

## **Human Rights Responsibilities beyond the State Pushing the Boundaries of Public and Private**

### **Workshop**

10-11 June 2021, online

Convened by

PD Dr. Janne Mende and Anneloes Hoff, Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg

Sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG) for the research project '[Business Actors beyond Public and Private: Authority, Legitimacy and Responsibility in the United Nations Human Rights Regime](#)'

A fundamental challenge to the state-centred international human rights regime is the growing agency of actors that do not neatly fall into the category of states, but have a significant influence on human rights. These include non-state actors, such as business enterprises or civil society organizations, as well as intergovernmental, regional and international organizations. In the context of global governance, privatization and the proliferation of international institutions, these actors gain the power and legitimacy to participate in the development and interpretation of norms and rules, in the provision of public goods and in the framing of public interests. These developments challenge the international human rights regime and its capability to deal with actors, powers and practices that fall outside of its traditional state-centred scope.

Research in different disciplines, including political science, international relations, international law, economics and anthropology, has developed perspectives which take these new forms of power and legitimacy of non-state and intergovernmental actors into account. This includes scholarship on private authority (Cutler 2003), business authority as a 'peculiar third' (Mende 2020), political corporate social responsibility (Scherer et al. 2016, Crane et al. 2008), international public authority (Bogdandy et al. 2017, Heupel/Zürn 2017), the human rights obligations of private actors (Clapham 2006), and business and human rights (Deva/Bilchitz 2013, Wettstein 2009).

This workshop draws on these developments to discuss research which challenges the dichotomy of public and private – without necessarily leaving these concepts behind or simply blurring the boundaries. It aims to explore perspectives which take the plurality of non-state and intergovernmental actors into account, in order to contribute to new models of human rights responsibility which go beyond the ‘private’ responsibility to respect and the ‘public’ duty to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

The conveners welcome proposals which empirically or conceptually discuss the forms, possibilities and limits of the human rights responsibilities of non-state and intergovernmental actors. This includes (but is not limited to) research on business enterprises, state-owned enterprises, international organizations, rating agencies, aid organizations or armed actors, and on a range of activities and powers, such as lobbying activities, the provision of public goods, security-related activities, discursive power or ideational power.

To apply, please send a paper proposal (app. 350 words) along with a short biographical note to [publicprivate@mpil.de](mailto:publicprivate@mpil.de). Questions can also be directed to this e-mail address. Deadline for submissions: **15 February 2021**.

Accepted paper-givers are expected to submit a short paper (1500-2000 words) before 31 May 2021, in order to be circulated among the participants prior to the workshop. The workshop will be based on short presentations and aims at providing plenty of room for discussion. A follow-up publication is planned.

## **References**

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