



University of Essex



Human Rights Centre Clinic Report 2024/25

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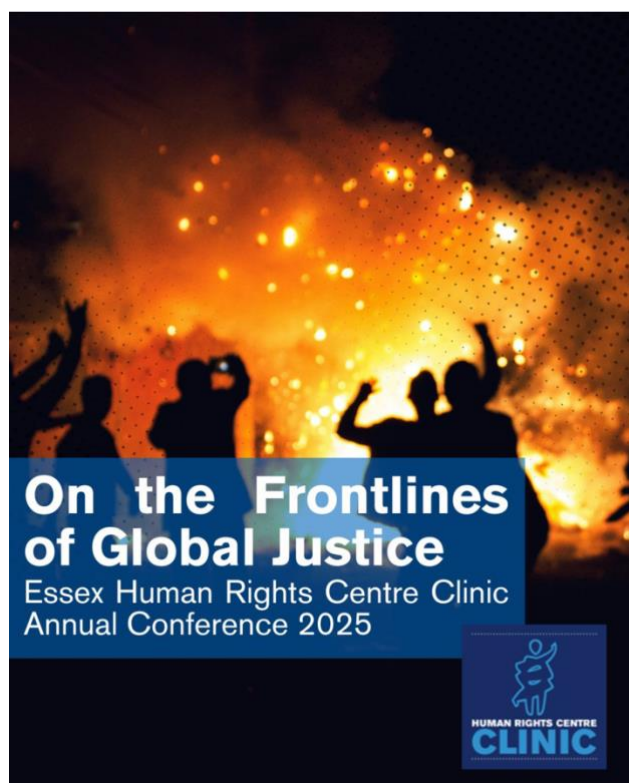


Table of Contents

Foreword from the Clinic Director	3
Testimonials from partner organisations	5
Highlights from 2024-25	6
Environmental Rights for a Just Energy Transition in Kenya	7
Defining Reparation for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence	9
International Human Rights of Uncontacted Tribes/Peoples	11
Making ILO Convention 189 Real for Domestic Workers in the Caribbean	13
Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit	15
Combatting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse within the United Nations	17

Foreword from the Clinic Director

In the midst of global uncertainty and pushbacks against human rights, I am delighted to present the outcomes and hard work of this year's [Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic](#) cohort. The Clinic connects dedicated students with national and international partner organisations working on urgent human rights issues. The role of the Clinic is to equip our students with the skills and experience needed to excel in their chosen field of human rights advocacy. The projects described in this report show the endurance and impact of the work conducted in the Clinic. From supporting the [successful advocacy](#) of communities and environmental defenders in Kenya to working on live cases of alleged arbitrary detention [brought before the UN](#), the importance and effectiveness of the clinical legal education we provide cannot be overestimated. Alongside their project work, Clinic students were enrolled on the [HU902 Human Rights Clinic](#) module. Experiential learning delivered by experts included sessions on interviewing victims of human rights violations, working with the media, and strategic litigation.



We rounded off another successful year with the inaugural Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic Annual Conference: [On the Frontlines of Global Justice](#). This gathered current and former Clinic students and partner organisations to reflect on the impactful human rights research conducted as part of Clinic projects over the years. Essex alumni who have gone on to successful careers in the human rights field reflected on their time in the Clinic, and how the experience prepared them for their careers. [Noura Shawki](#), Regional Legal Advisor for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Cairo and Clinic alumna, reflected on the transformative impact of the Clinic. As a Clinic team member in 2020-21, she worked on a project which helped the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions to enhance victim participation in national human rights institutions across Europe. The team's recommendations were published and presented to the

Network's Economic and Social Rights Working Group – an experience she described as a career milestone. [Ricardo Villalobos](#), a board member and the Coordinator of the Research and International Advocacy Department at Aula Abierta, an NGO working on issues of academic freedom across Latin America, described his journey from grassroots documentation efforts in Venezuela to high-level advocacy before international human rights bodies. Ricardo praised the Clinic's holistic approach, noting how it trained students not just in law but in the deeper structural and ethical questions that shape real-world human rights practice.

The Annual Conference was an opportunity not only to mark the significant achievements of our current students, but to reflect on the influence of rigorous clinical education as seen through Essex alumni. Each former student was able to connect a lesson learned within the Clinic with human rights work and

advocacy they have conducted since graduating. I am excited to see the positive changes our students continue to make in the world, and remain deeply grateful to all those within the Clinic community – team members, staff, partner organisations, and of course alumni – for making the work outlined in this report possible.



Dr Sabina Garahan

Director, Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic

Testimonials from partner organisations

“We have been impressed with the commitment and professionalism of the students of the ADRU [Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit], whose research has contributed significantly to our work, including on thematic topics relating to the deprivation of liberty.” – Dr. Ganna Yudkivska, Chair-Rapporteur, [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#)

“Working with the HRC Clinic team has been an enriching and informative experience. Their commitment, insight, and collaborative spirit made them invaluable partners in advancing a just energy transition for Kenya.” – Branson Kiptoo, Research and Development Officer, Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action ([CJGEA](#))

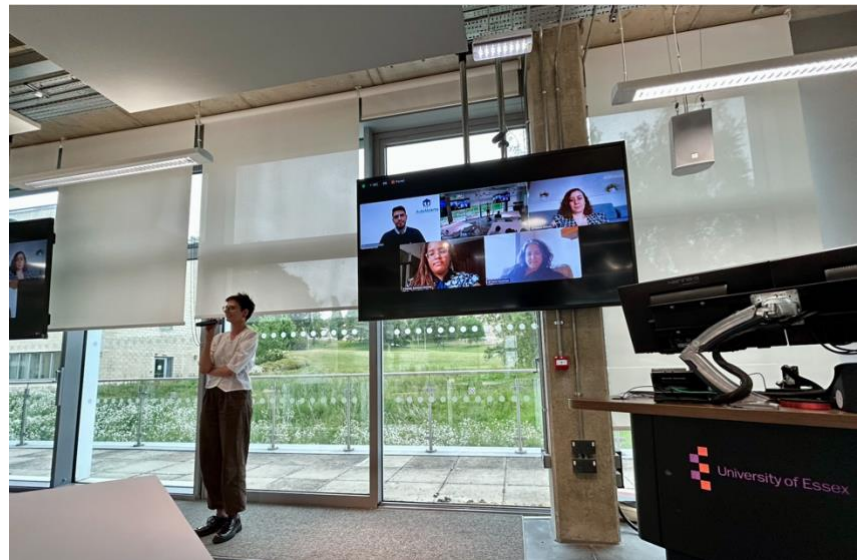
“The students from the Human Rights Centre Clinic of the University of Essex produced a really detailed and high quality report for us on the International Human Rights of Uncontacted Indigenous Peoples. We were really impressed by their dedication, knowledge and enthusiasm for the research and really appreciated the chance to meet the students and discuss the first draft of the report with them. The report will be extremely helpful in informing advocacy work for the rights of uncontacted Indigenous peoples around the world. We look forward to working with the Human Rights Centre Clinic of the University of Essex again.” – Sophie Grig, Asia Campaigns Director, [Survival International](#)

Highlights from 2024-25



Attendees at the 2025 Annual Conference: On the Frontlines of Global Justice, June 2025

Presentation from Essex alumna
Zuzanna Wójciak, Program Associate at
WITNESS



ADRU team visit to the UN headquarters in Geneva, April 2025

Environmental Rights for a Just Energy Transition in Kenya



Partner: Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action ([CJGEA](#))

Team: Daniella Aning, Louise Kazek, Ekaterina Luzina, Zunaid Saiyed

The Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action (CJGEA) is a human and environmental rights advocacy non-profit championing the right to a healthy environment and sustainable livelihoods for marginalised communities in Africa. CJGEA advocates for accountability in environmental governance and enhances protection of communities' rights in the face of potentially harmful development projects. This year's Clinic project with CJGEA upheld this fundamental mission. Clinic students investigated the application of procedural environmental rights as a means to empower the inhabitants of the Uyombo region (Kilifi County) of Kenya, which was earmarked for the country's first nuclear reactor. In a victory for CJGEA and the Uyombo community, the [Kenyan Government announced in July 2025](#) that it no longer intends to locate the nuclear power plant in Kilifi.

The project focused on three key procedural rights enshrined in Kenyan law: public participation, access to information, and access to justice. The team assessed the compliance of relevant domestic laws with Kenya's national and international commitments, as well as international standards and best practices more widely. The report presents key findings on the implementation of the three fundamental procedural rights in the context of the proposed nuclear plant, highlighting areas where information disclosure, consultation, and transparency have fallen short of international standards. Importantly, the report also offers recommendations and possible pathways for strategic litigation to help CJGEA advocate for stronger public engagement and accountability.

The Clinic team's report concludes that despite robust constitutional, statutory, and international legal frameworks guaranteeing access to information, public participation, and access to justice, the Kenyan Government and its agencies have failed to meet these obligations in their handling of the nuclear project. The lack of meaningful community engagement, the withholding of crucial project details, and the violent suppression of peaceful protests all point to systemic failures in upholding procedural environmental rights. To address these concerns, immediate corrective measures must be taken. The Kenyan

Government must halt the project until full and inclusive consultations are conducted, all relevant environmental impact assessments are transparently shared, and affected communities are granted the opportunity to participate meaningfully in decision-making. Additionally, legal action and international advocacy must be pursued to ensure accountability and protect community rights.

By empowering the Uyombo community through the application of procedural environmental rights, the project ultimately contributes to challenging the responsibility of state and non-state actors in the fields of environmental protection and access to socioeconomic rights. Through their work, Clinic students have supported CJGEA's key mission – defending the environmental and human rights of marginalised communities living near extractive industries and hazardous sites in Kenya.

This project was supervised by [Dr Stephen Turner](#).

Defining Reparation for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence



Partner: Global Survivors Fund ([GSF](#))

Team: Carolina Peniche, Preesita Saloni, Leandra Toska, Lini Zurlia

The Global Survivors Fund (GSF) was launched in October 2019 by Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureates. The GSF's mission is to enhance access to reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) around the globe, thus responding to a gap long identified by survivors. In this project, a Clinic team conducted research to analyse what meaningful reparations would look like for survivors of CRSV and what is required to make the reparations effective and accessible. Through a comparative analysis of reparation programmes in Kosovo, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and Colombia, the report – “Defining Reparation for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence” – identifies the legal and institutional barriers that continue to deny survivors the justice they are entitled to and offers concrete pathways toward more survivor-centred and effective reparation programmes.

By comparing different models, the report offers a critical resource for policymakers, practitioners, and civil society organisations designing future reparation programmes. It goes beyond identifying whether reparations exist, also interrogating how they function in practice and finding gaps in implementation and effectiveness in several cases. For example, Kosovo's reparation programme for survivors of CRSV is a milestone in legal recognition, but implementation remains limited. In Cambodia, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia recognised CRSV primarily through forced marriage, excluding survivors of other forms of sexual violence. Following its Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Sierra Leone created one of the earliest reparations frameworks in post-conflict Africa. It recognised sexual violence survivors as a priority category, promising them pensions, healthcare, education, and symbolic measures. Yet out of 3,602 registered CRSV survivors, only half received comprehensive benefits. Colombia's approach is the most thorough on paper. A 2011 Victims Law provides financial compensation, psychosocial care, and land restitution, while the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) integrates reparation into transitional justice proceedings. However, survivors face long waiting times, inconsistent service delivery, and limited awareness of their entitlements, especially in rural areas.

Across all four case studies, the Clinic team identified a pervasive problem: the disconnect between legal recognition and practical delivery. Survivors were often burdened by bureaucratic procedures, retraumatising verification demands, and unclear eligibility rules. In some instances, survivors had to choose between a reparation pension and their basic retirement entitlements, forcing a trade-off between justice and subsistence. The team concludes that reparations must be reimagined as more than symbolic measures or financial compensation. When designed without survivor input, implemented through rigid bureaucracies, or treated as a discretionary act of goodwill or charity rather than legal entitlement, reparation schemes become hollow gestures that fall far short of delivering justice. For this reason, the report provides recommendations aimed at addressing the identified challenges. For reparation policies to be truly effective, they must ensure access for all survivors, long-term sustainability, economic empowerment, and, crucially, centre around survivor agency. Without these elements, reparations risk becoming symbolic gestures rather than substantive justice mechanisms, failing those they aim to support.

This project was supervised by [Dr Marina Lostal](#).

International Human Rights of Uncontacted Tribes/Peoples



Partner: [Survival International](#)

Team: Nadia Butkenicius de Arruda, Dewi de Weerd, Garance Guigue, Erin Opat

Survival International campaigns for the rights of Indigenous and/or tribal peoples and uncontacted peoples, advocating for their rights to land and to determine their own futures. Survival's work has entailed taking legal action, media and letter-writing campaigns, and working with other NGOs and scholars to support the human rights of Indigenous peoples. Most recently, their campaigning has focused on the rights of uncontacted tribes. Against this background, the Clinic project supported Survival International to examine international human rights law and norms pertaining to the rights of uncontacted tribes. The Clinic team prepared a report outlining relevant international human rights standards and jurisprudence, which will help Survival International develop its campaigns to protect the rights of uncontacted peoples.

A unique challenge of this project was considering how the rights of voluntarily isolated groups could be protected from institutions that are obligated to guarantee their rights. In tackling that challenge, the team focused on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). While UNDRIP recognises Indigenous peoples' rights to land, culture, and self-determination, it is not legally binding. The ICCPR and ICESCR are by contrast binding treaties ratified by many States, including those where Uncontacted peoples reside. While these treaties do not explicitly mention Indigenous land or isolation, the team examined how breaches of the rights to self-determination, life, land, and health in uncontacted territories could be interpreted as violations of these binding obligations. Through their analysis, students showed how environmental destruction, State inaction, and corporate expansion on Indigenous land not only breach Indigenous-specific standards like UNDRIP but also violate broader human rights protections enshrined within the ICCPR and ICESCR.

The report highlights key case studies of threats to the rights of Indigenous peoples. Students examined the *Mashco Piro* in Peru, the *Yanomami* in Brazil, the *Shompen* in India, and *Hongana Manyawa* in Indonesia, illustrating in each case how extractive industries, infrastructural development, and insufficient

State protection lead to breaches of international human rights. Team members were able to flag where existing legal instruments offer a basis for accountability and to recommend ways of addressing remaining gaps in protection. The report also considers corporate accountability through soft law frameworks. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines, while not binding, outline important standards for responsible business conduct. The report assesses how these instruments could be used to apply pressure on companies operating in, or near, uncontacted territories. One of the team's key reflections was that even in the absence of formal enforcement, these mechanisms are increasingly effective tools for advocacy and policy reform.

Ultimately, the Clinic report finds that the rights of Indigenous and uncontacted peoples in voluntary isolation cannot be protected by legal frameworks alone. The team's hope is that this report contributes meaningfully to Survival International's mission, while also inspiring future students and researchers to critically engage with the protection of uncontacted communities through rights-based advocacy.

This project was supervised by [Professor Colin Samson](#) and [Dr Ebba Lekvall](#).

Making ILO Convention 189 Real for Domestic Workers in the Caribbean



Partners: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing ([WIEGO](#)) and The International Domestic Workers Federation ([IDWF](#))

Team: Mars Denyer, Preslie Fox, Nicholas Mykytyn, Clara Torchet-Dit-Renard

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. The International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) is a global member-based organisation serving over 670,000 domestic and household workers through its affiliates in 68 countries. For several years, WIEGO has been collaborating with IDWF to strengthen domestic workers' organisations in Africa and the Caribbean. Part of this work involves building domestic worker leaders' capacity to better support members to claim and enforce their rights as workers. In pursuit of these aims, the Clinic project focused on implementing the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers in the Caribbean (C189). Students conducted an in-depth assessment of whether the laws and policies of two selected States – Grenada and Guyana – comply with C189's core obligations. The aim is to strengthen accountability for the commitments made by the Governments of Grenada and Guyana in ratifying C189. The team used [WIEGO's Toolkit on C189](#) to guide their analysis, finding gaps in implementation of C189 in both countries.

The research team found that while domestic workers play a vital role in Guyanese society, their work remains largely undervalued and under-protected in the workforce. Legal provisions that should offer safeguards are often too broad and insufficiently enforced, falling short in addressing domestic workers' lived experiences. Notably, gaps were identified in nearly all areas of compliance. While the Constitution and domestic laws ostensibly protect workers' rights, including freedom of association, protection against forced labour, and non-discrimination, domestic workers are often excluded from full protection, either explicitly or due to a lack of sector-specific implementation. Finally, the inconsistency in normative

protection heightens the vulnerability of domestic workers, particularly live-in workers, migrant workers, and those employed informally.

In Grenada, much of the legislation did not specifically mention or protect domestic workers. Other provisions, meanwhile, specifically excluded them: for example, the Factories Act – the primary piece of legislation regarding workplace safety – only extends to factories. Other specific areas in C189 were not addressed in the legislation. For example, there are no legal provisions enshrining a domestic worker's right to choose whether to live in their employer's house or prohibiting employment agencies from deducting fees from workers' wages. An overarching theme was the gender bias in domestic work – a sector where most workers are women – manifesting in patterns of undervaluation and exploitation. Provisions aimed at shielding against abuse, harassment, and violence do not specifically cover sexual harassment in the workplace, despite evidence showing that domestic workers are at high risk of this.

Clinic students began this project with the goal of ensuring that the rights promised in C189 are not just theoretical but are made real in practice and realised in the lives of workers. Their report has already helped to advance that goal, having served as a key tool at a workshop for domestic workers aimed at empowering them with knowledge of their rights. The research serves as a foundational tool for domestic worker organisations and allied advocates to push for meaningful legal change and accountability. The Clinic team's legal analysis and keen insights will continue to support the partner organisations' advocacy and work in this region.

This project was supervised by [Professor Paul Hunt](#).

Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit



Partner: [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#)

Team: Camila Araneda Jofré, Lukman Audu, Oliver Goldsmith, Misheck Jere, Daniela López Tinjacá, Louise Kazek, Juliette Richard, Alfiana Qisthi

In 2024-25, the Arbitrary Detention Redress Unit ([ADRU](#)) continued to run as a multi-year project under the auspices of the Human Rights Centre Clinic. The ADRU is supervised by [Dr Matthew Gillett](#), a Senior Lecturer. Dr Gillett is a United Nations Special Mandate holder, as an expert member and Vice Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Based on written applications, which included a motivational statement, and online interviews, a cohort of 8 students was selected out of a competitive pool of around 20 applicants. The selected students brought a diverse range of experience and linguistic ability to the team, including from France, Nigeria, Malawi, Indonesia, Chile, Colombia, and the UK. Most students were enrolled on the [LLM in International Human Rights Law](#) or the [MA in Theory and Practice of Human Rights](#).

Over the course of the academic year, the ADRU collaborated with Dr Gillett and UN experts to redress cases of alleged arbitrary detention. The team received specialised training on key legal and human rights concepts related to protections against arbitrary detention. This equipped team members for their effective work on real cases. They learned how to review and analyse submitted complaints of arbitrary detention, assessed government responses concerning allegations of human rights violations, and researched novel issues regarding detention-related human rights breaches. The casework covered a range of regions and issues, from detention without lawful basis to detention as a reprisal for the exercise of human rights, and related fair trial breaches.

Team members also conducted thematic research on various topical strands of the right to liberty, including: the war on drugs and arbitrary detention in Indonesia and the Philippines; alternatives to the

right to consular assistance for foreign detainees; artificial intelligence in predictive policing and arbitrary detention; persons with disabilities and arbitrary detention; children in social care institutions and arbitrary detention; and child refugees in arbitrary detention. After producing short research briefings, the students developed their research further, assessing and making proposals for the approach to the thematic issue taken by the Working Group and other UN bodies.

Throughout the year, students received relevant training from Dr Gillett on:

- the law concerning arbitrary detention and the five categories under which it is assessed by the Working Group;
- legal drafting and strategy for litigation purposes;
- planning and conducting missions and country visits.

Additionally, students attended a session on vicarious trauma and its role in human rights practice via the [Digital Verification Unit](#) with Jose Kukul, Trainer and Interpreter from the International Criminal Court.

ADRU sessions were typically held on a weekly basis. Alongside discussions on casework and thematic research, guest speakers provided insights on both international law and careers. These included Manuel Ventura, Adjunct Fellow/Lecturer at the School of Law, Western Sydney University, who addressed the team on International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law, and Virginia Carnabuci, Legal Assistant at the Case Matrix Network and former ADRU member.

Importantly, to provide contextual understanding and opportunities to meet with professionals and experts on human rights, the ADRU organised a [field trip to Geneva](#), with the support of the Human Rights Centre Clinic. This took place between 8-9 April 2025, coinciding with the 102nd session of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. During the trip, the students met with expert members of the Working Group, as well as professional human rights officers, staff from the UN High Commission for Refugees, the UN Committee against Torture, and the Independent Investigation Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM). Meeting with the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention allowed students to present key findings of their thematic research to leading experts, engage in meaningful discussions, and ask questions regarding professional work in the UN and human rights field.

This project was supervised by [Dr Matthew Gillett](#).

Combating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse within the United Nations



United Nations

Partner: [Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

Team: Zeynep Baysar, Dewi De Weerd, Safa Ersan, Gülberk Gür, Keira Jones, Valeria Martinez Garcia, Thi L L Nguyen, Samruddhi Pai, Sian Posy, Vichaya Ratanajaroj, Rabi Remawa

This ad hoc project supported an [Independent Review of the Adjudication of Claims Pertaining to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by the United Nations Internal Justice System \(UN Dispute Tribunal and UN Appeals Tribunal\)](#). The memorandum is the result of a collaboration between the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN's Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OSC-SEA) and the Essex Human Rights Centre and Clinic. The memorandum was authored by [Professor Carla Ferstman](#) and [Franziska Fluhr](#), Essex Law School. Students of the Essex Human Rights Centre Clinic assisted with the research and were tasked with analysing judgments of the UN administrative justice system which involved allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). The purpose of the research was to identify trends and patterns within the cases, the adjudication process as described in the judgments, as well as the judicial findings, considering issues such as: access; standards of review; evidence; interpretations of relevant features of SEA; and administrative leave and disciplinary sanctions.

The memorandum finds that the greatest challenge with the judgments is their lack of consistency. Owing in part to a regulatory framework that is at times vague and confusing, the case-law of the tribunals is inconsistent in its interpretation of the requirements for sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse or violence have been found only in relation to unduly narrow sets of circumstances and numerous judgments have avoided findings of sexual exploitation and abuse in workplace contexts when sexual harassment may have been applicable. While there is relative consistency within the judgments on the disciplinary sanctions imposed as a result of findings of serious misconduct, there is less consistency in the decisions to impose administrative leave while SEA investigations are ongoing.

The framework on zero-tolerance for SEA makes clear that SEA victims should be treated as rights holders, and that their entitlement to be treated with dignity and respect, to be protected from reprisals, and to receive support and assistance must be assured in all proceedings which concern them. Furthermore, it is recognised that victims should be informed about the progress of investigations and of cases that concern them. This is necessary so that they can exercise their rights to express their views and concerns about proceedings that concern them. The Victims' Rights Advocate Statement further recognises SEA victims' right to a remedy and reparation, though restricts this to recourse against individual perpetrators, which is both legally limiting and practically ineffective.

As a priority it is recommended that the tribunals make much greater use of their ability to make referrals to enforce accountability in SEA cases. Furthermore, the UN Secretary-General and other relevant UN bodies and entities should consider how to ensure that SEA victims can access effective recourse when their complaints of SEA are not followed up or are followed up ineffectively. Equally, it is crucial to address the procedural and practical lacunae associated with SEA victims' access to a remedy and reparation. Given the lack of standing of most SEA victims before the UNDT and UNAT, these tribunals will have at most a partial role. Further consideration should be given to introducing a victim compensation element to the disciplinary measures that the Administration can impose, and by extension the measures the tribunals can sanction. Beyond this, the memorandum also recommends that the UN Secretary-General and other relevant UN bodies and entities should institute a consultation process to consider further the additional measures that can be taken to ensure SEA victims obtain adequate and effective redress.

This project was supervised by [Professor Carla Ferstman](#), Director of the Essex Human Rights Centre.