

## Editorial

Business and human rights (BHR) is rapidly emerging as an independent and robust field of inquiry. Yet, so far, there has been no dedicated scholarly journal in this field. We are, therefore, pleased to present this inaugural issue of the *Business and Human Rights Journal (BHRJ)*. *BHRJ* fills a growing need for an authoritative forum for scholars and practitioners to exchange cutting-edge ideas about the complex and evolving relationship of human rights with business.

*BHRJ*'s core principles are cross-disciplinary academic excellence, integrity, openness, diversity, global reach, and a timely practical orientation. To that end, we have recruited a distinguished Board of Advisors known for their deep and abiding commitment to human rights, an outstanding Editorial Board of prominent scholars who have their own academic speciality but who also contribute to the broader BHR discourse, and a Developments in the Field (DiF) Panel consisting of well-established leaders in the BHR movement who are broadly representative of the diversity of perspectives in the practitioner community.

Another principle we hold fast to is that BHR scholarship and practice should be mutually informed and interactive. *BHRJ* strives to be relevant to government officials, diplomats, policy makers, civil society actors, businesspeople, lawyers, and academics in the BHR field. We especially welcome vulnerable groups who are disproportionately affected by corporate activities to add their voice to our ongoing dialogue about BHR.

*BHRJ* is first and foremost intended to serve as the leading forum for scholarly articles in the BHR field. We are committed to publishing the highest quality original work addressing such issues from a broad spectrum of disciplines such as law, business ethics, public policy, management, economics, political science, sociology, and international relations. Scholars have been grappling with a number of enduring questions in the area of BHR (or the related fields of corporate social responsibility and business ethics) for decades. Are corporations, as artificial entities, appropriate actors to assume human rights responsibilities? What is the moral basis, nature, or extent of such responsibilities? Do corporations have a duty only to avoid causing harm or do they also have positive duties to help protect and fulfil human rights? What regulatory approaches, devices, and sanctions would be effective, efficient, and practicable in ensuring that business enterprises comply with their duties and responsibilities?

The articles in *BHRJ*'s inaugural issue reflect the broad range of topics in the academic discourse on BHR. Patricia Werhane explores the implications of conferring human rights responsibilities on corporations from a philosophical perspective, while Upendra Baxi assesses whether the international community has responded adequately to the quest for justice of the people affected by the Bhopal gas disaster more than thirty years ago. Olivier De Schutter and James Gathii along with his co-author Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu examine the feasibility of different regulatory options to hold companies accountable for human rights violations. Menno Kamminga, on the other hand, offers an

empirical analysis of the level of corporate seriousness in discharging the responsibility to respect human rights.

We are also pleased to introduce a unique DiF section to keep our readers informed with topical BHR updates from around the globe. In this section, we will publish short, timely pieces focused on emerging best practices and innovations in promoting corporate respect for human rights. *BHRJ* will draw on the vast experience of the growing global network of BHR practitioners and experts who are addressing key governance challenges and gaps in their work on a daily basis.

The term ‘field’ in the context of the DiF section indicates that the editors seek pieces that capture developments in diverse settings and from diverse geographies. These will include contributions from or about communities impacted by corporate activity, social activists working on the ground to enhance business respect for human rights, teachers innovating in classrooms, corporate executives devising and implementing responsible business practices, legislators and policy makers deliberating on legal reforms, and courts as well as national human rights institutions developing tools or strategies to strengthen access to justice for victims.

In our inaugural issue, we feature pieces focused on a host of BHR innovations. Shareen Hertel and Allison MacKay share their experience in teaching an interdisciplinary BHR course to humanities, science, and engineering students. Jonathan Kaufman and Katherine McDonnell provides a first look at experiments in community-driven operational level grievance mechanisms as a way to provide access to remedy locally. Several DiF pieces examine critical BHR issues from a regional perspective. Humberto Cantú Rivera analyses the Mexican judiciary’s innovative rulings promoting access to remedy for Mexican victims of corporate human rights abuses. Min Jiang describes recent trends in internet and social media censorship and surveillance in China. Salil Tripathi and Motoko Aizawa not only reflect on the progress made in Bangladesh in the garment sector after the Rana Plaza collapse, but also examine the road ahead and the remaining challenges of securing safe and humane working conditions. Claire Methven O’Brien, Amol Mehra, Sara Blackwell, and Cathrine Bloch Poulsen-Hansen offer a comparative perspective on the first wave of national action plans created by states to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Other DiF pieces focus on global governance in the BHR arena. Carlos Lopez and Ben Shea provide a succinct and informative account of the first meeting of the UN Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group tasked with elaborating a legally-binding international treaty focused on transnational corporations and human rights. Alan Bryden and Lucía Hernández report on emerging best practices of companies, security providers, and other stakeholders with respect to security and human rights challenges in complex environments.

*BHRJ* also features a book review section. While the number of published books in the BHR field is increasing rapidly, there is still no publication outlet that systematically screens and reviews this growing body of literature. *BHRJ* will try to fill this gap. Titles are chosen based on their relevance to the field, with due regard for an inter-disciplinary perspective. Although we will give priority to titles dealing with core debates in the BHR field, reviews of important books in closely related fields will also be published.

Our reviews will focus on current, cutting-edge scholarship on BHR, and thus recent titles will be given priority over older publications. Nevertheless, each issue will feature

a 'BHR classic' reviewing a book that has made a seminal contribution to the field. These 'classic' reviews will be slightly longer than regular reviews and reflect on and reassess the book's lasting legacy to the ongoing BHR discussion.

This inaugural issue of *BHRJ* reviews two current titles and one classic. These three books represent three different disciplines. David Jason Karp's *Responsibility for Human Rights, Transnational Corporations in Imperfect States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) engages with justifications of corporate human rights responsibility from a political science perspective. It is reviewed by Nadia Bernaz. Penelope Simons' and Audrey Macklin's *The Governance Gap: Extractive Industries, Human Rights and the Home State Advantage* (London: Routledge, 2014), reviewed by Nomonde Nyembe, takes a legal perspective on the regulatory issues of extractive companies in the Global South by their home states. Finally, our first 'classic' is Thomas Donaldson's *The Ethics of International Business* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), one of the first human rights-based works on international business ethics with profound implications for the BHR debate then and now. This 'classic' is reviewed by Georges Enderle.

We are pleased to be launching *BHRJ* with Cambridge University Press (CUP). CUP has been publishing scholarly works since 1584. We believe their commitment to academic excellence and modern technology makes them the ideal partner for our venture. We feel grateful to be working with Rebecca O'Rourke, CUP's Senior Commissioning Editor, who has helped guide this project from its inception with consummate professional skill and a deep personal commitment to excellence. Working with Rebecca and the entire excellent CUP team, we are regularly reminded that the press, as befits an organization more than five centuries old, takes a long-term view.

In presenting this inaugural issue to our readers, we do hope that you will find it timely and relevant and that over time we will earn your trust as a partner in contributing to the evolution of BHR discourse. We look forward to engaging with our authors, reviewers, and readers through a variety of traditional and social media platforms, and welcome your feedback.

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*Editors-in-Chief*