

Brown Bag Talk Organized by

The Transitional & Transnational Justice Working Group
at the Center for Global Studies and
the Department of Public and International Affairs at
George Mason University

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Punishing War Crimes: Civil Society Efforts to Bring War Criminals to Trial in the Former Yugoslavia

By

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1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

**Department of Public and International Affairs
Robinson Hall, Conference Room
Fairfax Campus**

Since the violent conflicts in the 1990s in the region of the former Yugoslavia numerous retributive and restorative mechanisms to cope with the past have been attempted. Recently, a regional fact-finding project was launched by several established human rights organizations in the area. However, instead of reiterating conventional critique on *whether* the different attempts to deal with the past were effective and *how* they might be improved, it is much more compelling to inquire about the topographical changes of human rights law as well as the practices of its proponents in the continuous tight-rope walk between accountability efforts promoted by the judiciary and the role of human rights activists in advocating facts about mass atrocity and war crimes.

Drawing on extensive fieldwork in Croatia, the author examines what role human rights advocates play in transitional justice settings and how they implement and adapt their practices, focusing on their risks, challenges and prospects vis-à-vis the judiciary and society. He argues that despite the symbiotic relationship between human rights activists and judicial practitioners this phenomenon illustrates the changing nature of human rights activism from a socio-political trench-war to an institutionalized socio-legal struggle that nonetheless remains highly political.



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