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Foreword

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Foreword

Eric Warren Lander, Danielle S. Petitto, Tara A. Gellman

The New York Law School *Journal of Human Rights* is pleased to introduce our inaugural United Nations Issue. Recognizing the vital role of the United Nations in promoting and protecting human rights globally, Professor Lung-Chu Chen, the *Journal's* founding faculty member, suggested we dedicate one issue per year to international concerns. The changing landscape of international law and the approach of the new millennium with its, at the time, highly anticipated UN Millennium Summit, provided an opportune moment to begin work on such an undertaking. Nearly two years later, our celebrated premier United Nations Issue has come to fruition.

The United States has begun to look outside of its borders more now than ever; newspapers and electronic media, for example, are introducing the United States' populace in greater detail to the workings of the United Nations and the scale of human atrocities occurring around the world. No longer are we focused solely on the domestic, hot-button issues of the day. Technological advancements have created an increasingly accessible world, a more globalized world society. We can no longer ignore the concerns of any global citizen.

Human rights law has forcefully emerged as a powerful mechanism of change in the international arena. Globalization is breaking down the post-Westphalian world order where sovereignty reigns supreme. Leaders, international institutions, and individuals are recognizing that certain crimes, acts of extreme indifference to human dignity, such as genocide, slavery, and crimes against humanity, will not be afforded the protection of sovereignty or the act of state doctrine. The reach of international human rights law now extends across state borders protecting individuals, not merely states.

Building on the precedents of Nuremberg, the ongoing criminal tribunals in the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as well as the potentially groundbreaking International Criminal Court, all provide ample evidence of the continually expanding juridical reach of international criminal law. Those responsible for grave breaches of human rights law are no longer immune from justice.

There is currently a potential shift in the mechanisms responsible for creating and incorporating international law. In the past, international law was solely the responsibility of sovereign states. Now, law is emanating from the individual, championed by numerous non-governmental organizations acting as lobbyists at the grass roots and international level, embraced by international organizations such as the UN, codified in multilateral treaty regimes, and, finally, incorporated into a nation's legal system through domestic legislation and a change in the collective conscious. This transnational process, creating law from the bottom up and then back down again, has become vital, an indispensable facet of rights protection globally. Through the dissemination of information we believe that we are doing our part to further the reach of international human rights law within the transnational system.

Obviously, we cannot possibly explore every aspect of the United Nations system or international law; both are expansive and continually growing. Therefore, we see our role as providing important insight into some of the more timely, contentious, and pervasive issues plaguing the world today. We have presented a variety of issues from women's rights, to the environment, from civil strife and democracy building in East Timor to strengthening of the international rule of law.

This issue, like all past issues, will contain professionally written articles and essays and students' notes and comments. However, its focus will be solely international and will introduce a new section, which provides several student written reports briefly discussing particular United Nations activities touching on human rights matters during the 55th Millennium Session. The UN is a massive organization, forced to deal with every possible concern. Therefore, we had the difficult task of effectively synthesizing the myriad sources in a coherent and provocative manner. While we are aware of the fact that we have barely scratched the surface, we are proud to present the results of this joint effort.