thursday 17 March 2016, 6pm**  
**Eliot Lecture Theatre 2**

## ***Crimes Against Humanity: One Hundred Years of Retribution***

Professor Gerry Simpson  
Professor of Public International Law  
London School of Economics



**Abstract:** Outside the National Portrait Gallery in London stands a statue of a British nurse named Edith Cavell. On 12 October 1915, Cavell was executed by the Germans in Brussels and partly as a result, there emerged an almost entirely novel way of thinking about international law and war.

Defeated enemies became 'war criminals', atrocities became 'crimes against humanity' and (a certain sort of) war became 'aggression'. The first half of the 20th century, then saw the appearance of an idiom and, then, architecture (Nuremberg, Tokyo) of what became known as international criminal law. This field (sometimes referred to also as 'war crimes law') began as tentative foothold (Versailles, Leipzig) but has now colonised much of our thinking about war and peace (Rome, The Hague).

When it comes to human rights abuses, it is *de rigueur* to call for war crimes trials for the perpetrators, and justice for the victims. But is it desirable to make "ending impunity" a supervening goal of war-making, peace-making and diplomacy? In this lecture I propose to engage in a critical stocktaking of this century of retributive humanitarianism.

Gerry Simpson was appointed to a Chair in Public International Law at LSE January 2016. He previously taught at the University of Melbourne (2007-2015), the Australian National University (1995-1998) and LSE (2000-2007). He is the author of *Great Powers and Outlaw States* (Cambridge, 2004) and *Law, War and Crime: War Crimes Trials and the Reinvention of International Law* (Polity 2007), and co-editor (with Kevin Jon Heller) of *Hidden Histories* (Oxford, 2014) and (with Raimond Gaita) of *Who's Afraid of International Law?* (Monash, forthcoming, 2016).

**Please join us for our Wine Reception before the Annual Lecture – Eliot SCR, 5pm**

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**Book Launch – Wednesday 16 March, 6pm, Templeman Library A108 and Library Gallery**  
**Professor Gerry Simpson in conversation with Dr Luis Eslava**

Professor Simpson's lecture will be preceded by the launch of Dr Luis Eslava's book *Local Space, Global Life : The Everyday Operation of International Law and Development* (CUP, 2015)

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**Cecil Graduate Workshop**  
**Friday 18 March, 11am-1pm Eliot Lyons Room & 2pm-5.15pm KS12**

### ***The Victims of International Law***

Professor Simpson's lecture will be followed by the Annual Cecil Workshop in which members of the Cecil community will present their work in progress on the theme that has run through Cecil activities this year *The Victims of International Law*. Lunch will be provided.

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