

Reparations after mass violence and repression –an instrument for a better future?

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Reparations are one of the main pillars of transitional justice, with the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation guaranteeing victims' right to 'adequate, effective and prompt reparation for harm suffered' (art. VII b). In fact, besides truth and accountability, reparations are amongst victims first demands in the aftermath of violence. The general assumption is that reparations are an instrument for a better future for both victims and societies affected by violence. Reparations should contribute to reconciliation and compensate survivors for past suffering. Despite the importance of reparations for victims and survivors and the enshrinement of the right to reparations in international law, the realisation of reparation programs has faced serious limitations and a gap between claims and decisions for reparations and their actual implementation. At the same time, questions around who can receive reparations as well as the topic of victimhood more generally remain highly politicised in many post-conflict contexts and impact the non/implementation of reparations, a factor that has not sufficiently been explored to date. The panel investigates the topic of reparations as a potential instrument for a better future and the outlined gaps from different angles, bringing together insights from a variety of case studies in transitional societies. By exploring the entanglement of reparations with other dimensions of transitional justice such as accountability or truth-finding as well as analysing the role of different conflict types and political framework conditions, the panel aims to further our understanding of the factors that determine reparation politics and their outcome. At the same time, the panel also draws attention to the way survivors themselves impact the transitional justice process, mobilising around own transitional agendas and acting as political collective actors in their own right.

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