

Announcement: Second Annual International and Comparative Disaster Law Essay Contest, 2017

Call for Abstracts

Introduction

This announcement calls for **the submission of abstracts not exceeding 500 words** for consideration for the second annual “International and comparative disaster law essay contest.” This contest is co-sponsored by the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#) (IFRC), the American Society of International Law [Disaster Law Interest Group](#) (ASIL DLIG), the [Jean Monnet Module](#) on “International and EU Law” at Roma Tre University and the [International Disaster Law Project](#) (IDL) of the Universities of Bologna, Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, Roma Tre and Uninettuno.

Background

Over the last decade, “natural” disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, droughts and tsunamis, killed over 1.1 million people and affected nearly 2 billion worldwide, often affecting poorer countries disproportionately. In response to related challenges, there have been several major global initiatives developed which are aimed at addressing these issues. These include the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Sustainable Development Goals 2015, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 accompanied by the Grand Bargain, the Draft Articles on the ‘protection of persons in the event of disasters’ developed by the UN International Law Commission, and technical assistance provided by the IFRC and its partners to implement tools such as the [IDRL Guidelines](#) and the [Checklist for Law and DRR](#) at the domestic level.

Due to advances in the science of disaster risk management, we now know that there are no true “natural disasters.” Many “natural” hazards are sparked or accelerated by human activity and no matter how “natural” the hazard, it is human exposure, vulnerability, resilience and preparedness that define whether a given event results merely in a rainy day or a national catastrophe. Unlike the weather, human behaviour can indeed be regulated.

Scholarship about legal and regulatory frameworks for reducing disaster risks, responding to disasters and recovering from them, is still in its infancy. Yet states are increasingly turning to legal tools to fight disasters, at the national, regional and international levels. Are they learning from each other about what works well and what does not? Are international instruments meeting their potential to increase cooperation in disaster risk management and humanitarian response? Are international legal tools being translated effectively to the national level in terms of implementation and enforcement? Further details about disaster law, together with details of the key binding and non-binding legal instruments, are available at www.ifrc.org/dl and <http://www.ieudl.eu/databases/>

This essay contest aims to stimulate creative thinking and analysis about disaster law, in relation to these and other questions, from an international and/or comparative perspective. The first annual contest, held in 2015, drew submissions from 12 countries. The winning essay was: Giovanni

Sciaccaluga, whose paper was entitled [Climate change related disasters and human displacement: towards an effective management system](#) (2015).

This year, the contest has been modified as a two-part process:

Step 1): The contest partners are firstly calling for submission of abstracts not exceeding 500 words on any of the questions described below, or related areas of interest (see below the section on 'Sample topics' for further clarification). **Abstracts should be received no later than 7 July 2017.**

Step 2): After the abstracts have been reviewed, the judge's committee will invite the contributors of the most promising five abstracts to submit full essays of no more than 6,000 words (including a 150 word (maximum) abstract and including all footnotes) by **31 October 2017.**

Eligibility and requirements:

- The contest is open only to (1) students enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program (as master or PhD students) at any university (anywhere in the world) at the time of submission; or (2) to students who have graduated from such programmes within 12 months of the final date of their registration period. Those whose abstracts are selected for essay submission will be required to produce documentary evidence of their registration as students.
- Essays may examine any issue related to law and disasters, but must do so either from an international or a comparative law or perspective, or both. Comparative essays should examine laws or legal issues from no less than two countries. A sample list of potential topics is included below. This is merely for the purposes of illustration; you may select a topic and research question(s) of your own choosing which falls within the broad eligibility parameters.
- Abstracts (and the essays) must be written solely by the candidate(s), in English, and may not have been submitted for publication elsewhere. This restriction will be lifted after the contest is completed, and, for the winners and "honourable mention" papers, after publication as IFRC Working Papers. Papers may have more than one author, but not more than three authors, so long as all authors meet all the criteria listed here.
- The abstract should include the following detail: (1) what issues you are going to examine, identifying the research question(s)/topics to be explored in the essay (due to the maximum length of the essay of 6000 words it is advised that competitors do not try to engage with more than two principal questions/topics); why you have selected these issues (i.e. why they are important, including to the development, implementation, enforcement etc. of disaster law); what the main legal issues are which need to be addressed; how you are going to examine these issues in terms of your approach (e.g. if comparative research, briefly explain which countries you have selected, why and how you plan to examine them; what types of binding and non-binding legal instruments you plan to frame your research around etc.). Abstract submissions must not exceed 500 words.
- Submitted essays should be analytical and not merely descriptive i.e. they should not merely identify and describe issues, legal instruments and challenges relating to them, but also discuss why such challenges exist, what the implications of them are, how such challenges might be addressed and overcome, and so forth.
- Any recognised citation style (e.g. *Oscola*, Cambridge University Press, Harvard) may be used.

Deadlines and method of submission

- The deadline for the submission of the abstract is **11:59 p.m. Central European Time, 7 July 2017**. Participants will be notified if their abstract has been selected by July 31, 2017.
- The deadline for the submission of the essay, for those abstracts that have been selected, is 11:59 p.m. Central European Time, **31 October 2017**.
- Abstracts and essays should be submitted to disaster.law@ifrc.org as Microsoft Word attachments. In the subject line, please state "Submission: International and Comparative Disaster Law Essay Contest". Questions may be directed to the same email address.
- By submitting papers, candidates represent that they fulfil the eligibility requirements of the competition.
- All candidates will receive an e-mail confirming that their submissions (whether abstracts or essays) have been received. They may not be contacted again until winners are selected.

Award and announcement of the winning essay

- The winner of the contest will receive:
 - A monetary prize in the amount of Euro 500.
 - A free annual membership in the American Society of International Law.
- The winner will also have his or her paper published as a "Working Paper" of the IFRC's Disaster Law Programme. They will retain copyright of their papers and may subsequently publish them elsewhere, according to the terms of the Working Papers series.
- Other "honourable mention" papers, as selected by the final jury and if of appropriate quality, may be published as a "Working Paper" of the IFRC's Disaster Law Programme. They will retain copyright of their papers and may subsequently publish them elsewhere, according to the terms of the Working Papers series.
- A message announcing the name of the winner and runners up of the contest will be sent to all members of the ASIL DLIG, as well as to the co-sponsors and made public on the ASIL website. An e-mail with the final outcome will also be sent to all who submitted papers.

Competition procedures and selection criteria

- On a separate first page, each entry should include: the title, author's name, author's mailing address, email address, and phone number, university name and address, and expected graduation date. In addition, contestants should include the following sentence, along with a submission date and signature of the author(s): "[Name of author(s)] is the sole author(s) of this paper and complies with all requirements of this contest. This abstract has not been submitted for publication elsewhere."
- A submitted essay will be regarded as 'published' and therefore not eligible if it has been accepted for publication by a journal or book, or otherwise posted online. Students are welcome to submit

essays based on coursework that was undertaken during their degree programs so long as they meet all of the other eligibility requirements.

- The title and abstract only should be repeated on the second page. No identifying information (including name, name of university, etc.) should be included anywhere other than on the first page.
- Reviewers and judges will be selected by agreement of the co-sponsors of the contest.

Sample topics

As noted above, participants are free to choose any topic they wish that is related to law and disasters. Please note that for purposes of this essay contest, the term disasters refers to 'natural' disasters (i.e. meteorological, hydrological etc.) and 'man-made' disasters (e.g. technological, pollution etc.), but does not include situations of war and armed conflict, unless considered as part of a 'complex' disaster situation. The following are a few potential themes provided only by way of illustration:

- What impact do existing disaster law treaties have on domestic disaster management?
- What are the added values and shortcomings of the recently adopted ILC's Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disaster?
- Can mandatory insurance rules reduce disaster risks in developing countries?
- Is there a customary duty to seek international assistance when local resources are overcome by a disaster?
- How can legislation improve post-disaster economic recovery?
- Should the rules for humanitarian assistance be different in conflicts and disasters?
- What are the legal implications of practice developed by international human rights bodies in relation to disaster scenarios?
- What is the role of domestic courts in improving the safety and resilience of communities?
- What are the pros and cons of a rights-based approach to disaster response?
- What are the prospects for a comprehensive global treaty on international disaster assistance?
- Should there be a global system of certifying humanitarian NGOs?
- Why aren't land use rules and building codes preventing more deaths and losses?
- What special protections do indigenous peoples require with respect to disasters?
- How do derogations and limitations to human rights in disasters affect outcomes for affected persons?
- What is the right balance between sovereignty and protection when it comes to international disaster response?
- What are the most reasonable and successful governmental approaches to post-disaster compensation to affected persons?
- How can we reduce legal barriers to speedy and equitable housing solutions after disasters?