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Editorial for the Thematic Section: Towards a Global, Anti-Colonial Criminology of War, Genocide and Resistance

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We write this preface to the special issue of *Criminological Encounters* about war at a time in which the news – both traditional media and social media - are pervaded by images, videos, sounds and voices from people in the midst of brutal conflict. We believe there was never a time in which the experiences of militarized violence, displacement, and destruction were ever clearer or more accessible to people living outside areas of conflict. Armed violence is currently spiralling across multiple ongoing conflicts including, but not limited to, Afghanistan, Congo, Ethiopia, India, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Russia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen (Geneva Academy, 2025).

Several conflicts have reached the threshold of genocidal violence – the intent to destroy populations in whole or in part (United Nations, 1948, Article II, UN, 2025) - the 'crime of all crimes' (Rafter, 2016). War and genocidal violence are raging in Sudan (de Waal, 2025; Shah, 2025) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Mohammed and Siguru Wahutu, 2025), most heavily in areas where Western corporations are profiting from the mining and extraction of natural resources such as cobalt, used to form smartphones and other screen based technologies (Koubi et al., 2014).

The brutal genocidal violence by the Israeli government in Gaza and in the West Bank has created a wide global movement in support for the Palestinian civilians (Morrison, 2020). Israel's violence is still considered a difficult topic for discussion in the Northern Hemisphere (Green, 2023), in spite of concerns about genocide raised by scholars (Green et al., 2023; IAGS, 2025) and authoritative international governmental organizations and courts (ICJ, 2024; ICC, 2024); multiple reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights on the Palestinian Territories (Albanese, 2024, 2025); as well as those from prominent Israeli organizations (such as B'TSelem, 2025). The definition of this violence as genocidal or indeed even just as in violation of international criminal law remains contested. As Cohen (2001: 157-9) demonstrated almost 25 years ago, Israeli atrocities have long been denied and facilitated by techniques of neutralisation, accepted also by international bystanders. The issue is not one that started in October 2023, as the Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Gutierrez made clear in his statement in October 2023 (UN, 2023): it is to be placed on a long continuum of "suffocating occupation" and ethnic cleansing (Abdullah, 2019; Pappe, 2024; see forum section on Gaza and Palestine in this special issue).

Indeed, part of what led us to co-edit this special issue was a shared frustration with watching, often with despair via the images on our social media feeds, as the international laws, treaties and organisations responsible for preventing and responding to such grave breaches of international law and human rights continue to fail through inaction, denial, but also harassment. The active facilitation of violence through the arms trade and political-military involvement in atrocities, or through intelligence gathering (Overton, 2025; Sabbagh and Abdul, 2025), raises many concerns for criminology. Combined with the mass reach of companies and state-corporate interests benefiting from war (Ruggiero, 2007), the weak international frameworks to hold states and corporations accountable contribute to how the environment and ecosystems continue to suffer mass devastation (O'Sullivan and Walters, 2016; White, 2025) - in ways which transgress human-made borders, harming the future of the planet as a whole.

The situation in Ukraine, subject to international adjudication as a possible genocide (ICC, 2023), also reveals the connections between military violence and the extraction of valuable resources (Baranowski et al., 2025), as well as centring the East as an underexplored site of colonialism (Piacentini and Slade, 2023: Tlostanova, 2018; see interview with Shevtsova, 2025) and providing renewed concerns about nuclear wars.

Commissioned by *Criminological Encounters* (De Backer, Melgaço & Volinz, 2023), this special issue aims offer critical insights both into the discipline's scope to analyse such violence, and to create space to evidence current atrocities and resistance, particularly in the Global South (Wilkinson and Degenhardt, 2024). 'Global South' is used geographically and as a conceptual tool for the global inequalities in resources and power (Carrington et al., 2019: 165). As this special issue demonstrates, there is no doubt that these facets of war and dynamics of state-corporate power are played out in an increasingly globalized context – and must be analyzed and evidenced as such.

The original contribution of this special issue to a criminology of war centres on its global and transnational, anti-colonial approach to the continuums of state-corporate violence and oppression. Through deploying a decolonial lens, the collection offers renewed visibility to the ways in which criminalisation, as a state tool of power, continues to illegalise peoples and silence resistance, intellectual and critical thought, and solidarity. Criminalisation through the creation and selective enforcement of law allows states to control the narrative around their violence, and to actively deny and conceal interpretations of violence emerging 'from below'.

What do we Mean by 'War'?

Aware that Criminological Encounters has a wide range of readers, we thought it would be useful to produce a summary of the broad literature on war. Far from this being an exhaustive summary, it includes what we think are relevant contributions to contextualize the current special issue.

In its most basic form, war can be defined as 'an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will' (Clausewitz, 1984 [1832]:101). War should be critically analysed as an ever-present continuum of violent politics and processes, angled towards the consolidation and expansion of power. War, or at least the threat of it, always lurks beneath law and order (Foucault, 2003), and is woven into political discourses of 'freedom' and 'security'. Order' has long been maintained through processes of 'othering', often direct towards racialised communities (Bauman, 2013). Wars are therefore engrained into how we perceive our identities, borders, and trajectories. War also continues to be an inherently gendered practice, which supports and magnifies gender orders through specific ideas of masculinity and femininity, and crucially through the deployment of sexual and military violence (Nikolic Ristanovic, 1996; Buss, 2009; Enloe, 2014; 2023; Cockburn, 2001; 2007; Kirby and Henry, 2012). It is not possible to perceive war and peace as entirely separate.

In the twentieth century, wars were typically fought between states, as these were the primary institutions organizing our social life (Giddens, 1985). Yet war can be both *inter*state and *intra*state, fought by a range of state and non-state actors, and rarely with similar powers (Kaldor, 1999; van Creveld, 1991). Political and military analysts such as Kaldor (2013) and van Creveld (1991) have noted that the state has lost centrality in contemporary wars. Civil wars, proxy wars, and forms of disintegration of the state are linked to the blurring of the traditional distinction between civilians and military, illegal and legal war activities. In these forms of conflicts, often animated by 'identity politics', the female body with its reproductive capacity can become the centre stage, and war may quickly metamorphose into genocidal violence.

Whether these constitute effectively 'new' forms of wars is still contested (Berdal, 2003; Banta, 2019). But what is clear, is how prominent armed groups, some within and outside the borders of the nation state, private militias and mercenaries are now able to be more easily seen animating wars, which are at times played out by asymmetrical powers, endowed with sophisticated technologies. This said, through a decolonial lens, these 'new wars' can also be seen as a continuation of the old, with more advanced weaponry and communications (McGarry and Walklate, 2019b).

Recent technological revolutions and (dis)information technology have enabled thinking of war as something that may be conducted efficiently 'at a distance' to the West, through claims of 'high precision targeting' and soldiers better protected from the risk of death. Yet these same technologies can result in more civilian deaths, usually framed as 'collateral damage' (Rasmussen, 2006). The use of unmanned aerial vehicles and the recent incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) targeting have further complicated the regulation of warfare by obscuring chains of responsibility and by bringing the destructiveness of warfare to another level (Kaucz, 2025). Years of negotiations and international attempts to ban destructive weapons are thus now increasingly challenged.

At an ideological level, wars and genocide operate through narratives and political machinery which involve the de-humanization of 'unwanted' or 'dangerous' peoples – 'enemies' – who are often illegalised, and violently ripped from homes and lands while being killed and destroyed (Bauman, 1989; Alvarez, 2008). In this sense, war and genocide should be understood as entangled with forms of framing collective

grievances against specific populations, who are thus progressively racialised and criminalised (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond, 2009; Shaw 2003). These ideologies do not stop or originate within the border of the nation state and its organised forces, they are often long processes intertwined with colonial legacies that are difficult to deny (Mullins and Rothe, 2008; Al-Hindi, 2025).

Towards a Global Anti-Colonial Criminology of War

In line with our aims to offer a 'global' approach to the criminological study of war, we approach 'war' as a continuum of organized violence, rooted in ideologies of racialization (Gandesha, 2020), greed (Bonger, 1916; 1936), and destruction (Fromm, 1941), which inevitably flow beyond the nation state, harming the planet in the process. We do not wish to argue that the globe is a uniform place. Quite the opposite, we strive to highlight the unevenness of material conditions and opportunities. However, it is now undeniable that there are global infrastructures that are availed, built and developed by corporate powers and powerful nations.

These forms of wars often have neo-colonial roots. Colonialism refers to harmful ideologies and state-corporate power structures which use racialized categorization, humiliation, and violence to dominate peoples, lands, and extract resources for capital gain (Morrison, 2019; Rojas-Páez and South, 2024; Fanon, 1963; Cesaire, 2000 [1950]. Colonialism is inherently destructive. Both as an ideology and violent organization of power angled towards 'growth with no limits' (Whyte, 2020: 69), colonialism depends on oppression, conflict, and erasure, with war as its main tool of enterprise. As Mullins and Rothe (2008) showed, most of the conflicts in the African continent were linked to expanding the power of Western colonial states.

As with domestic 'crime', international laws can only signal some forms of harm in war, and can be used expeditiously to legitimise forms of neo-colonial expansion within the Global South, by intervening in globally under-resourced parts of the world through military power as a form of police power (Neocleous, 2014; Iyase and Folarin, 2018, see also Degenhardt, 2023). Western narratives and visions of military conflict as a way to address issues of 'disorder' as 'foreign policy', coupled with the tactical and spurious uses of international law, fundamentally enabled the launching of even more militarized violence, mostly by Global North states intervening in Global South states, expanding forms of governance beyond the state (Holmqvist, 2014; Duffield, 2007). The prominence of drones or unmanned aerial vehicles in warfare further allowed talking of war as a form of 'policing', individualising wars against 'bandits and criminals' (Dal Lago, 2003; Mueller, 2004).

The 'war on terror', launched immediately after the 9/11 attacks by a Coalition of States led by the US and UK, is a primary example of this form of militarised 'policing'. Political discourse of 'risk' was used to construct Muslim groups and individuals in different countries as 'criminal' (Mythen and Walklate, 2016), with 'punishment' often delivered through targeted strikes, but also through sustained military aggression such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, Western state-corporate powers were pursuing violently destructive forms of resource and capital extraction (Coulter, 2005).

A critical criminological approach to war should recognise the 'global' reach of current forms of violence and its entanglememt with forms of past domination, or how the past reverberates unevenly across present nations and spaces. To us, a 'global, anti-colonial criminology' should therefore involve tracing and mapping the responsibility of colonial powers, systems and structures, through their material and intellectual, sometimes visible and sometimes invisiblised legacies. This requires evidencing the continuum of war, atrocity and denial by global superpowers, multiple states and various connected actors, armed groups and corporations - whether directly or indirectly through complicity and facilitation of armed violence. It must also recognise that colonialism still lives in the present. Current wars, humanmade borders, and armed violence over natural resources cannot be understood fully without anchoring analysis to these colonial histories and ongoing sites of occupation.

The following sections present summaries of the special issue contributions across three overarching themes: war as a continuum of violence; activism, resistance and protecting the power of protest; and

the role of criminology amid times of war and genocide. The special issue concludes with an artistic intervention with Ashtar Theatre and *The Gaza Monologues*, to then leave space to the forum dedicated to Palestine and Gaza.

War as a Continuum of Violence

A strong thread across many of the special issue contributions concerns the connection between different processes, actors, and institutions involved in strengthening and consolidating the violence of war and genocide beyond the battlefield. Violence is magnified by the carceral logics and politics of deportation, denial of human rights, citizenship, and financial support for vulnerable communities, particularly those crossing borders to seek refuse and asylum (Soliman, 2021; Esposito et al, 2026 forthcoming). Private actors concur in these violent efforts through their own channels of sanctioning, prohibitions, and denial of space or financial support, or conversely through their own material enabling actions. The objective of domination, which is fundamental component of war, is therefore achieved by a multitude of means, that extend beyond the use of weapons and militarized violence, to reach into different aspects of social life - most evidently through international systems of criminalization, policing and incarceration.

Brunilda Pali and Polly Pallister-Wilkins (2025) in their piece strongly emphasize the need to analyze the interconnection between the violence suffered by the Palestinians and the criminalization of the Palestinian solidarity movements by states and academic institutions. Their analysis moves from the case study of the Netherlands where undercover officers and police violence, including the bulldozing of students' encampment, were deployed within university to curtail legitimate educational events or protests in support of Palestinians civilians. Even if not comparable to the horror inflicted to Palestinians, these forms of violent attack demonstrate how Palestine has become a public (dis)order and security issue for Western states (on this topic see also Curreri and Piche, 2025 and Fatsis, 2025 in this issue). Pali and Pallister Wilkins further connect the disciplining and self-censuring of educators in universities, and the suppression of intellectual debates, to both the legacy of the 'war on terror' and the new forms of authoritarianism.

The question of academia as a place for intellectual thought is not new to the current crisis of liberal democracies and the incoming forms of authoritarianism and popular ethno-nationalisms. Dina Belluigi's (2025) article traces what remains of the practices of surveillance, intimidation, pressure, and effective erasure of dissenting academic citizens in some past histories of authoritarian countries in Africa. Through a series of art images and photos, Belluigi (2025) reveals the archiving of such practices and juxtaposes current forms of commemoration of well-accepted historical intellectual thought, to less well-known forms of censuring. This contribution from critical education studies is a powerful reminder of the continuums of violence and repression in periods of conflict and war, and of how universities respond, afford, or indeed (mis)represent academic dissent even in times of so-called peace. Ultimately, Pali and Pallister-Wilkins and Bellguigi powerfully remind us that while the university can be a critical site of dissent, refusal and resistance to state violence, it is also a site of surveillance, policing and criminalization amid the (re)ordering of the world, contributing to the maintenance of entrenched geopolitical interests and established hierarchies.

Mehrdad Emami and Paola Rivetti (2025) provide a timely critical account of the ways in which the discourse on what they call "gender disorders" plays out in imperial wars and regime change. The recent crisis between Israel and Iran was a paramount example of how neo-colonial and imperial venture are often supported by narratives in which women's protection appears as the objective of a military operation. Exposing the ways in which gender is a crucial component in the militarization processes, Emami and Rivetti show how the local women's struggle against the hijab was opportunistically exploited to advance the need for regime change. Further, the piece underscores how some women may support these gendered narratives to ally opportunistically to the foreign forces.

The interview with Maryna Shevtsova (2025) also reminds us of this dimension when she argues that we need to analyze the Russian aggression of Ukraine through a feminist perspective, giving voice not just to women in Ukraine, but also women in the larger Russian Federation. If much literature focuses on the

uses of sexual violence as a weapon of war, Shevtsova suggests that the violence of masculinised military conflict further cascades into people's personal lives in many ways, increasing the prevalence of domestic violence. Maryna argues we cannot limit the analysis of sexual violence to the experiences of women, and instead need to include the specific experiences of LGBTQI+ communities, as well as men's forced conscription. Gender also appears as a crucial feature when the Ukrainian's government invisibilises the care work many women are expected to carry out when men leave to fight (within and outside the mainland), to instead emphasise the number of women enrolled in the military or in government. And yet, there are continued issues of sexual harassment in the military for women, showing once again the profoundly patriarchal nature of military institutions.

Recounting her experiences of studying the gendered regimes that war demands to pursue fighting and endure the pain of militarised societies, Ruth Jamieson's interview (2025) speaks clearly of the need to be more aware of the connections between war and colonialism. Ruth starts by underscoring the continuities of war in terms of acknowledging the impact the violence of war has on different generations. It was in relation to her own personal trajectory that we see the impact of wars on future generations, through contact with the wounded from the second World War in a local hospital in Canada, and the ways in which the pain of a politicised mother's quest to see her son became visible to her as a young person. This interview, full of insights and ideas, is a stark reminder that our research projects often emerge through our private lives, and of the need to be persistent in following our own interests.

Connecting war to gender regimes and forced displacement, the article by Neela Hassan (2025) discusses the ways in which Afghani refugees' deservedness was related to either the deployment of Canadian forces In Afghanistan or gendered constructions of vulnerability, particularly for women. Seemingly recognising their nation's role in exposing people to possible retaliation by the Taliban Government, the Canadian policy effectively instrumentalised the refugee convention for the country's military operations. Further, Hassan (2025) exposes through her media analysis how women's construction as 'vulnerable and deserving' follows typical colonial (mis)representations of Muslim countries. This construction at the same time romanticized women's resettlement in Canada and reinforces racialised and gendered tropes. Importantly, Canada thus maintains its own profile as a 'civilising nation', while denying its role in the forced migration of some populations.

In the short opinion piece by Halil Ibrahim Bahar, we can see the most direct and pernicious ways in which refugees from countries harmed by conflict are criminalized and exposed to the violence of some politically motivated groups on social media in their countries of arrival. We are particularly grateful to Bahar for sharing his experience with us as a persecuted scholar, and for contributing to our special issue in collaboration with his daughter, Hacer Bahar, when he was no longer able to access his work because of detention. In their piece, they are critical of the politics of the Turkey state towards refugees from Syria. Hate speech and criminalization of refugees are prevalent in Turkey, as in many countries. To Bahar and Bahar (2025), instead of supporting Syrian refugees, the country is actively withholding support - effectively allowing some vocal political groups to scape goat and criminalize these populations as the reason for politically induced socio-economic struggles. The scapegoating and criminalization of Syrian refugees and the violence they are subjected to digitally, and in person, is well captured by this short piece, reminding us of the role that state criminalization may have on those who are deemed not to belong and crucially, to those who dissent.

Activism, Resistance and Protecting the Power of Protest

Within our attempts to encourage a global anti-colonial criminology of war, it was important to include research documenting activism and resistance. International requests for financial and military support co-exist with anti-war activism and civil initiatives to boycott institutions and corporations involved in conflicts (see PACBI, 2023 and Fatsis, 2025). The difficulty of intervening in complex contemporary conflicts concerns the criminalisation of mass mobilization and restrictions to freedom of speech (Selmini and Di Ronco, 2023, see also Pali and Pallister-Wilkins, 2025), including within academia. Despite growing public debate and the strong feelings and emotions around these issues, local governments and institutions are increasingly using criminalisation to disrupt activism, strangle voices of resistance and

limit necessary democratic space (Cristiano et al., 2023). Some of the articles in this special issue speak more directly about these dynamics than others.

June Hwang presents research around the criminalisation of activism and protest, through a case study of resistance to the arms industry in South Korea. The article demonstrates how the criminalisation of protest is used as a weapon to uphold powerful political and private economic interests, while international treaties fail to sanction the states and companies involved in supplying arms to those committing genocide and crimes against humanity. Hwang (2025) argues that arms fairs must be studied as a criminogenic site of warmaking, where the brutality of war is sanitised as a 'benign enterprise' for 'public good'. Further, Hwang argues that resistance to the arms trade is integral to disrupting the normalisation of state-corporate violence and the continuation of global capitalism through the profitable business of war.

Lucrezia Curreri and Justin Piché (2025) argue that we also need to pay attention to other forms of silencing. Looking beyond debates and intellectual engagement, they demonstrate that there is a 'sonic silencing' of protests in support of Palestine in Ottawa, Canada. The selective use of noise ordinance by-laws in Ottawa, to criminalise Pro-Palestine protest noise and fine activists for using megaphones, reveals how the Canadian state attempts to maintain the 'dominant sonic order' of public space by keeping anti-colonialism 'silent', while permitting the noise of a wide range of other activities. They advocate that critical criminologists must deploy their research to aid community-led organising and engage in activism to collectively defend rights to freedom of speech and assembly, rather than uphold and facilitate agendas of the state.

The issue of Palestine has produced some fierce conflict around what can and cannot be said not just at government level but also by journalists, in universities, in the streets; as well as who is allowed to speak and whose perspectives are projected. Fatsis (2025) provides an important account of the recent attempts by the European Society of Criminology to silence and disrupt anti-genocide activism such as the call from Criminologists for Palestine (2025) (included in the forum on Gaza and Palestine in this special issue). The debate over Israel's violence is such a fierce contestation that in some parts of the world, governments have recurred to the politics of criminalization of protests specifically supportive of the Palestinian cause (see Germany for instance but also the UK and the US). These aspects require new reflections on what it means to be doing criminology, provoking a renewed need to investigate the traditional question of how conflict can contribute to our understanding of the 'criminal question', as well as the political (mis)uses of criminalization.

The Role of Criminology Amid Times of War and Genocide

At the basic level, our teaching of criminology involves the problematization of what constitutes 'crime?'. Whether on an individual or international scale, 'crime' is the socio-political construction of certain behaviors and acts as deviant, involving the specific articulation of a behavior as "criminal", and then its potential apprehension by the police, adjudication by the courts, and a range of punishments. All these processes and institutions involve their own selective processes.

As critical criminologists have long argued, criminalization has been most prominently a tool of the powerful, mostly directed 'downwards' towards unwanted, vulnerable, 'undesirable' peoples, and often racialized communities constructed as 'suspect' (Hillyard, 1993, 1994; Scraton, 2007; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2011; Chambliss, 1994; Boukli and Kotzé, 2018, and Canning and Tombs, 2021, and Weis, 2023). Further, Moore (2014) evidences how 'modern' systems of crime and punishment were often developed and finely tuned in the colonies first, usually during periods of war, occupation and armed conflict, before being 'brought home' to Western countries in the form of laws and policing (Brown, 2014). Punishment and the police were and still are used to effectively rule the colonized (Wacquant, 2025). A proper consideration of the crimes of the powerful therefore involves looking beyond the limited socio-political processes involved in the criminalization of some behaviours deemed to be conducive to harm, especially when state and corporate powers are involved.

While Kramer and Michalowski (2005) argue that we could turn to international law as a guide to identify

crimes in which states are involved, international law is deeply affected by political dynamics which involve not just the state and its institutions, but multiple states, their geopolitical interests, and their corporate allies. The apparatus of international law, and its new iteration as international criminal law, although representing an important milestone in some respects, as it attempts to sanction individuals for state crimes and forms of mass atrocities at a global level, it is still linked to the exercise of power of some Global North/Western states (Lohne, 2019; Hagan and Raymond-Richmond, 2009).

The international legal structure itself, as it stands, is therefore very problematic and in need of revision as it follows its own selective processes by which powerful nations can wrestle in and out of justice as it suits (for a comprehensive account see Koskeniemmi, 1990; Makau, 2017 but also recent interventions such as Clarke, 2020; Marinello 2024). Stan Cohen's (2001) pioneering work on the states of denial shows how states, perpetrators, witnesses and sometimes even victims neutralise violations of human rights, through rationalizations that reinterpret harmful acts in ways that are acceptable. Conscious of the limits of law in identifying criminal activities in which the state itself may be involved, Green and Ward (2004) highlight the important role of civil society, social movements and criminology in labelling actions by the state that are harmful, independently from them being technically and/or legally criminalized.

To stimulate critical thinking and discussion, we often tell students that killing – the most evident and harmful form of law breaking – whilst constructed as murder in civilian law, is permitted in war and even encouraged. Thus, labelling processes are key in enabling or disabling social censure (Becker, 1963). Violent actions in war are often understood as something other than violations of norms (See Degenhardt, 2023). They may be 'camouflaged', as Albanese (2024) states in relation to the effective re-interpretation of international humanitarian law by Isreal (see also Badalic, 2019 on similar processes as part of the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan and Pakistan).

Similarly, the destruction of infrastructures, the theft of goods and resources, economic expropriation and environmental damage are all actions accepted if not praised in war (Whyte, 2007). It is our very culture of war and heroism that needs changing (Ruggiero, 2005). Soldiers become political 'heroes' for enacting harmful behavior that is represented as 'beneficial' or 'necessary' in the contexts of war. Although soldiers are usually highly trained to overcome the prohibition of killing, many still find it difficult to kill, along with struggling with the embodied harms of dehumanisation, war and colonial occupation long after leaving battlefields (Wilkinson, 2025, 2026 forthcoming). It is for that reason that we could study, according to Jamieson (1998b), the ways in which states or authoritative groups reverse moral order to demand that individuals pursue harm and violence as practices of redress or domination through armed conflict.

Following the eruption of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, many academics have produced important work on the study of war, especially after the launch of the 'war on terror' and the war of aggression in Iraq, with its predatory practices of economic extraction (Hagan, 2003; Hagan and Rymond-Richmond, 2009; Mulling and Rothe, 2008; Hagan et al., 2015; Braithwaite, 2020). The study of war from a criminological perspective is linked to the need to better understand the ways in which dynamics of prohibition of violence can be weakened for those who participate in violence, and the need to study mass gendered victimization and the changing forms of social control in societies at war (Jamieson, 1998a, 1998b, 2002).

In recent years, McGarry and Walklate (2015; 2016 and 2019a) have substantially contributed to establishing a criminological study of war as part of the curricula. Despite contesting the label of "criminology of war", as 'it risked becoming yet another intellectual enclave of criminology" if aligned with state institutions and agendas (McGarry and Walklate, 2017), they nevertheless argue that war has been studied in the field of social sciences and criminology for some time – more often in conjunction with "the emergence and cessation of war, conflicts and genocides" (2019: VII-VIII), rather than as a continuum. To these authors, the study of war/crime nexus should be an "inter and intra disciplinary endeavor" (Di Pietro, 2016 cited in McGarry and Walklate, 2019a). We concur with this analysis that the study of war is not of pertinence of just criminology, many are studying it critically in political sciences, sociology, psychology, anthropology, international law, international relations and transitional justice, but we stress the need to affirm the value of studying war also through our disciplinary tools and theories

(see also Hagan, 2015; and Jamieson in this issue).

As John Hagan (2015) underlines, criminology has the capacity to contribute to the study of criminal wars and the accrued breaking of law in the conduct of violence and in the post-conflict phase, through extensive qualitative and quantitative social science. We echo our esteemed colleague in saying that criminology has a responsibility to contribute to understanding where, how and why these supreme forms of criminality occurred (Hagan, 2015: 3-4), and to evidence the harms they produce. This special issue is an attempt to contribute to this endeavor.

Stephanie Di Pietro (2025) speaks directly to this argument when arguing criminologists need to consider more carefully the aetiology of the crime–war nexus, and more specifically, the criminogenic effects of war in the life course of children and young people. The impact of war goes far beyond the more evident violence of killing and destruction typical of warfare. It is inscribed within the individual strains a person may suffer as a result of changes in their family structures, the attendant mechanisms of trust/mistrust, and the fall of institutions. Di Pietro argues that considering these dynamics between the individual and macro dimensions in the context of war would improve our ability to reconstruct societies and support people's resilience after war.

The article by Fatima Rodrigues (2025) relates back to one of this special issue's main objectives, demonstrating how criminology can be effective at studying the connection between war and its colonial past and present. The ongoing InJUSTiceWar project investigates Portuguese colonial violence in Africa (1961-1974), through analysing the crimes committed by Armed Forces combatants and held accountable within the Territorial Military Courts in Angola and Guinea. The analysis brings to the fore once again the ways in which colonial powers use states of exception to justify violence against liberation movements. Further, Rodrigues (2025) reveals that studying law breaking within contexts of war and colonial occupation can reveal racialised hierarchies etched into the very legal frameworks which claim to provide justice and peace.

Using two case studies of 'child soldiers' in war, Ian Marder (2025) argues that studying criminology through war examples creates space to apply the criminological gaze 'upwards', and trace how power and social control run through systems and institutions, often in contradictory ways. For example, the socially constructed categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' are quickly eroded in the context of war. Importantly for this special issue of *Criminological Encounters*, Marder's article reminds readers that criminology should not be a discipline of study contained to classrooms or lecture halls. He argues that Criminology programmes should be designed to be carried onwards and outwards, to build knowledge in ways that allow students to re-shape the world in ways that reduce intersectional harms, oppression, exclusion and suffering – especially in contexts of war and state violence.

All these articles concur more broadly that war is a fertile terrain in which to study behavior that is usually censured, not just in relation to the reversion of the broader cultural landscape and its impact on individuals, but also in relation to changing forms of organization, social bonds, and importantly tracing the commission of criminal behavior to more powerful institutions and actors in the present, past and future. As Ruggiero explained in his multiple commentaries and essays, the study of criminology cannot be severed from the study of the powerful, their economic interests and their discursive apparatuses (see Degenhardt and Scalia, 2025). War needs to be criminalized as one of the most egregious forms of violence, as its harms affect people on all sides (Ruggiero, 2023) and is damaging the planet we all call home. Criminologists need to interrogate the 'justifications' for war and document the violent impact it has.

In the current context of increased state-corporate militarization, proliferating genocidal violence, and threats of nuclear wars, criminology cannot remain silent. The harms in wartime far exceed the gravity and scale of criminalised behaviours in so-called peacetime. As criminologists, we have a responsibility to inform students and the public of the facts, through our knowledge and critical analysis on these issues. Further, we cannot maintain the separation between violence within the state and violence outside national borders, as typical of the discipline in its most administrative form. We should actively deploy

our research skills and theories to these mass harms which for long time were left to the margins of the discipline. Mobilising our knowledge to uncover data and interpret it through available theories will not just increase our knowledge of criminalisation in general, but hopefully contribute to the exercise of tracing colonial violence across time and space. We must not choose to keep quiet or keep academically sleeping-walking in denial while people in so many parts of the world are affected by the most destructive forms of violence, in which our institutions are complicit.

Artistic Intervention – Roaa Ali and Priya Sharma, with ASHTAR Theatre

Funded by the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Nottingham and the Faculty Strategic Research Equipment Fund (SREF) at Queen's University Belfast, Roaa Ali and Priya Sharma were commissioned to work with ASHTAR Theatre group, based in Palestine, on an artistic intervention for the special issue. Ali and Sharma (2025) discuss three pieces of performance art from *The Gaza Monologues*, which have been performed worldwide since 2010 to document, witness, remember and make visible Palestinian voices and experiences under Israeli occupation and genocide.

This artistic intervention, including extracts from conversations with ASHTAR's Iman Aoun and Edward Muallem, makes clear how life amid continued violence and the sensory assaults accompanying such violence disrupt time and the most intimate spaces, stretching and shortening the days of Palestinian families trying to survive and exist among the destruction. As Ali and Sharma (2025) write, *The Gaza Monologues* is an arts-based framework of justice, 'designed to counter erasure', serving as both archive and a site of political action. Importantly, the work of ASHTAR exists in the gaping space left by the gross failures of international law.

We are immensely grateful to have been able to include extracts from ASHTAR's performances alongside Ali's and Sharma's reflections on the pieces within this special issue. It must be noted that supporting artists through university research funding, especially those working amid active conflict zones, takes an immense amount of labour to overcome what can be a frustrating number of institutional barriers and administrative requirements. But it can be done. And it should be done. For art has the power to contribute so much to criminology, especially where words alone cannot always do justice to the full complexity of human experience and the harms flowing from the systems and institutions which should exist to protect life, not facilitate its erasure. Please do engage with the artistic intervention and as Ali and Sharma's conclude – amid such violent constructions of 'ungrievable life' (Butler, 2009), 'the question remains: as witnesses, what will we do?'.

Researchers' Positionality, Limitations and Contributions of the Special Issue:

We are both aware of the privileged positions from which we write and feel this should be openly acknowledged. Hannah was born in Northern England and Teresa in Northern Italy. Current redundancy schemes aside, we both work in relatively well-funded institutions: the University of Nottingham, England, and Queen's University Belfast, a part of the UK positioned effectively in the island of Ireland. These intuitional affiliations have, quite literally, afforded us the role to guest-edit this collection through their provision of some research time and funding to support the artistic interventions, even in neoliberal academia. We appreciate that many colleagues do not have such research freedom and financial support. We are anti-war academics who engage in activism, trade unionism, and organized solidarity and protest within and outside our academic work. We are also conscious that while we aim to approach war through an anti-colonial and intersectional lens, we are based within the colonial heart of war in the UK and are both white skinned cis women, trained (albeit for different lengths of time) in the task of writing for the Anglo-Saxon speaking world.

Acknowledging the criminological toolbox has been grounded in Northern and Western analysis, and at times problematic hierarchies of power, we called for researchers of the Global South (the Global majority) and early career academics to contribute to this issue of Criminological Encounters. It is a privilege to have been able to work with some incredibly talented PhD students and early career academics over the last 18 months. Representation from the Global South and indigenous perspectives have been difficult to

secure within the timescales of academic publication processes. This lack of engagement may well reflect limitations in our circulation of the special issue call for papers. It could also reflect a valid distrust of 'criminology' – the study of 'crime' – which is rooted in Western colonialisation (Agozino, 2024), where law has been, and is still being used to facilitate violent occupation, racialised categorisation, segregation, criminalisation, exclusion, detention, concentration and destruction of peoples in the pursuit of capital gain. As such, there are many wars and genocides which are unfortunately not analysed within this special issue. We hope, however, to have enabled new voices to provide their analysis of contemporary and historical conflict dynamics.

We have also experienced several attempts to curtail academic freedoms from within the publication processes. Some pieces submitted to the special issue have been subject to intense peer-review criticism and rejection, at times in highly unprofessional ways. Several reviewers have denied recognition of valid contemporary evidence presented in certain articles submitted to the journal, such as critical analyses of ongoing genocides and international inaction. This has been frustrating and a potential insight into the institutional and cultural (colonial) academic barriers placed around scholars of the Global South and Indigenous communities (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). These actions have prompted us to intervene, and at times, involved an ethical active stance from the editors to disregard those reviews and instead to provide constructive reviews to the authors who wished to make their cases.

From inaction around gross violations of international law, to the forceful detention and imprisonment of refugee and asylum-seeking communities as 'criminal' - the law 'mostly works' for the powerful. While these systems and processes of criminalisation in contested contexts of war are very old, centring the global connections between current and historical violence as a continuum of colonialism offers a new direction for the discipline. The ability to witness and evidence atrocity in real time via smart phones and an increasingly globalised world allows criminologists to see and analyse the colonial machinery of war and denial in action, where they were once able to be concealed and only unpacked when weapons fell silent and survivors' stories were offered a space to be heard.

'Crime' is created in political arenas, meaning criminology is in great part about locating where power lies. Academia is indeed a site within which attempts to silence the truth are a real threat. Many university institutions are in the process of cutting critical programmes and the arts, placing many academics in precarity. An anti-colonial approach also means moving with solidarity and supporting collective action, within and outside institutional walls. From the research we do and the funding bodies we work with, to the ways we treat our colleagues and the people who take part in research, we encourage criminologists old and new to recognise the power we hold as a discipline. As Becker (1963) prompted us to always consider, 'who's side are we on?'.

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To continue the legacy of our recently departed colleague and friend, Vincenzo Ruggiero, we hope that this collection of work inspires more researchers to turn an active eye to towards state violence and to developing a global, anti-colonial criminology against war. If knowledge is power and unity is strength, we must persist to use the interdisciplinary armoury of a criminological toolbox to intervene in war and state harm wherever possible. For silence only ever benefits the oppressors.

Finally, thanks must go to each other, for continuing to show up and extend ethics of care to us and authors throughout this project, while we've both been navigating a web of personal and global pain. It's been a privilege and a pleasure to guest edit this special issue. We hope it's worth the wait!

Hannah and Teresa

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