

Editorial #34: The Audacity of #HÖpe

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On the grand scale of humanity, a good thing you could say about 2023 is that it is over – if only that meant that there were realistic hopes of less horrors for 2024. However, such fatalism is not what we are about here: Because doing international law requires the hope that things could be different – a Fool’s Hope perhaps, as Gandalf might call it.

What gives us some hope is having a look the small part we have been able to do by providing an open and diverse platform to the international law community for another year.

What You Read in 2023

Our top posts of 2023 are a colorful mix of well-known all-time favorites, articles that discuss current topics, and rather unusual posts.

More than 8 % of our readers are based in India – which puts the country third in our readership statistics after the United States (9 %) and Germany (28 %). This is why we are very happy that our two most read articles of 2023 center Indian perspectives on human rights law and anti-discrimination in India. Our most clicked article “India’s Forced Sterilization Practices Under International Human Rights Law” by Ramya Jawahar Kudekallu was [published](#) on 10 March 2022 as part of our “Women in International Law” symposium, Volume 1. The symposium was [continued](#) in 2023 with a focus on women in international refugee law. In our second-most clicked article “The Internationalisation of Caste”, Swati Singh Parmar [discusses](#) the incompatibility of caste discrimination with international human rights law, which provoked a remarkable number of comments on our blog.

Moving down the list, many readers will stumble across familiar names and titles: Our [most popular article of 2022](#) and #8 of 2021, Sissy Katsoni’s “The Right to Abortion and the European Convention on Human Rights: In Search of Consensus among Member-States”, came in third. In our January 2023 editorial, we were wondering whether Cristian van Eijk’s [record-breaking piece](#) “Sorry, Elon: Mars is not a legal vacuum – and it’s not yours, either” would be #4 in 2023, since it reached #1 in 2020, #2 in 2021 and #3 in 2022. However, this post (or the person addressed in its title?) was not quite as popular anymore and ranked #12 in 2023.

Rather, an anonymously-published article [ranked fourth](#) this year: In “What to Expect When You’re PhDing: Mental Health and Doctoral Studies in International Law”, the author guides us through the peculiarities and troubles of pursuing a PhD, speaking mostly from a German point of view. A German version of this article was [published](#) on JuWiss blog. The fact that this article drew so much interest suggests that mental health struggles in academia deserve more attention, alongside an improvement of working conditions.

Some articles seem to have secured their spot in our ranking before the year even started: Konrad Lachmayer's "Constitutional authoritarianism, not authoritarian constitutionalism!" (#5) is being featured in our top 15 [for the fourth time](#) since 2019, and Valentin J. Schatz and Dmytro Koval's "Ukraine v. Russia: Passage through Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov" (#6) even [for the fifth time](#). Will we see them again next year?

Of course, current events are reflected in our top 15, too. Nora Salem's article "Palestine – Israel: Context Matters!" [sparked debate](#) on 20 October 2023 and made it to #8 in just a little over two months. Three articles on the list appear in our extensive [Ukraine-Russia article collection](#): "[Should Third States Follow Ukraine's Lead and Confiscate Russian State Assets?](#)" by Artem Ripenko (#9), "[How Are Nuclear Power Plants Protected by Law During War?](#)" by Anne Dienelt (#11, and #7 in 2022) and "[Russia's Recognition of the DPR and LPR as Illegal Acts under International Law](#)" by Júlia Miklasová (#15, and #2 in 2022).

Only five out of the 15 most popular posts were published in 2023. To us, this illustrates once again that many of our articles remain just as relevant over time – a finding that encourages us in our concept of "[slow blogging](#)". Being able to take time in discussing, arguing and responding to scholarly work is also one of the main motivators for #reflectiÖns, a new, open-ended review format on Völkerrechtsblog. Its first edition started on 18 December 2023 with a [video lecture](#) by Juan Pablo Scarfi on 'The Monroe Doctrine: Towards a New Historiography'. Please find more information on our new #reflectiÖns series [here](#).

Other encouraging statistics include the continuously growing audience of the (German-language) Völkerrechtspodcast. Three years into this project, we are as excited as on the first day and look forward to our next guests.

Growing Our Team

Going by numbers, actually, the 15th place on our most-clicked articles list would have been awarded to our Call for new team members, which we published in November. All in all, we received close to 80 applications from all over the world and then faced the extremely difficult task of selecting just twelve new editors to join our team. We feel extremely honored that so many highly qualified and just downright cool individuals are motivated to give some of their time to Völkerrechtsblog.

#blÖgiversary

This level of support is what has allowed Völkerrechtsblog to grow and thrive since 2014. Yes, you did the math right – 2024 marks our ten-year anniversary! We are already working on special content to celebrate our #blÖgiversary, so keep an eye out for that.

And speaking of staying in contact, do consider joining us on [Bluesky](#) (@voelkerrechtsblog.org).

We look forward to another year with you – thank you so much for being here.

Here are the 15 most-clicked articles on Völkerrechtsblog in 2023:

1. Ramya Jawahar Kudekallu, [India's Forced Sterilization Practices Under International Human Rights Law](#) (10 March 2022)
2. Swati Singh Parmar, [The Internationalisation of Caste](#) (15 June 2023)
3. Spyridoula Katsoni, [The Right to Abortion and the European Convention on Human Rights: In Search of Consensus among Member-States](#) (19 March 2021)
4. Anonymous, [What to Expect When You're PhDing](#) (12 May 2023)
5. Konrad Lachmayer, [Constitutional authoritarianism, not authoritarian constitutionalism!](#) (31 August 2017)
6. Valentin J. Schatz and Dmytro Koval, [Ukraine v. Russia: Passage through Kerch Strait and the Sea of Azov \(Part I\)](#) (10 January 2018)
7. Abhijeet Shrivastava & Anujay Shrivastava, [How "Attack on Titan" Complicates the Genocide Convention](#), (7 December 2022)
8. Nora Salem, [Palestine – Israel: Context Matters!](#) (20 October 2023)
9. Artem Ripenko, [Should Third States Follow Ukraine's Lead and Confiscate Russian State Assets?](#) (19 June 2023)
10. Karina Theurer, [Litigating Reparations: Will Namibia Be Setting Standards?](#) (25 January 2023)
11. Anne Dienelt, [How Are Nuclear Power Plants Protected by Law During War?](#) (7 March 2022)
12. Cristian van Eijk, [Sorry, Elon: Mars is not a legal vacuum – and it's not yours, either](#) (5 November 2020)
13. Marco Vöhringer, [Critiques of International Criminal Law Revisited in the Light of the Rome Statute: What More Can We Do?](#) (10 January 2022)
14. Spyridoula Katsoni & Jan-Phillip Graf, [The Future of "Climate Refugees" in International Law](#) (5 June 2021)
15. Júlia Miklasová, [Russia's Recognition of the DPR and LPR as Illegal Acts under International Law](#) (24 February 2022)

